

CHAPTER FOURMETHODOLOGY: TECHNICALITIES OF THE ETHNOGRAPHIC APPROACH
TO RESEARCHINTRODUCTION

Having selected the appropriate approach for endeavouring to address a research problem, it is important that the researcher acquires a carefully developed understanding of the chosen approach in order to become fully aware of its advantages as well as potential pitfalls. The ethnographic approach and its key technique of participant observation are not readily accepted by all educational researchers. The ethnographer is sometimes viewed with suspicion by other researchers or, perhaps, sometimes with a sense of mystique. Yet, the present writer has come to believe that ethnography has a valuable contribution to make to educational research.

In this chapter, the writer returns briefly to the concept of ethnography in order to set the scene for the examination of a number of technical aspects of the research approach. First, the writer provides a discussion of the research techniques chosen for the study. An examination of the technique of participant observation is undertaken in addition to shorter discussion of the two supplementary techniques of informant interviewing and document collection. Second, the writer discusses the technical features of validity, reliability and generalisability which are key features of any research undertaking. A note is included, too, on the notion of the foreshadowed problem.

THE CONCEPT OF ETHNOGRAPHY REVISITED

There are a number of ways of studying the world of a school principal. The researcher can obtain a position as principal and set about investigating the school world at first-hand in a similar way to that undertaken by Hills (1975) who re-experienced the elementary school principalship during a year's leave from university teaching in educational administration. Methodologically and practically, however, this is likely to be a difficult task. Gaining a job as principal may not be as easy as it sounds while the position of researcher-as-principal in the truest sense of participation in both aspects of the work presents difficulties of both practicality and objectivity. When one is deeply entwined with the events of which one is part, it is quite likely to be difficult to find sufficient time to devote to the research undertaking and to retain a semblance of objective distance from the events and people with which one is involved. Wolcott has made the same point (1970:115) and noted the problem of seeking to learn about the principal's world from the literature:

Unfortunately, the literature in educational administration is disappointing as a source of data for learning about the real world of the principal since it tends to be hortatory or normative in content. It tells principals... how they ought to act. It is prescriptive rather than descriptive. Thus while it is an excellent source of information for learning about the ideal world of formal education, it fails to provide an account of what actually goes on or how the ideals are translated into real behaviour.

(Wolcott 1970: 115)

Wolcott's comment on this shortcoming in the literature, made in 1970, was not new. Eleven years

earlier, Griffiths had noted, "What we want are descriptions of administrators as they actually behave on the job". (1959:34) In 1979, the present writer had commented similarly to Wolcott on the paucity of literature describing the real world of the school administrator, particularly in New Zealand, saying:

Principals, today, have available to them, numerous sources of guidance on method and approach to their work. Yet, there still remains a scarcity of literature in response to Griffiths' plea for information about what principals actually do.

(Edwards 1979b: 248)

As discussed in Chapter Three, the research approach of ethnography presents very real possibilities for learning about the world of the school principal. Smith has quoted his colleague, Hymes, who expressed the potential value of ethnography as a means of understanding human social life:

...of all forms of scientific knowledge, ethnography is the most open, the most compatible with a democratic way of life, the least likely to produce a world in which experts control knowledge at the expense of those who are studied. The skills of ethnography consist of the enhancement of skills all normal persons employ in everyday life....

(Smith 1981:74)

Smith considered that the promise of ethnography arose from two premises. First, the ethnographer considers that patterns of behaviour result from cultural processes which are dependent on individuals and contexts. Therefore, any attempt to understand the life of a school must take into account the culture of the school. Second, the ethnographer considers that decisions on "what counts as significant" cannot be made in isolation from the individuals and

context of the study. Therefore, the researcher must seek and appreciate the views of participants in the school and endeavour to understand their knowledge and skills. (Smith 1981:74) "Ethnography," Smith wrote, "lets 'what counts' be determined by the total context." (ibid:76)

Detractors of the ethnographic approach note a battery of points which they perceive as being disadvantages. It is difficult, if not impossible, to replicate an ethnographic study in order to verify the results. First, every situation is unique and unable to be duplicated. Therefore, cross-checking of data is not always possible. Second, this unique nature of the research is likely to be compounded when the researcher has found his or her own unique place in the field. Again, it would be difficult, if not impossible for a second researcher to penetrate the field and gain the same understanding of it. However, the uniqueness of the setting and the researcher's part in it may well be an attraction and strength of the approach. Detractors comment, too, on a lack of indicators of validity, reliability and generalisability in ethnographic studies, as well as an absence of measuring devices and a lack of scientific rigour.

However, Smith (1978:318) noted a movement toward a realisation of the place which educational ethnography can play in research. His example was embodied in the comments of Campbell and Stanley who, in 1963, criticised such research as consisting of "one-shot" studies with an absence of control, a minimum of design, the use of casual observation and memory, little valid comparison and being of almost no scientific value. Twelve years later, Campbell - as Smith noted - expressed his realisation that such studies are informative and

convincing, possess a significant probing and testing power, can produce new knowledge and fill an important void in providing a common sense perspective on, and understanding of, the overall context of a study. Smith described the way in which his own researches through the 1960's and 1970's can be viewed as an "evolving ethnography of schooling" as he encountered the approach, began to make use of it and became more comfortable with, and understanding of it.

Cronbach documented his own shift in position toward an appreciation of the possibilities for research of the work of the ethnographer:

An observer collecting data in one particular situation is in a position to appraise a practice or proposition in that setting, observing effects in context. In trying to describe and account for what happened, he will give attention to whatever variables were controlled, but he will give equally careful attention to uncontrolled conditions, to personal characteristics and to events that occurred during treatment and measurement. As he goes from situation to situation his first task is to describe and interpret the effect anew in each locale, perhaps taking into account factors unique to that locale of series of events.

(Cronbach 1975:124)

The ethnographer, Fetterman pointed out, (1982:18) takes into the research situation a set of four basic values. The first value requires that the researcher will be guided by the viewpoint of the participants themselves. The second value requires that the researcher will seek to attend to the broad picture of the culture system being studied and its inter-related parts. The third value requires that the researcher will experience the world being studied but with an awareness of his or her own biases and

refraining from making value judgments on the world of study. The final value requires the researcher to "place the data in its own environment so as to provide a more accurate representation." (Fetterman 1982:18)

The ethnographer, therefore, engages in the practical task of learning what one needs to know in order to function in a particular setting. From the ordinary details of daily life, the ethnographer constructs a picture of the way of life in that setting. The ethnographer will be guided often by a foreshadowed problem area which will take form as the investigation proceeds. Much will be learned that cannot be stated prior to the study or controlled by approval, hypotheses, questionnaires or experiments. On-site research about real people in their actual situations can be a welcome relief from externally imposed research methods. (Roberts 1976:3) The unique feature about ethnography is that the researcher endeavours to see and experience the group's life from the perspective of the actual participants of the group and the picture which emerges should present this perspective. Observation becomes the main data gathering tool for attempting to describe and interpret the world in which the ethnographer's study is located. The discussion now turns to a consideration of the research techniques used in the present study.

clarifying interaction without seeking to influence events. Schatzman and Strauss suggested that this role is acceptable to the group and allows the observer to feel that an intrusion is not being made.

4. Active control - a role in which the observer seeks to control his data gathering activities by such means as formal interviews.
5. Observer as participant - a role in which the observer plays a full part in the life of the group, perhaps as a teacher-researcher.
6. Participation with hidden identity - a role in which the observer appears to identify with the group and carries out observations without revealing this activity to the group.

A number of the aspects of the participant observer's role have been noted in the discussion on advantages and limitations of the technique. There are, however, several other features of which the researcher needs to be aware. Schwartz and Schwartz (1955: 353) have noted that the researcher should be aware of the biases which one brings to the task. Khleif (1974: 393) advised that the researcher must be motivated continually to seek to identify his or her own biases so that their effect on the study is minimised. The researcher's position regarding the notion of objectivity is important in studies employing this method, too. The quantitative researcher seeks to undertake the task in a "sanitised" fashion in which the researcher carefully seeks to have no influence on the behaviour of the subjects. The nature of participant observation makes this stance virtually impossible while the purpose of the technique is that

RESEARCH TECHNIQUES

Introduction

The key technique of the researcher who employs an ethnographic approach is that of participant observation. Ethnographers, however, have at their disposal a range of techniques. The two supporting techniques which were selected for the Manoa College study were informant interviewing and document collection. Pelto (1970: 145) highlighted the value of a range of techniques: "Examining cultural behaviour with a variety of different approaches (techniques) greatly enhances the credibility of research results." In this section of the thesis, the three data gathering techniques are examined while a comment has been added on their use by Wolcott (1973) whose study of a school principal provided the present work with its methodological basis.

Participant Observation

The term "participant observation" has been used by Bogdan and Taylor (1975:5) to refer to:

...research characterized by a period of intense social interaction between the researcher and the subjects, in the milieu of the latter. During this period, data are unobtrusively and systematically collected.

Schwartz and Schwartz (1955: 344) noted, too, that the researcher is in a face-to-face situation with the observed and is, thus, part of the context being observed. The participant observer undertakes the

research task as a member of the group being observed. Bailey (1978: 219) identified four types of observation, each of which differed according to its degree of structure and setting. Bailey's four types included: unstructured laboratory observation, structured laboratory observation, structured observation in a natural setting (for example, the studies of Mintzberg, (1973) Willis (1980) and Schimpf (1979)), and unstructured observation in a natural setting (e.g. Whyte, (1955) Corrigan (1979) and Wolcott (1973)). The Manoa College study can be described as fitting the latter type. The researcher should be aware of the advantages and limitations of participant observation as a research technique.

Advantages and Limitations of Participant Observation

Mintzberg's (1973) observational study of a group of managers is frequently discussed in the literature of school and business administration. This was a study in which Mintzberg spent a week with each of five managers, observing them at work. In reviewing Mintzberg's book reporting the study, Weick commented, "his data base is mundane." However, the reviewer clearly noted the value of that data base and the way in which it was obtained when he summed up the work: "Rarely has the field of organizational behaviour had better evidence of the value of description and induction than is found in Mintzberg's book." (Weick 1974:111)

For the ethnographer, the major advantage of the technique lies in the opportunity which it affords for the researcher, "to secure his data within the mediums,

symbols, and experiential worlds which have meaning to his respondents." (Vidich 1955:354) Wiseman and Aron suggested (1970:53) that this feature gives the technique an in-built validity which arises from the actions of the participant observer and the possibilities which exist for him or her. Schatzman and Strauss (1973: 53) noted that the researcher can see properties as a newcomer which may be lost to insiders while the newcomer strives to maintain a continuing "de novo" sensitivity and appreciation of events. The researcher's sensitivity to his own experience and the ability to capitalise on those sensitivities were viewed as strengths of the method by Schatzman and Strauss. The ability to observe nonverbal behaviour was noted as a strength by Bailey (1978: 215) who stressed, too, that behaviour was able to be observed in its natural setting and over a lengthy period of time if necessary. Dean, Eichhorn and Dean (1969: 20-23) indicated further advantages of the technique which arise from its on-site flexibility: the problem can be reformulated in response to new data, the researcher can ease himself into the field without blundering into it in haste to begin, categories and analysis of data can be developed as the study proceeds, data can be pursued in depth if required, informants can be carefully selected, the researcher is "on hand" to cope with delicate interpersonal situations which might arise, and "the impressions of a field worker are often more reliable for classifying respondents than a rigid index... in a questionnaire." (ibid: 22)

Khleif (1974: 390) noted that the participant observer in a school in his or her own society, at least, is familiar with both language and the society and, therefore, is not subject to culture shock as the study begins. The strengths of the method which

Woods (1977: 42-43) considered to be important centered on the observer sharing in the life of the group and being able to learn about the cultural meanings of the group. Other advantages noted by Lutz and Iannacone (1969: 115-116) included: the flexibility afforded the researcher to shape his or her own role and to move readily between data and theory; the freedom which enables the researcher to explain data; and, the opportunity which the technique provides to identify subjects' categories and perceptions as a source of explanation of the data. Smith concluded:

Such experience makes the "one-shot" case study" label a serious misnomer. Everyday in the field is a new quasi experiment, guided and enriched by an intellectually stimulating environment of persons, supportive and critical; of ideas, mundane and all-encompassing; of chores and opportunities. These events play in and throughout the field experience.

(Smith 1978:339)

It is important that any researcher using the participant observation technique ensures that possible limitations are overcome. Sindell (1969: 601) noted the bias inherent in an overemphasis of observational methods without seeking to determine informant's perceptions. Gaining entry can be a hazardous process as a number of writers have commented. As Scott explained, "higher echelon gateways are perceived quite differently to lower echelon personnel" (1965:274) - meaning that permission from the "top" does not necessarily ensure the co-operation of subjects on lower levels of the hierarchy. Battersby (1980:22) reported his difficulty in gaining permission from an education board when he sought to study beginning teachers and noted, too, the

challenge of gaining the co-operation of the teachers for his observational study. Van Dalen (1973) considered that the observers might have shortcomings in their own makeup: being influenced by their own past knowledge, making incorrect inferences, observing events from the perspective of one's own interests or values and tending to observe what one already knows. Lutz and Iannacone (1969: 117) recognised, too, this susceptibility to his own biases of the researcher during fieldwork and data selection, processing and reporting. The present researcher has commented elsewhere (Edwards 1979b: 250) that the observer becomes party to intimate and sensitive information and the focus on, for example, a school's principal may cause colleagues and children to scrutinise and criticise the individual occupying the main status position in the school. Rainwater and Pittman (1969) have commented on some of the issues which might hinder an observer in a politically sensitive study.

Participant observation is expensive in terms of time, as Lutz and Iannacone (1969: 116) noted; and fatiguing, as Thomas, Willis and Phillipps (1981: 63) concluded; while Mintzberg (1973: 270) noted the hectic pace of the observer's work, as did Wiseman and Aron. (1970: 53). The present researcher found that principals wanted to talk about their work and problems - sometimes at the expense of time observing action. (Edwards 1979b: 250) The passage of time can influence a study (Lutz and Iannacone 1969: 107) as some facts are forgotten while others seem more or less important in retrospect. A study can be affected too, by over-rapport (Miller 1969: 87) and over-familiarity between researcher and subject. Dean, Eichhorn and Dean (1969: 21)

pointed to the difficulty in quantifying data gathered by observation, while it is acknowledged that there are difficulties in making generalisations from the small samples which seem characteristic of observational studies. Observers are not normally able to control the events being observed. (Wiseman and Aron 1970:53) Finally, much data is accumulated by the participant observer but it is impossible to use all such material. The technique, therefore, is expensive in terms of the volume of data which does not reach the final report. (Runkel and McGrath 1972) However, when the limitations of participant observation are recognised and countered, where possible, the technique has clear strengths, as Cusick commented:

As one lives close to a situation, his description and explanation of it have a first-person quality which other methodologies lack. As he continues to live close to and moves deeper into that situation his perceptions have a validity that is simply unapproachable by any so-called standardised method. Likewise, so his reliability, which is an extension of his validity, becomes better. As the researcher is the actual instrument, as he becomes more aware, so he must of necessity become more reliable.

(Cusick 1973: 232)

The Role of Participant Observer

Wolcott (1975a:115) and Duignan (1981: 290) have commented on the researcher as the main data gathering instrument of the study. In fact, the observer fills a number of roles as the main instrument: planning strategies, gathering and processing data, deciding what to gather next. In assuming the role of participant

observer, it is important that the researcher clearly conceptualises the way in which the role will be taken by him or herself. Scott (1969: 272-274) outlined two possible positions - the disguised or the open role. However, other writers have provided wider typologies.

Cicourel (1963: 43) discussed Gold's four theoretically possible roles which ranged on a continuum from complete observer to complete participant with observer-as-participant and participant-as-observer placed within the bounds of the continuum. Bickman's (1976: 263) typology ranged from the observer functioning as a complete participant or participant-as-observer or observer-as-participant or the complete observer. Bickman added a fifth role, "provocateur," in which the researcher seeks to control the research situation and to elicit particular behaviour from subjects. Schatzman and Strauss (1973: 59-63) provided a more useful typology which explains the roles and seems to allow for some possible movement between roles at different stages of a study. Their set of six roles contains:

1. Watching from outside - a role in which the observer watches events in a clinical situation.
2. Passive presence - a role in which the observer is present but does not interact with participants and avoids being involved in events. Schatzman and Strauss suggested that this role is difficult to maintain by both observer and the observed over a long period of time but is useful in the early stages of a study.
3. Limited interaction - a role in which the observer is seen as a "kind of" member of the group but he or she engages only in minimal,

of facilitating some degree of relationship between observer and subjects. Powdermaker explained this relationship:

Involvement is necessary to understand the psychological realities of a culture, that is its meanings for the indigenous members. Detachment is necessary to construct the abstract reality: a network of social relations including the rules and how they function - not necessarily real to the people studied.

(Powdermaker 1966:9)

This notion of detached involvement has been further explained by Khleif (1969: 393) who wrote that the observer might have an attraction to and a repulsion from the group and is a stranger and friend at the same time. Implicit in the relationship is likely to be an element of reciprocity. Malinowski (1922: 4) had his tobacco to share with informants but Scott (1964: 279) raised the question of how the observer can reciprocate when studying a modern organization. His simplest suggestions include a ready ear, an open mind and a willingness to be friendly.

Cicourel (1964: 51) provided clear guidance on the relationship: the observer must "temporarily drop his use of scientific rationalities, yet maintain the scientific attitude when describing the actor's actions." Vidich noted (1955: 356) that the observer remains marginal to the society and Bogdan and Taylor (1975:8-9) advised that the observer remains detached from his or her subjects in a real sense - standing back, not judging but seeking understanding. The deeper the researcher becomes immersed in the group's culture, the

more difficult it is to study it objectively, warned Wiseman and Aron. (1970: 53)

Wilson (1977: 258) described the technique required as being one of "disciplined subjectivity" which, in his view, is as thorough and intrinsically objective as any other kind of research. The observer strives to uncover his subject's perspectives and does this by seeking to empathise with the subjects and to gather, process and interpret his data in careful accord with the requirements of the method.

The presence of an observer means that behaviour is likely to be altered in any social situation - even in very small ways. Vidich (1955: 355) commented: "Whether the field worker is totally, partially or not at all disguised, the respondent forms an image of him and uses that image as a basis of response." The researcher must seek to establish a role to which people will react as normally as possible. The key factor in the establishment of this role lies with the researcher. Cicourel (1964: 42) suggested that the acceptance of the researcher by the group is largely on the basis of the researcher as a person rather than what the project represents. Whyte indicated his view that the person seems more important to one's subjects than the project being undertaken. He wrote:

I soon found that people were developing their own explanation about me: I was writing a book about Cornerville....I found that my acceptance in the district depended on the personal relationships I developed far more than upon any explanations I might give. Whether it was a good thing to write a book about Cornerville depended entirely on people's opinions of me personally. If I was all right, then my project was all right....

(Whyte 1955:300)

Schwartz and Schwartz (1955: 346) termed the process of adjustment by observer and subjects that of "mutual habituation" which gradually occurs and in which, they suggest, it is important that the researcher does not get into conflict situations with the observed; it is equally important that the researcher participates with the observed on a "simply human" level as the one role each shares is that of human being. A feeling of warmth and empathy between people on both sides of the research, the writers suggested, will lessen the psychological distance and communication restraint between the parties:

When the observed become convinced that the observer's attitude toward them is one of respect and interest in them as human beings as well as research subjects, they will feel less need for concealing, withholding or distorting data....the alteration of the situation which ensues from the impact of the observer may be minimized.

(Schwartz and Schwartz 1955:347)

In participant observation, both observer and observed share a common interest in the same group. The difference between each, however, lies in the nature of the work of observer and observed. "Competent research," wrote Lutz and Iannacone, (1969: 117) "requires that the field worker be extensively and carefully trained." Schatzman and Strauss provided a battery of advice for the novice observer:

The researcher is a learner, has patience, is tolerant and sympathetic. He wonders first and judges last... he generally accepts what he sees and hears at face value....He does not visibly take sides on arguments among members....He is open to the discovery of whatever is not so obvious to others. He is most considerate, polite,

but not shy; he is, in fact, rather tough in the sense that he cannot be put off for too long, nor shamed or coerced....He assumes that the hosts would have it no other way.

(Schatzman and Strauss 1973:65)

Wolcott (1970 and 1973) reported that participant observation was his primary methodology when undertaking his study of Ed Bell. Wolcott endeavoured to observe Bell in as many settings as possible and was excluded from only a few "touchy" parent conferences. Wolcott and Bell attended meetings together both inside and outside of the school and Wolcott reported, (1970: 118) "I believe most of his professional colleagues conducted business-as-usual in my presence." The researcher took care to minimise his interaction in the field settings and engaged only in light social banter. Two further methodological issues were reported by Wolcott which should be noted. First, on the issue of reciprocity, Wolcott felt at a loss to have anything to give to Bell as a means of reciprocating the principal's co-operation. However, Wolcott's providing of transport to meetings helped fill this need and provided another setting for discussion. Second, the researcher was anxious not to become over-identified with his subject to the detriment of relationships with other potential informants. Therefore, Wolcott displayed an active interest in other staff members and ensured that he visited the school on days when Ed was absent. The study extended beyond the school as the researcher observed his subject in a range of settings - from professional meetings to service club luncheons, from a family wedding to Ed's teaching of a Sunday School class.

The ethnographer must consider, too, the perspective from which he or she seeks to consider observed behaviour. It is appropriate at this point to consider two possible perspectives.

Two Perspectives for Understanding Human Behaviour

The researcher who makes use of the qualitative techniques of observation of peoples' behaviour in their own settings and who discusses and questions his informants, who come from those settings, endeavours to see things from the perspective of an "insider" or a participant. The intent is to discover and understand the reasons underlying the actions of participants. In the simplest terms, the researcher can look at and talk with people and, then, report what he (the researcher) has seen and discussed. This report portrays the researcher's perspective of people and events. The report may or may not be accurate in its portrayal.

However, and again in simple terms, the researcher can consciously seek to move from his own perspective to seeking to endeavour to discover and understand the view of events which is taken by the informants themselves. Such a perspective requires the researcher to move from the stance, early in the fieldwork days, in which the researcher develops his own meaning and understanding of what he is experiencing and to strive to "see" things as a participant. From this latter perspective comes the true product of ethnography - a presentation of thick description which portrays the meanings and actions of actual participants as distinct from the picture which would be produced by someone simply "looking in" on events as in the first approach outlined above.

Harris clarified the two positions:

To describe the universe of human mental experiences, one must employ operations which are capable of penetrating inside of other people's heads. But to describe body motions and the external effects produced by body motions, it is not necessary to find out what is going on inside of other people's heads...the operations suitable for discovering patterns with respect to what goes on inside of people's heads have come to be known as "emic" operations, while those which are suitable for discovering patterns in the behaviour stream have come to be known as "etic" operations.

(Harris 1976: 329-330)

Harris described the activity which occurs inside people's heads as the thoughts and feelings which human beings experience. The behaviour stream includes the environmental effects and body motions experienced by human beings. This use of two different terms arose from the work of Kenneth Pike who used suffixes from the terms "phonemic" and "phonetic". Pike endeavoured to apply these terms, as used in his inquiries in linguistics, in order to develop an understanding of human behaviour. In the field of linguistics, phonemes are the minimal contrasting sounds present in a language and are able to be simply discriminated between each other in order to determine whether any contrast in the sound changes the meaning given to the sound in the language. If two of the same sounds provide a difference in meaning when used in the same sound context, then both belong to two different classes of phonemes. Different sounds are termed different phonemes because native speakers of the particular language perceive them in contrast with each other when one is substituted for the other. (Harris 1976: 332)

When the observer takes an etic view of events,

Harris stated that interaction between researcher and participant is productive only to the extent that the ideas or explanations existing outside the mind of the participant have been discovered. When the observer takes an emic view of events, Harris stated in contrast, that interaction between researcher and participant is productive to the extent that the ideas or explanations that emerge represent and account for the way in which the participant's mental life organises and explains those ideas and explanations. (Harris 1976: 331). Harris noted, too: "...let me categorically reject any notion of superior or inferior realities associated with emic and etic epistemological notions." (ibid:331) Wilson indicated that an emic perspective is "actor-relevant" and implies that an etic perspective is "observer/researcher-relevant." (Wilson 1977:252)

Schumacher suggested that each perspective might have a part to play at different stages of a research undertaking:

The general framework with which one begins analysis of a given case he (Pike) called "etic." The analysis of the actual system he called "emic." The reconsideration of the general framework in the light of the analysis he called "etic."

(Schumacher 1979: 9)

In the present study, the researcher found himself endeavouring to apply an appropriate perspective at the appropriate time. During the first month in the school, as the researcher sought to find his way around in the school world, relationships with other people tended to be of a surface nature and the researcher gained for himself an orientation toward

the school and the people in it. This, in fact, was an etic perspective in which it was not yet possible to engage closely with people and events and to seek to view those events from the viewpoint of the actual participants in the life of Manoa College. However, this focus moved during the next extensive fieldwork phase when the researcher endeavoured to experience life in a series of arenas at the college. He was trying to experience that life and to gain an insight into the way the participants saw and made sense of Manoa College. The approach was particularly true as the researcher endeavoured to share with Jim Carr the way in which this secondary school principal perceived his school world. Similarly, the final interview phase of the study sought to see from an emic, or actor-relevant perspective, the mental construction of the Manoa College world and its principalship from the viewpoint of people who inhabited Jim Carr's working world. In developing the written ethnography the researcher found himself seeking to use emic images to portray Carr's school world. The use of these emic images provides the answer to the question, "Whose reality is being portrayed?" This is an important question for the ethnographer and one for which the answer must be, "The reality of the participants."

Informant Interviewing

A series of open-ended interviews was undertaken during the present study. Wolcott indicated (1970: 119) that interviews can provide information about institutionalised norms and statuses as well as providing data

about the range of perceptions among a group of people regarding persons and events. During the study of Ed Bell, interviews were conducted with Bell's colleagues and family members. Wolcott thus gained material regarding perceptions and affective content which enabled the researcher to identify illustrative material to "flesh out" his data on the principal. Wolcott did no interviewing until the second half of the year's fieldwork by which time he was fascinated to note that his informants spoke readily about the school's administration and principalship and their own problems and successes.

Interviews have certain advantages. They can be economical of time and can be molded in a flexible way. The interviewer is able to probe for further detail or clarification. These features are especially apparent in open ended interviews which also enable respondents to construct their own responses rather than either selecting from alternatives or being limited in the extent to which a response can be developed. McCall (1969: 133-135) noted some of the limiting features of interviews of which the researcher should be aware: the ability of the respondent to express his or her thoughts in verbal form; the possible desire of a respondent to please the researcher with an answer or to slant an answer in some ulterior way; or, the difficulties of either gaining responses from a respondent who might not talk readily, or, to keep on course the respondent who enjoys a lucid flow of conversation. Dean and Whyte (1958: 1) asked, too, "How do you know if the informant is telling the truth?"

As Kerlinger noted, (1979:309) interviewing can be

a time-consuming process, while Borg and Gall, (1979:309-311) on the other hand, noted that responses may be biased and shallow. However, Borg and Gall, when discussing semi-structured interviews, which are comparable to open-ended interviews, pointed to the value of this type of interview in educational research:

It provides a desirable combination of objectivity and depth, and often permits gathering valuable data that could not be successfully obtained by any other approach.

(Borg and Gall 1979:313)

There are few rules in interviewing according to Bogdan and Taylor (1975:108-117) who noted that the researcher with an understanding of his or her goals, subject and interview situation has wide latitude for the development of the interview. The advice of these writers stresses the requirement for the researcher to be flexible and sensitive, to create an open atmosphere by paying attention, by not making judgments and by carefully monitoring one's own choice of words and response to the answers of the interviewee. Answers can be cross-checked for further clarity and for internal consistency. The key factor in the eliciting of data through respondent interviews lies in the rapport which is established between interviewer and subject. An open-ended interview is likely to be a unique event in itself. Although a basic framework of questions may be followed, the variety of respondents' answers are quite likely to result in the interviewer following different leads with different respondents. Participant observation, of course, regularly involves the technique of informal interviewing as the observer takes part in discussions with his subjects during or close to events which have been observed.

Document Collection

Data of this kind were collected throughout the study and included a wide range of items. Bogdan and Taylor (1975: 96) defined documents as, "an individual's descriptive, first-person account of the whole or part of his or her life or an individual's reflection on a specific event or topic." The writers include data gained from interviewing as well as diaries, letters and autobiographies. For the present research, however, a wider range of materials was included in the category of documents while material gained through interviewing of informants was treated as a separate category of data. Glaser and Strauss (1967: 163) have likened library resources to the voices of informants encountered in the field while McCall (1969b:4) has expressed a similar point of view in which he termed the collection of documents and records related to a study as "informants" or "surrogate observers". McCall's list of potentially useful material is wide: rule books, minutes of meetings, personnel files, diaries, budgetary statements, etc. McCall noted that the use of documents has some limitations, although, on the other hand, they provide historians with major raw material for their research. Zelditch (1969: 9) perceived documents as the products of primary methods of data collection. This, of course, is a minor point but the important thing is that documentary material can prove to be a valuable source of information in an ethnographic study, as Zelditch noted:

Many documents, for example, are essentially informants' accounts and are treated exactly as an informant's account is treated: subjected to the same kinds of internal and

external comparisons, created (sic) with the same suspicions, and often in the end, taken as evidence of what occurred at some time and place from which the investigator was absent. The fact that the account is written is hardly important.

(Zelditch 1969: 9)

McCall and Simmons advised (1969: 63) that diaries, letters and life histories are useful to obtain data such as that which a researcher might seek to gather from direct interviews. Other sources, such as journalistic accounts, reports and statistics can provide factual detail which may not be readily available among informants and may predate informants' involvement in the organization. The chief difficulties which McCall and Simmons note about documentary items is that, "they are usually incomplete, unsystematic, and tantalizing but tangential", (ibid) while their writers are not normally able to be further questioned or probed. McCall and Simmons suggest that documents have value in an ethnographic study although, on balance, they are less able to be controlled than an interview situation in which the fieldworker is able to determine the direction in which the interview should proceed.

In his ethnographic study of Ed Bell, Wolcott reported (1970: 117) that, as part of the data collection mode which he termed "enumeration," a range of documents was gathered. Wolcott collected all official notices published at the school in the same way as staff members by having his own mailbox in the school office. Bell gave Wolcott the collection of daily notices and his personal logbook at the end of

the year and Wolcott had access to reports required by the school district on such features as school attendance. In addition, Wolcott recorded samples of the time and activities of the principal at work and was able to use documentary items to carry out frequency counts of some features of school life.

Bogdan and Taylor suggested a range of document types and noted (1975: 100) that, "the researcher will almost always have to imaginatively and aggressively search them out." Passivity, they suggested, is likely to result in empty-handedness. They warned, too, (ibid: 121) that personal documents should be examined in the light of the context in which they were written as the contents should be regarded as expressing what the writer thought and felt at the time of writing.

Having discussed the research techniques chosen for the study, the writer turns, now, to a consideration of three important technical features which must be addressed in any research undertaking.

TECHNICAL FEATURES

Introduction

Any research undertaking must be concerned with the technical features of reliability, validity and generalisability. In an ethnographic study these features are important but are seen in a somewhat different light from their application to quantitative studies. In this section of the thesis, these technical features are discussed and related to the present study.

Reliability

The issues of reliability and validity are inter-twined but have been separated in order to allow a clear discussion of each concept at this point in the thesis. However, it is important to note that a different perspective of the two concepts is required when they are discussed in relation to an ethnographic study. Reliability and validity are important factors in any study but are perceived differently in quantitative and qualitative studies. Reliability refers to the confidence and trust that somebody reading a research report can have in the way in which the data were gathered. In an ethnographic study, it is important to be able to demonstrate the conditions under which one's observations were made.

Owens (1982: 9-10) has presented a summary of the ways in which the "rationalistic" researcher seeks to ensure that a study is characterised by a high degree of reliability. Quantitative studies, however, seek to

employ the testing of causal relationships of problems developed externally from the research site and to investigate representative samples from which generalisations can be made to other comparable groups. Any group to which is administered, for example, a questionnaire, must be randomly selected on the grounds of specific criteria. The researcher, too, seeks to remain distant from the subjects of the study and may achieve this position by interposing instruments for data collection which minimise any interaction between researcher and subjects. Certainly, the researcher will seek to minimise any personal relationship with the subjects. In addition, the quantitative researcher will seek to control the variables which are likely to impinge on the study. Random selection of subjects from a large population, or a large group of subjects, is seen as a means of obviating the influence of chance or extraneous factors in the same way as the researcher strives to ensure that the conditions, under which data gathering occurs, are standardised for all subjects. Finally, a goal often attributed to quantitative studies is that they should be replicable under similar conditions in order to be able to seek accurate confirmation or difference of results.

Qualitative studies such as ethnography, on the other hand, as LeCompte and Goetz (1982: 33-34) have noted, seek to understand the interplay among variables which exist in a natural context. "Credibility," they noted, "is established by systematically identifying and examining all causal and consequential factors." This process occurs on the spot in a natural setting and, of course, the researcher is unable to control factors within the setting. Researchers such as

ethnographers may consciously avoid the structures of predetermined theoretical positions or hypotheses for testing. Instead, research questions, hypotheses and decisions for the next step in a study will arise as the study proceeds. In determining the reliability of an ethnographic study the researcher must provide the fine detail of the way in which the study was developed, the part played by the researcher and the ways in which data were gathered and processed. In an ethnography, this detail is the key to obtaining a high level of reliability which can be hindered by biases or other influences. The present chapter contains a discussion on the role of the observer and the methods used to obtain data in the study while, in the next chapter and in the "ethnography" section of the thesis, the researcher clearly details the practicalities of undertaking the study. However, as Bogdan and Taylor have written:

On the more positive side, the qualitative researcher employs special techniques to minimise the potential effects of bias in the data collection and analysis stages of the study.

(Bogdan and Taylor 1975: 12)

Throughout the study, the researcher was careful to attend to the issue of reliability and took a number of steps in order to seek a high level of reliability. A summary of those steps follows. First, the researcher perceived himself from the outset as the main data gathering tool for the study - the "main instrument" in Wolcott's terms - (1975a:115) and sought to build the rapport which would enable him to penetrate Jim Carr's school world and to become "at home" and trusted in that world. The researcher had some prior experience in observation (Edwards 1979a) and viewed the first month

of the study as a pilot experience in observation. Bailey (1978:247) has noted the existence of evidence that experienced observers are more reliable than inexperienced ones. Not only was a substantial commitment of time and emotional energy given to the study but the researcher consciously sought to tread a fine line between being an objective observer and a part of the subjective world. The intent was to observe events without endeavouring to exert influence upon them.

Second, the fieldwork phase of the study involved an extensive period on-site throughout the school year of the study and this regular presence allowed the researcher to become progressively more at home in the school situation and more knowledgeable about it. This understanding could not have been achieved by any period of brief contact with the school. Third, as noted, the month of February served, in effect, as a pilot study as it enabled the researcher to experiment with his data gathering and recording techniques and to gain an overview of the field; after which he retired from the field and reconsidered every aspect of the study before proceeding further.

Fourth, all data were systematically gathered and recorded. This was a straightforward task in the case of documents which were collected but was crucial in relation to the subjective data gathered by means of observation and interview. Observations were recorded in written notes and the interviews were tape-recorded after having been carried out late in the year in order that informants would feel willing to talk with the researcher. At no point in the study did the researcher rely on memory: any data which would become part of the study, as a key rule for this researcher, were required to be stored in either written or taped form.

Fifth, the study developed a clear focus after the initial month of fieldwork when the researcher

made the decision to investigate the school world of Jim Carr. This decision focussed the study clearly on the principalship from an early stage of the research.

Sixth, from February to October, the main data gathering technique was by participant observation. However, throughout this period, the researcher became close to the principal and regularly held informal discussions with him; during which observations and emerging ideas were clarified and rapport was further developed. In the final stages of the project - by which time the researcher had become well-known in the school - interviews were conducted with a sample of staff and Board members. By this time the researcher was not seen as a threat in the school and was seen as someone who was able to handle the confidences which had arisen during the study. Nobody who was approached to be interviewed refused the opportunity. The interviews provided a suitable means of cross-checking peoples' perceptions of events and relationships.

Seventh, when the fieldwork phase had just reached its mid-point the researcher had the opportunity to speak about the study in progress (Edwards 1981b) at a conference of teachers of educational administration. The occasion provided valuable feedback during the conference session and in informal discussion afterwards and was a means by which an element of peer input was able to be obtained as people either asked questions about the approach to fieldwork or made suggestions for the coming months in the field. This range of techniques aimed at ensuring reliability would be unlikely to be required in a quantitative study.

The researcher must be concerned, too, with the issue of validity. This is an important point for consideration although, in field studies such as

ethnography, validity is gained to some extent as reliability is established. Lutz and Iannacone (1969) have commented similarly:

Once reliability is established, validity is not so much at question in field studies. As Kerlinger has said when writing about the field study method, "There is no complaint of artificiality here." The observer is viewing the actual behaviour. He is not one-step away from the behaviour as is the case when tests are used to measure perceptions of behaviour. Rather, the field observer is looking at the actual behaviour. In this method, if the data are reliable, they are usually valid.

(Lutz and Iannacone 1969:124)

Validity

Validity is concerned with ensuring that the ideas and propositions which emerge from a study are well-grounded in, and soundly reasoned from, a reliable data base. LeCompte and Goetz (1982: 43) consider that validity may be, in fact, the major strength of ethnography. The main reason for this strength derives from the data collection and analysis techniques which are used by ethnographers. The collection of data by a participant observer who is immersed in the site of the study for extensive periods - when coupled with the continual consideration of the data, collection methods and processing - is regarded as an important source of support for claims of validity. Cronbach (1975: 125) noted, "Intensive local observation goes beyond discipline to an open-eyed, open-minded appreciation of the surprises nature deposits in the investigative nets." Participant observation proceeds

in the natural setting of the participants themselves - settings which contain the reality of life for those people in a more accurate fashion than is the case in a contrived experimental setting. Informants from whom the researcher gains first-hand information are located in their own setting, on their own terms, so that interaction with the researcher is direct and discussion, or questioning, is framed with less abstraction and greater regard for the participants' view of their world. Rather than being a vaguely constructed and highly subjective research activity, ethnographic investigation is characterised by its own thoroughness and discipline. LeCompte and Goetz made the same point:

Finally, ethnographic analysis incorporates a process of researcher self-monitoring, termed disciplined subjectivity, that exposes all phases of the research activity to continual questioning and re-evaluation.

(LeCompte and Goetz 1982: 43)

The ethnographer faces two aspects of the validity issue: first, to ensure that the study has internal validity by which the researcher has actually observed what he or she thought was being observed; and, second, to ensure that the study has external validity by which the observations are used subsequently in an accurate, and well-reasoned manner. The present researcher found that a high level of internal validity was necessary if a similar level of external validity was to be obtained.

Smith (1978: 341-349) outlined a cluster of six dimensions which are significant in assuring the validity of one's data. Smith, first, stressed the major degree of importance which must be attached to direct on-site observation in an ethnographic study.

This is the key feature of an ethnographer's work and the researcher is, therefore, placed directly in the field and in the actual world of his or her subjects. Observing in the field is the main characteristic feature of the work of an ethnographic observer in comparison to that of the researcher in the laboratory or the researcher who gathers data by administering tests, questionnaires, surveys or interviews. In order to gain validity in the field, the researcher faces a number of challenges which range from gaining access to a site, to establishing rapport with one's subjects so that information which is real to them will be forthcoming without distortion or difficulty, to determining the data which will be gathered and the role which the researcher will take in the field. Successful on-site observation is the prerequisite factor for establishing validity in an ethnographic study. Wolcott has commented on the importance of:

...the ethnographer's commitment to being present in person on the scene over an extended period of time as well as to utilizing a number of approaches for gathering information.

(Wolcott 1975a:122)

The main thrust of the researcher's work at Manoa College was given to being at the college whenever possible throughout the school year in order to observe the interactions which were the focus of the study. Bailey (1978) has summed up the significance of on-site observation for the issue of validity:

If a researcher is interested in gathering data on human actions, as opposed to beliefs, values or opinions, direct observation of the act by the researcher would seem to have superior face validity over data collection by questionnaire or document study....Thus, I

think it is safe to generalize that, all other things being equal, observation of an occurrence has greater face validity than a second-hand account....

(Bailey 1978:241-242)

Smith stresses, too, the intensity of the observation experience. Observation is a time-consuming and labour intensive activity and one which demands the researcher's regular presence and mental concentration on the site. This intensity ensures the deepest possible immersion of the researcher in the place in which the study is located and is an aid to coming to know that field in the way in which it is known by participants. As importantly, however, an intense period of observation is necessary for the researcher to follow the nooks and crannies which appear during the study and to observe real behaviour in which people do not act or present a facade to the researcher. The longer and more intensely the researcher is in the field, the more difficult it is for people to hide their usual activities. Again, at Manoa College, the researcher ensured that his observations were frequent in time and intensive in nature. Schumacher (1979: 10) underscored the point: "Extensive observation, meaning the length of time in the field, is a procedure to assure validity of the data." A constraint on the dimension of intensity of observation is that of the capacity of one human being to maintain an intensive programme of observation. A number of factors impinge on this capacity, including: one person's ability to see, hear and record; and, the ability to maintain observation when the researcher may be tired or distracted by difficult physical conditions in which to observe behaviour and to hear what people are saying. Bailey

(1978: 243-244) terms such factors the "adequacy of the human sense organs."

Smith's next dimension is that of freedom of access to the research site, to people in it and to information. This dimension includes the degree to which the researcher is free to observe within the organization itself and the degree to which information is forthcoming from informants. At Manoa College, the researcher negotiated access to almost all situations, while even the confidential section of the meetings of the Board of Governors was accessible. Throughout the year, the researcher consciously worked to establish trusting relationships with his informants and was never refused information by anybody with whom any aspect of the study was discussed. Bailey (1978: 242) noted that, when informants become known to the researcher, there is some danger that information they provide may have some bias. At Manoa College, the researcher remained alert to this possibility throughout the study.

A further dimension raised by Smith is that involving the use of multi methods and triangulation - two concepts which are linked with each other. Smith (1978: 345) identified a range of sources of data and means of gathering that data which the observer has at his or her disposal. This range of sources and techniques enables the researcher to gather data from the differing viewpoints of different informants and to cross-check data which are gathered. "Validity," House wrote, (in Schumacher 1979:11) "is provided by cross-checking different data sources and by testing perceptions against those of participants." Although Jim Carr was the focus of the present study, the researcher observed

him in a wide range of situations and informally throughout the study and - especially in the final months of the study - undertook a series of interviews with other informants to gain their perceptions on the school, its principalship and other events which had been observed. Similarly, as data were processed, the researcher constantly sought to ensure that key points were cross-checked to ensure accuracy. Triangulation became an important procedure for ensuring that data and ideas were valid.

The ethnographer's work, although focussed on the investigation of a single case, is not bereft of sampling. This is another of Smith's dimensions. It is impossible for the researcher to be everywhere at once and it may be similarly difficult to speak with everyone on-site. At Manoa College, therefore, the type of information sought by the researcher determined not only how to obtain that information but also what sources of information should be used. After the first month of the study, for example, a decision was made to observe Jim Carr in a number of situations on a regular basis. The selection of these situations was a sampling decision as the researcher considered that the most accurate picture of this principal's school world would be gained by observing him in that sample of available situations. Similarly, as the fieldwork phase reached its conclusion, a decision was made to interview a selection of staff and Board members. Again, informants were selected on the basis of providing a sample of information.

Smith's final dimension for ensuring validity is that of the observer being aware of the existence of "unobtrusive signs" and "muted cues" as the process of

observation occurs. The important point with this dimension is that the researcher must constantly be looking beyond the obvious actions which are being observed in order to take note of other "snatches" of life which occur or of such features as non-verbal signs or verbal asides made by people during the process of observation. Smith concluded, (1978: 349) "Final reports which don't contain such data seem less significant than those that do."

External validity, which is concerned with the ideas generated in a study being able to be understood or applied by other researchers, is a final, yet very important feature. The quality of the ideas which are generated or "constructed" is an indication of "construct validity" - to use a term discussed by LeCompte and Goetz (1982: 53). Schatzman and Strauss provided clear advice on obtaining validity in this sense:

It means that every proposition uttered - indeed, every declarative sentence - is a datum or derivative of data, that the data are demonstrably empirical, and that they are empirically and logically related to the propositions stated. Even if the propositions are not particularly brilliant, they are grounded and the researcher has found no negative evidence bearing directly upon them. On this, at least, the researcher can rest his case.

(Schatzman and Strauss 1973: 133)

In the present study, the researcher finally rested his case for external validity on the development of thick description using primary data as a basis for the development of grounded theory.

Owens and Wolcott stressed this position. Owens wrote:

In the course of prolonged observation, the investigator will be carefully triangulating, conducting member checks, corroborating information, and collecting referential adequacy materials all for the purpose of developing thick description. This calls for synthesizing, integrating, and relating observations in such a way as to "take the reader there." This is not an easy task....

(Owens, 1982: 15)

Owens noted that the task of constructing thick description is not easy; but Wolcott stressed the importance of the use of primary data:

Finally, I would insist that any ethnographic account should contain a wealth of primary data: actual quotes from informants related in their own words from comments and written documents; stories, myths....I feel that coupled with the obligation on him (the ethnographer) to order and make sense out of his material he is duty bound to present sufficient primary data that his readers have an adequate basis for rendering their own judgments concerning the analysis.

(Wolcott 1975a:124)

In fact, a perfect thick description of a culture is probably unobtainable. Geertz (1975: 17) warned that coherence cannot be the major test of validity for a cultural description. The researcher must seek to portray the participants' reality without forcing that portrayal to an unreal perfection. Geertz explained, "there is nothing so coherent as a paranoid's delusion or a swindler's story." (ibid: 18). The ultimate aim in thick description is to impart the

perceptions of the participants in a social setting. External validity, in effect, must be assessed largely on the degree to which a thick description portrays this reality and is relevant and true to the participants. (Smith 1980: 386)

Generalisability

In quantitative research, an important feature is the degree to which findings can be generalised from the sample population to other populations. In qualitative studies, however, the generalisability of results is unable to be considered in the same light. Forsberg (1974: 100-101) in reviewing Wolcott's (1973) study of Ed Bell, asked how data on the behaviour of one person could allow the researcher to possess adequate background or standards for making judgments and generalisations about many principals or the elementary school principalship. In fact, the question does not apply in studies such as that conducted by Wolcott. As with the Ed Bell study, the present research was conducted for the purpose of learning about a single case. The researcher sought to gain an intimate familiarity with the case of Jim Carr and worked toward being able accurately to describe aspects of Carr's school world and to subject them to analysis and interpretation. In this type of research an extensive knowledge is gained of one case only and it would be almost impossible to defend any claim that the case under investigation was either typical or suitably randomly selected.

Generalisability, therefore, was less a concern for the present study than it would have been had a

statistical approach been taken. Instead, the writer considered that his task was to describe and interpret the school world of Jim Carr as that world was encountered with him by the researcher. The description and interpretation would be available for use by subsequent readers who would be able to weigh their own thoughts and experiences against the "thick description" of Jim's life at Manoa College. A simple practical example of this point would be the secondary school principal who might read the work and encounter an event in Carr's school life and - having considered the description and interpretation - might then ask himself, "How would I have handled that situation had it occurred in my school?" Duignan has expressed the point similarly:

The essential task of the ethnographer, therefore, is not to answer the reader's questions but to make available to him answers derived from an interpretation of the behaviour of others in similar situations.

(Duignan 1981: 295)

In an ethnographic study such as that undertaken at Manoa College, the aim is to understand and present the subject's world intimately. Discoveries which arise may lead to hypotheses for later testing in a broader study but they do not lead to generalisations about other schools or principals. Wolcott commented (1975a:124) that he would be satisfied when another researcher found interest and credibility in his description of Ed Bell and was willing to make further use of it: "That's what these bricks are for," Wolcott wrote. Similarly, Geertz has noted his view that any degree of generality in an ethnographic study stems from the delicacy of the distinctions made in the study rather than in the sweep of the study's abstractions:

...the essential task of theory building here is not to codify abstract realities but to make thick description possible, not to generalise across cases but to generalise within them.

(Geertz 1975: 25-26)

A further concern which arises from the notion of generalisability and which faces the ethnographer is the issue of the replicability of the study. This is a significant consideration in quantitative studies. In the present study the issue was placed to one side as - when working in the subjective world of the social sciences and particularly in a study such as that undertaken at Manoa College - it would not be humanly possible for the study to be replicated. The year in the field could never be recreated at the college itself or replicated at all in any other situation. In setting the issue aside, the writer was keenly aware of two points. The first point was that, as LeCompte and Goetz (1982: 35) noted, no ethnographic study can be replicated because human behaviour is never static and the ethnographic process is personalistic - no two ethnographers are likely to use the same approach. However, the important feature is not the replication of a situation but the possible replication of ideas and constructs which a researcher develops during the study. On the basis of the evidence presented in a study, other readers should be able to replicate or understand the findings developed by the researcher. This feature relates to the second point of which the writer was aware and which LeCompte and Goetz, again, noted:

Comparability and translatability are factors that could contribute to effective generalization in experimental studies;

they are crucial to the application of ethnographic research. Comparability requires that the ethnographer delineate the characteristics of the group studied or constructs generated so clearly that they can serve as a basis for comparison with other like and unlike groups. Translatability assumes that research methods, analytic categories, and characteristics of phenomena and groups are identified so explicitly that comparisons can be conducted confidently.

(LeCompte and Goetz 1982:34)

The Foreshadowed Problem

In Chapter One it was shown that the research problem emerged in the form of a question as the study proceeded. The researcher began with an interest in learning about the administrative operation of Manoa College and, as familiarity with the school and Jim Carr increased, placed a clearer focus on the school world of the principal. Bogdan and Taylor (1975: 26-27) noted that general questions are normal in the early stages of such research undertakings while Schatzman and Strauss made the point even more clearly:

Yet, the field method process of discovery may lead the researcher to his problem after it has lead him through much of the substance in his field. Problem statements are not prerequisite to field research; they may emerge at any point in the research process, even toward the very end.

(Schatzman and Strauss 1973:3)

After the first month in the field, the researcher's focus on Jim Carr gave rise to decisions throughout the rest of the year concerning the nature of the data which

would be required to answer the main research questions and the questions continually arising in the researcher's mind in addition to the ways in which the data would be collected and processed. The problem embodied in the research question was sufficiently broad to allow the researcher to make his decisions on these aspects of the study. The problem itself was, in Malinowski's terms a "foreshadowed" problem. Malinowski wrote:

Good training in theory, and acquaintance with its latest results, is not identical with being burdened with "preconceived ideas." If a man sets out on an expedition, determined to prove certain hypotheses, if he is incapable of changing his views constantly and casting them off ungrudgingly under the pressure of evidence, needless to say his work will be worthless. But the more problems he brings with him into the field, the more he is in the habit of molding his theories according to facts, and of seeing facts in their bearing upon theory, the better he is equipped for the work. Preconceived ideas are pernicious in any scientific work, but foreshadowed problems are the main endowment of a scientific thinker, and these problems are first revealed to the observer by his theoretical studies.

(Malinowski 1922: 8-9)

The present researcher found that, by setting himself a foreshadowed problem, the study of Jim Carr's school world gained a focus but retained an open-ended quality which enhanced the opportunity for inquiry and discovery rather than seeking to prove or disprove any particular theoretical framework which might have been brought to the study. Schumacher (1979: 8) has made the same point while Smith (1978: 331) has noted that the foreshadowed problem represents an initial and partial analysis of the problem. At Manoa College,

the foreshadowed problem guided the choice of appropriate research techniques and provided some limitation to the study. The researcher initially had wanted to learn about the administrative workings of a school. This, in itself, was found to be an enormous task - beyond the abilities and time of the researcher - and the foreshadowed problem ultimately limited the scope of the study to the school world of Jim Carr. Therefore, the study was maintained within reasonable bounds at the same time as it was provided with a central subject for integrating every aspect of the study - from the use of literature to observations to interviews and to presentation of the final report. Wolcott commented on this aspect of the ethnographic approach:

I would hold that ethnography is best served when the researcher feels free to "muddle about" in the field setting and to pursue hunches or to address himself to problems that he deems interesting and worthy of sustained attention....One of the most satisfying aspects of this traditional approach is that one is free to discover what the problem is rather than obliged to pursue an inquiry into a predetermined problem....

(Wolcott 1975a:113)

CONCLUSION

This fourth chapter contained a discussion of the technicalities of the ethnographic approach to research. The research techniques of participant observation, in particular, informant interviewing and document collection were outlined. Then followed a discussion of a series of important technical features of any research undertaking: reliability, validity and generalisability. The chapter concluded with a brief note on another technical feature of ethnographic studies: the foreshadowed problem. This chapter has provided the background knowledge of the methodological technicalities involved in the present study. In the next chapter, the writer presents a discussion of the methodological practicalities involved in undertaking the study of Jim Carr's school world at Manoa College.

CHAPTER FIVEMETHODOLOGY: THE PRACTICALITIES OF THE RESEARCH PROCEDUREINTRODUCTION

Having considered a range of relevant studies and the technical aspects of ethnographic research in previous chapters, the writer presents a detailed account of his research procedures in practice during the Manoa College study. The writer considers it important carefully to indicate the way in which the research was undertaken. Almost all the studies reviewed in Chapter Three contained clear explication of the researchers' methodological procedures. An understanding of the procedures used provides a foundation for an understanding of the thick description which emerges from the application of those procedures in the present study.

In this chapter, the writer discusses the selection of a suitable site in which to locate the study and proceeds to detail each step involved in gaining entry to the school and the cooperation of the people on whom the study would focus. The data gathering techniques are outlined and the writer discusses himself as the researcher. A number of ethical issues are raised - the concepts of anonymity, confidentiality and reciprocity. The writer indicates his data processing procedures and outlines the various problems which were encountered in the field.

SELECTING A SITE FOR THE STUDY

Whereas Wolcott (1973) began his study by seeking to identify a willing and likely subject, the present study - as was noted in Chapter One - began with a broad research problem which was stated in question form, "How does a New Zealand school work and how can these workings be explained?" This question placed the initial emphasis of the study on identifying a school in which the problem could be investigated and refined. The researcher was seeking to undertake a study of a different educational environment from any with which he was experienced or familiar and a decision was made to locate the study in a secondary school as the researcher had no previous experience of teaching, research or administration in such schools.

A number of constraints was placed on the selection of a suitable school. First, the school needed to be at least somewhat typical of New Zealand secondary schools - i.e. coeducational, with an enrolment of 500 to 1000 pupils most of whom would be of Caucasian background, set in an urban location in an area of mixed cost and type of housing and with average rates of pupil and teacher turnover. (Johnson, Adams et al 1977: 16) Second, the administrative operation of the school needed to be able to be studied by a single researcher using on-site, observational methods in the main - methods which would be time consuming for the researcher and which would require regular contact with the school in order to develop the sensitivities necessary for such an approach. The study, then, would certainly be more manageable if located in a school with its own Board of Governors

rather than being a school which shared a Board with other schools. Third, the school must be within reasonable access of the researcher's home and place of work in order that home and work responsibilities could be maintained at the same time as the researcher's remaining time could be spent frequently on-site, as the planned study would be time-consuming in terms of fieldwork. The school needed to be within reasonable access in case the researcher should be called to the school at short notice.

All eight secondary schools within a twenty-five kilometre radius of the researcher's workplace were considered as potential sites. Schools A and B were church affiliated schools with complex links with their governing bodies while one school catered for pupils from Forms 1-7 and the other school had fewer than 500 students. School C was located furthest away from the researcher's workplace and had an enrolment exceeding 1000 pupils. Schools D, E, F and G shared a joint Board of Governors and two of the schools were single sex schools. On initial investigation of the group, a complex pattern of administration emerged. To unravel the anticipated complexities, the researcher considered, would be beyond the scope of a single person. In addition, the researcher found, during informal discussion, that acceptance of the planned project would be unlikely to be readily gained. Schools A to G were removed from the list of possible sites. This left School H, Manoa College, although the college was not selected "by default." In fact, the college was the only school which met all of the criteria for selection: being at least somewhat typical of New Zealand secondary schools, having its own Board of Governors and being within easy access of the researcher's home and workplace.

School H was finally selected as a likely site for the study. For the purposes of this research, the school was given the name "Manoa College" and the city in which the college is located has been called "Farmington."

Gaining Access to the Site

Having been newly arrived in Farmington himself, the researcher was not known at Manoa College and had neither contacts connected with the college nor any prior knowledge of the school. Bogdan and Taylor recommend this position:

...we would recommend that researchers choose settings in which the subjects are strangers to them and in which they have no particular professional knowledge or expertise.

(Bogdan and Taylor 1975:28)

Gaining entry for the study was of crucial importance as it would lead to the establishment of the relationships which would be a cornerstone of the planned research. The phase of gaining entry, therefore, was carefully planned and executed in a series of steps over a period of almost four months in 1980:

Late July: The first approach was made to the school when the writer briefly visited the school seeking to meet the principal at the end of the school day. The principal was absent from school that week, on sick leave. The researcher met the deputy principal and gave a brief explanation of the proposed project. The deputy principal expressed interest in the project and indicated that he would pass the message on to the principal next day. The idea of the project was left with the principal as the school term drew to a close.

September 11: The researcher called at the school

during the vacation and found the principal in his office. The principal introduced himself as Jim Carr and the researcher outlined the intended study and gave assurances that the study was intended to be non-threatening and non-intrusive of staff or pupil time. Jim Carr explained the procedure which would be required for gaining permission from the Board of Governors. "J.C. warmed to the idea and I felt pretty excited about it," the researcher noted in his fieldbook.

September 15: A second visit was made to meet briefly with Jim Carr after school to see whether Jim had any "second thoughts" about the project. The researcher wanted to test any reaction to the meeting several days earlier and to stress that a likely emphasis would be placed on the principalship during the study. Jim was positive about the proposal: "It would be good for us. Any school which can't stand being looked at! As principal, I wouldn't worry. We could learn from it." Jim Carr gave his support to the proposal.

The researcher explained to Carr that he was newly arrived in Farmington, was new to secondary education and explained his own background in education and study - particularly that his 1979 study of five principals had proceeded smoothly. Manoa College, the researcher indicated, was new and innovative and significantly different from other local secondary schools. The researcher was interested in the school as a place in the community and as a community itself and in the administration of the school. He hoped to be able to observe and record in the school -

especially observing the administrative team and key people in the school. Confidentiality would be respected, and people would have the right to veto the researcher's presence in any situation. The researcher would seek permission to make any change in the direction of the study and a general offer was made of help in the school, to which Carr replied, "The better use of your talents will be in the study area of educational administration."

September 26: A direct approach was made to Jeffrey Grey, a Board member who was reported to have an interest in educational research, having completed a post-graduate degree several years previously. The strategy taken was to ask Grey's advice on the approach which might be made to the Board. The Board member was interested in the novelty of the suggested research. He telephoned the Board Chairman during the discussion in order to determine the appropriate procedure which the researcher should follow in order to gain entry to the school and to determine the Board's policy toward granting access for research studies. Grey outlined the Board's policy toward researchers, of confidentiality, non-interruption and regular reporting. "You'll need to convince Don Main before he makes up his mind - in writing. He won't shift," Grey explained.

October 1: The researcher met Don Main, Chairman of the Board of Governors, at Main's home and explained the project. Main was receptive to the idea and indicated that a proposal in writing would be required for the Board meeting in late-October. Jeffrey Grey later indicated to the writer that Main had been impressed with the researcher as a person and by the

purpose of the project. As Whyte (1955: 300) had noted, "Whether it was a good thing... depended entirely on peoples' opinions of me personally."

October 2: The researcher phoned Don Main to ask whether the proposal should be further discussed between the principal and researcher. Main advised, "No."

October 2: The researcher did phone Jim Carr to indicate that he had not been idle with the proposal but had developed the ideas as discussed and that he was becoming aware of some of the political sensitivities. The researcher considered that it would be tactful to keep both Carr and Main informed.

October 3: The researcher finalised his construction of a written proposal, two and one-half pages in length, for later presentation to the Board, as a formal approach. In constructing the proposal, the writer endeavoured to anticipate the questions and criticisms of Board members. The proposal (Appendix I) outlined the nature and intent of the study; the means of data gathering which were planned, the timing of the study, some tentative areas of interest, the writer's personal reasons for undertaking the study, a summary of the writer's relevant background experience and education, a series of guarantees and an indication of the reasons underlying the choice of Manoa College. No grandiose promises were made by the writer in terms of such goals as, "making suggestions which would change the school."

October 3: The proposal was hand delivered by the researcher to the Board Chairman. Don Main indicated

that he would try to get the proposal through the Board at its meeting in the coming week.

October 9: Don Main phoned the researcher to say that the Board had given the proposal its "OK" on the previous night and that he had done some ground-work with the proposal over the weekend with other Board members. The Board would require confidentiality but would allow access to the Part B section of their meetings which were held "in committee".

October 9: The researcher called on Jeffrey Grey and thanked him for his assistance with the proposal. Grey commented, "Don liked it. You did everything correctly."

October 9: The researcher called on Jim Carr, thanked him for his help in having the proposal accepted and reassured him about the planned project. Jim Carr was given a copy of the proposal for his own files and for the school staff. Carr invited the researcher to speak about the project at the next meeting of Heads of Departments. Scott (1969: 274-275) has noted the importance of gaining permission from the top level of management but the danger of being identified with that group by people on lower levels who may well be the subject of the research. It was important, therefore, to gain the cooperation of the departmental heads or "HOD's," as they are commonly termed at Manoa College.

October 14: A letter was received by the researcher from the Board giving their approval to "conduct a survey" in the college. The letter noted:

This is granted to you subject to our Board's usual requirements of strict confidentiality,

regular reporting to the Board and sighting of the final draft before publication.

November 10: The principal arranged for the researcher to speak to the monthly meeting of the college's Heads of Departments, being placed on the agenda for a ten minute section of the meeting. After being introduced early in the meeting, the writer explained his own background (particularly as a teacher in schools) and indicated the project he hoped to undertake, the reasons behind the project and the planned approach. An offer was made to help with school activities should this be desired and possible (e.g. "I am willing to help coach a football team, take a remedial reading group or pull curtains at the school concert if necessary.") The point was made by the writer that the approval of the Board, the school's governing authority, was no guarantee of the project's success. Such approval, if not accepted, too, by the school staff, might be the "kiss of death" for the project. The next 45 minutes were spent answering staff members' questions as openly and honestly as possible. These questions included:

- * How much of our time will you take?
- * Will you want to visit our classrooms?
- * Why did you choose this school?
- * What are you going to actually do in the school?
- * I've been here for three years and I'm only beginning to understand now what goes on here. How can you possibly do this in a series of visits?
- * Who will see the information which you gather?
- * Isn't it a disadvantage not to have taught in a school like this one?
- * How do we know we can trust you?
- * What will you do if any group asks you about something to do with another group or individual?

* Who will have access to your final report?

Finally, the writer detected a feeling of approval was emerging and asked, "Do I detect that I'm getting your support?" The Heads of Department indicated support for the project. In conversation with members of the meeting later, a number of HOD's indicated that they had agreed for a number of reasons. They appreciated the opportunity to ask numerous questions and felt they had been treated as intelligent people. Their suggestions, at the least, had been considered. They felt they had been given a clear indication of the planning and purpose of the project. They felt that the researcher had been honest (and modest) and had not made any rash promises. They had appreciated the offer to help at the school and felt, too, that they might learn something from the study.

The cooperation of all key parties involved in the study had been gained. The Board, the principal and the Heads of Department had agreed to the proposal. It was felt, after informal discussion with some HOD's, that the remaining staff members would cooperate, too.

Throughout the phase of gaining entry, the researcher had carefully sought to present a professional image himself, to reassure people that the study would not interrupt their work and would be non-threatening and treated confidentially. The purpose of the study for the researcher was made clear as was the fact that he had some past experience in this type of research and that the literature showed that few such studies had been undertaken.

The Guarantees

Free access to all situations in the school had been negotiated during this initial phase. In return, all parties concerned had been provided in writing with the same set of guarantees, which are contained in full in the proposal in Appendix I. In summary, the researcher guaranteed to:

- * Work unobtrusively without disrupting the school or such events as staff and Board meetings;
- * Ensure the confidentiality of all information obtained, and its source;
- * Discuss data only with the project's supervisors;
- * Preserve - as far as possible - the identity of the school and all individuals connected with it;
- * Maintain regular contact with the main parties to discuss any queries or anxieties which may arise;
- * Refrain from making any statements concerning the study or the school to the media;
- * Report to the main parties on the completion of the study; and,
- * Gain the permission of interested parties before seeking to publish any aspect of the study beyond the thesis.

The researcher noted, too, that he would not make himself available for the purposes of passing information between individuals or making judgments or giving advice about the workings of the school or anyone connected with it. In addition, although freedom of access had been gained, the researcher indicated that he would leave any situation immediately if asked.

Explaining the Study

Throughout the phase of gaining entry, the researcher had explained the study in this way:

I am interested in studying the administrative operation of a New Zealand secondary school - particularly the emphasis of the school as a small community and its place in the local community. The techniques I want to use are usually used by the anthropologist studying small scale societies. I believe that they are well-suited to learning about a school. The newness of Manoa College, the fact that it has a single Board and the close relationship of the college and the local community are the main reasons for choosing this school. My immediate reason for the study is because its part of a degree programme. I've done some early work on it. I've had previous experience with this type of research when I did my earlier Masters' work. I do know about the sensitive relationships and information in the administration of a school. I do assure you of my interest in working sensitively and not disturbing relationships. I don't know of any other comparable study in Australia or New Zealand. I hope to spend perhaps a year in the school observing people and activities, reading such things as notices and policy statements and, later, interviewing key people. The study will finish at the end of the year.

Further detailed explanation is contained in the proposal itself. (Appendix I)

Early Orientation to the Research Site

November 12 to December 5: The researcher waited for a day before returning to the college so that news of the project could be circulated by HOD's in their departments. During the remaining weeks of the school

year, the researcher spent as much time as possible at the school - being in the staffroom, moving around the school, attending school assemblies, talking with people. The aim was for the researcher to find his way around the school and to become known and accepted. The researcher made a conscious effort to be friendly, open and interested in everything which people discussed with him and to ensure that an impression of being non-threatening was given at all times. Staff members, particularly HOD's, were welcoming and interested in the project. Several HOD's expressed a willingness to be consulted and one HOD noted appreciation of the researcher for being open about the study fitting the requirements for a degree. Olive Sumich, the school's Senior Mistress, was the only person to express any doubt about the study: "I'm anxious that these people aren't used. I'm still not convinced." The researcher offered to talk further with her. In his field notes, however, the researcher commented that the general feeling was, "Great. Let's get on with it." During this time, the researcher read the minutes of the Board of Governors for the previous five years and the school's collection of newspaper items. Both tasks provided the researcher with background knowledge of recorded and reported events in the school's recent history. Later, the researcher began carrying a grey field notebook in order that this item would gain acceptance prior to becoming a prominent "tool" of the researcher when the data gathering phase of the project began the following year. In addition, the staff photograph was purchased as a source of "putting names to faces."

The writer was constantly aware of the sensitive nature of gaining access to, and acceptance in, the

school and establishing one's credibility, developing rapport and being perceived as non-threatening. The researcher was careful to follow the adage of "making haste slowly." At the end of the school year, the researcher noted in his fieldbook some initial impressions. There was a sense of vitality and openness among the staff. One HOD commented, "Our stress is that we are so much involved." Jim Carr seemed to have been equally open with the researcher. Some people who seemed to know more about the school had been identified. The college had an attractive and well cared for environment. On the final day of school, the researcher attended the Christmas morning tea in the staff room.

January 30, 1981: A short visit was made to Jim Carr's office to remind him that the fieldwork would begin when school opened for the new year on the following Monday.

Next, the writer outlines his data gathering techniques and the way in which he undertook the study.

DATA GATHERING TECHNIQUES AND THE UNDERTAKING OF
THE STUDY

Introduction

Duignan (1981: 286) used the phrase "an adventure in interpretive research" when describing his observational study of the administrative behaviour of eight Albertan school superintendents. This phrase embodied an exciting venture into an exploration of unknown domains - an adventure undertaken by observation, description of events and the unravelling of those events by a process of analysis and interpretation. The present researcher found, too, this sense of adventure throughout the Manoa College study. Certainly within the New Zealand context, this was a study of the unknown as the writer was unable to identify any similar study of school life recorded in the literature of New Zealand education. In pursuing the study and constructing a written ethnography, this was the first work of its kind to be undertaken in New Zealand. Duignan noted, too, that this research approach is both an exciting form of research and is, in itself, an exploration. (1981: 296) The school world of Jim Carr proved a world which continually provoked the researcher's interest. No two days, no two events were alike and the researcher found himself eagerly returning to that world on each occasion with a sense of wondering about the events which lay ahead. This excitement continued throughout the fieldwork phase and into the data processing period. At every turn, there were new experiences to observe and undergo, new ideas to explore and new meanings to seek. Coping with the possibilities of exploration was no simple task and fully provided the researcher

with a challenging world at Manoa College and in the subsequent work away from the fieldwork site. Duignan finally commented on the ethnographer being seen sometimes as someone generating only "soft data." (1981:296) However, as he pointed out, the role of the ethnographer entails the incumbent in "wearing a number of hats" as, sometimes the historian, sometimes the psychologist, sometimes the anthropologist but always requiring to be rigorous and consistent in the rules and procedures which are applied. In exploring the world of Jim Carr, the writer consciously sought to achieve and preserve this rigour as will be discussed in the next section.

Selection of the Data Gathering Techniques

In deciding that the initial statement of the research problem could best be answered by the use of an ethnographic approach on the part of the researcher, a consequent decision was made to use participant observation as the main means of gathering data in the field. This technique was common to all the qualitative studies reviewed in Chapter Three. However, the researcher needed to be sure that the technique was most appropriate to the kinds of information which were to be sought and that supplementary techniques would be used where necessary, too. Trow, when commenting on Becker and Geer's (1957) comparison favouring participant observation as a superior technique to that of interviewing, asked a series of questions which should guide the choice of appropriate data gathering techniques:

What kinds of problems are best studied through what kinds of methods; what kinds

of insights and understandings seem to arise out of the analysis of different kinds of data; how can the various methods at our disposal complement one another?

(Trow 1969:333)

Trow's message was that the kind of information sought is the factor which ultimately dictates the kind of technique which should be used. Zelditch (1969) considered three types of information and three types of method for acquiring that information. On the basis of two criteria of "goodness" - informational adequacy and efficiency - he cross-referenced the information and method types. At Manoa College it was decided that three types of information would be needed in order to address the research problem:

1. Descriptions of events, interactions between people, conversations and explanations gathered from subjects;
2. Opinions, judgments and explanations of individual subjects; and,
3. Written policy statements, reports, sets of minutes and tables of figures.

Zelditch (1969: 17) indicated that these three information types could best be gathered by three different techniques:

1. "Descriptive" material by participant observation;
2. "Opinion" material by informant interviews; and
3. "Written" material by enumeration and samples - a term which the researcher considered would be indicated more suitably as "document collection."

Therefore, on the basis of Zelditch's criteria of information adequacy and efficiency of obtaining that information, the use of these three data gathering

techniques was confirmed. Their use will be discussed at this juncture.

Participant Observation

Participant observation was used as the main data gathering technique as it was the most suitable method which would allow the researcher to become immersed in the lives of the people who participated in Jim Carr's world and to observe the situations in which those people interacted. This proved to be the case. Participant observation allowed the researcher to view the people in Jim's school world, to see them in a range of school locations, to talk with them, to get to know them, to share their experiences, their anxieties, their joys. The researcher was able to view and be part of Jim Carr's school world at regular intervals throughout a whole school year. In particular, the researcher was able to view Jim's school world in as full a means as possible - the people with whom he interacted and the areas in which he functioned; as well as to gain an understanding of Jim's thoughts on many topics - the way he saw things, the way he constructed his own reality - as far as this is humanly possible to be done by another person.

The type of observation which was used was termed "unstructured" observation by Bailey (1978: 219-222) and is useful when the observer seeks to become part of the culture being studied. Unstructured observation, Bailey considered, was suitable for use in a natural setting in which the researcher was not attempting to impose a firm structure on the setting and in which participant observation was the main data gathering technique.

The method was appropriate at Manoa College where the researcher was not seen as having any personal stake in the school. Whereas the people who inhabit Manoa College are bound intimately in some way with the college, the researcher's "career, status, friendships, past, future, and self-definition (were) not directly intertwined with the settings being studied." (Bogdan and Taylor 1975: 5-6) In a sense, this being "in" but not "of" the situation is advantageous for the observer. Participants themselves might take for granted many aspects of life in the school and may be so bound up with the school that they are unable to "stand back" and comprehend the perspectives of other participants. Also, the researcher, when in the field, was able to devote all his attention, time and energy to his observations, free of the constraints which would press on participants as they would be required to undertake their various tasks in the school. Bogdan and Taylor considered that participant observation was different to simple observation as a participant-as-the-researcher is more systematic in observing, recording and concentrating on the detail of events and language. Participant observers are free to observe rather than having to undertake any other responsibilities or tasks at the same time.

The Process of Observation

In undertaking his observations the researcher set himself a series of guidelines:

1. To arrive before the event to be observed was due to begin;

2. To position himself as near to the action as possible, yet being able to observe everybody involved in the event;
3. To endeavour not to become involved in the activity under observation apart from informal discussion or greetings at the beginning and end of the event;
4. To record as rapidly and as faithfully as possible what the observer could see was happening in the event - including direct transcriptions of language used; and,
5. To pay close attention to the event being observed.

These guidelines ensured flexibility in observing, concentration on the event, immediate recording of the observer's notes and freedom from participating in or influencing the event being observed.

During the year, the observer filled thirteen field-books, each of 90 pages length with each page being 15 centimetres wide and 21 centimetres deep. During events such as meetings or when following Jim Carr the observer noted by each recorded item the time showing on his watch. For each event, the abbreviation used for each participant was noted alongside any data relevant to that person. The notes included the abbreviations for each person present. In total, the fieldbook pages amounted to 1184 pages of recorded observations. The fieldbooks themselves were slim volumes, light grey in colour and were intended to be unobtrusive in their appearance. While making his observations, the researcher had to focus intense concentration on the event being observed yet allowing

himself flexibility to notice the aside comments made by people or the responses of people in the situation. The prime focus of attention as the year progressed became Jim Carr. A fieldbook entry sample is included in Appendix II.

The Role of the Observer

Already in this chapter, and in the previous chapter, a number of aspects relating to the role of the observer have been indicated. However, it is necessary to precisely address this topic on its own. The researcher found that he had stated a clear position on his role right from the day of the first approach to Jim Carr. The distinction between participating in order to establish rapport with one's subjects and participating in the events being observed might sometimes be considered as a blurred or fine distinction. On reflection, the writer considers that, at Manoa College, the two aspects of the observer's role were successfully kept separate. The researcher painstakingly pursued a quest for an open relationships with his subjects and particularly with those people who became key informants. However, during the observation of any event the researcher was careful to function only as an observer. Wilson (1977: 258) described this position as "disciplined subjectivity." On almost every occasion, the subjects did not attempt to draw the researcher into the event. One such occasion is reported in Chapter Seven. This is not to say that occasional reference would not be made to the researcher. This did occur sometimes and on these occasions the researcher simply smiled or commented

blandly and returned his attention to his fieldbook. As a fellow human being the researcher must offer some response when he or she receives attention or comment from the subjects. Any "wooden" or bureaucratic response would be likely to lessen the openness of the relationship between observer and observed. Wolcott similarly (1970:119) engaged in light social banter but minimised his interaction in the observation settings. Bogdan and Taylor provided simple but clear advice:

...the observer must remember that his or her primary purpose is to collect data. Any participation which interferes with the ability to do this should be avoided.

(Bogdan and Taylor 1975:51)

In their typology of participant observer stances, Schatzman and Strauss (1973:59-60) discussed the roles of observer as "passive presence" and as "limited interaction." The former role, they noted, is useful in the early stages of the project when the observer is becoming orientated and does not want to interrupt what seems to be serious proceedings. However, the role is difficult to sustain as subjects begin to feel "watched" and do not know what is being "done" to them. "They want to be observed by a partly known person, not by a stranger," noted Schatzman and Strauss. (1973:60) The present researcher began in this role in the early days of the study but soon found himself shifting to the latter role. With a role involving warmth of rapport and ready access to data, the researcher felt comfortable in the limited interaction which occurred. In staffroom settings, he sat among the teachers and in all smaller group meetings he was included in the circle of participants. Don Main was the first person to facilitate this

position at the February meeting of the Board when - as the researcher moved to a chair just behind the circle of Board members - Main invited him to sit in the circle in order to feel part of the Board. Main's invitation proved to be correct as the researcher did gain the feeling of being involved in the Board's proceedings. However, on the concept of objectivity, he was careful not to seek to influence events, but, rather, to observe the events in which the participants were involved.

Effect of the Observer on the Observed

Vidich (1955:81) considered that the observer remained marginal to the society being studied, should not commit his allegiance to any particular group and should keep his identity vague. The present researcher did not accept this last point but was careful not to become identified with any particular individual or group. When the focus of the study moved precisely to Jim Carr, the researcher was careful not to spend all his time with Carr or to portray only an interest in him.

An ethnographic study which occurs over an extensive period of time also means that people are less likely to be able to retain any false position which they may wish to present. The clearest example of this point during the study occurred during the inspection phase in February when the researcher arranged to shadow Jim Carr for a day. On arrival at the school at the agreed time of 7.30 a.m., the researcher found that Jim had arrived earlier and then proceeded to spend the day taking the researcher on a "Cook's tour" of the school and the principalship in an effort to show all the

activities which a principal should do, and during which Jim played the role of a principal. In contrast, by October when the researcher again arranged to follow Jim for a week, both observer and observed were confident in the relationship between each other while the constant press of events during the week made it impossible for Jim to structure the situation. The result was a reliable observation of a week in Jim's school world. Other groups such as the Board of Governors or HOD's had sufficiently full agendas which ensured that their work had to be done without attention to the observer. Rather, "business as usual" continued.

The Background of the Observer

The observer came from a professional background in education although he had no previous experience in secondary education. His post-graduate studies were in anthropology and educational administration. His past research experience had involved a case study of members of a Pacific Islanders' church in a New Zealand city during which ten church members were interviewed in their homes. (Edwards, 1973) The study of five principals (Edwards 1979a) was discussed in Chapter Three. In this study, the researcher used observation and interview techniques as the major means of gathering data on the work of the sample principals. The study pointed up the potential of observation as a means of effectively gathering data concerning the principalship.

As a person, the researcher had found himself to be interested in people and the ways in which they function in their daily lives. As the research

problem was developed, the researcher felt keen to try to penetrate and understand the world of a secondary school principal in a descriptive and interpretive fashion without recourse to statistical computations and numerous pages of charts. The personal challenge felt by the writer was to bring to life Jim Carr's school world as it is experienced and viewed by Carr himself. It should be noted that the researcher was not able to locate himself full-time at Manoa College during the school year as his own work responsibilities continued while the study was in progress. However, the fieldwork was made possible by the researcher's flexible work schedule which enabled him to be on-site almost whenever he wanted. This was particularly true of the early and late months of the year. The researcher has noted earlier that he was newly arrived in Farmington and was not known by anybody at Manoa College.

Informant Interviews

At Manoa College, a series of informant interviews were conducted for a different purpose to the informal day-by-day discussions and in a different manner. The interviews were intended to gather explanations and opinions from a sample of people who participated in Jim Carr's school world. This activity provided the opportunity for the researcher to clarify a number of points, to hear the perspectives of a number of individuals, to cross-check some of the events which had been recorded during the observations and to seek answers to the questions which had been developed during the earlier phases of the study. Apart from an extensive interview with Jim Carr early in the study,

all other interviews were conducted at the end of the fieldwork phase. The reason for leaving the informant interviews until the final portion of the year was that the researcher wanted to ensure that, by the time he sought to conduct the interviews, he would be well-accepted in the college. He would be more likely to obtain honest responses to questions which would be likely to touch on intimate and controversial aspects of the administration of Manoa College. When the interview programme was formulated there were no refusals to participate by any of the informants who were approached. The sample of informants who were interviewed is listed in Appendix III.

The informant interviews were designed to enable a sample of staff and Board members to provide their perceptions of certain events and people which had formed the basis of the observations in the earlier part of the year. Each interview followed a set of predetermined questions but allowed individuals to respond in their own manner. Some responses were brief, others came at considerable length. The researcher was required to monitor carefully the response procedure and to determine on-the-spot whether it was appropriate to move the respondent to the next question or to probe further or to simply allow the answer to develop. The respondent interviews were tape-recorded, apart from a single case where the respondent expressed a preference that written notes be made rather than being taped. The framework of questions used during the informant interviews is listed in Appendix IV.

Document Collection

The study at Manoa College produced a large and varied collection of items for the researcher. These items were carefully coded and filed. In brief, the writer collected such items as memoranda to staff and pupils, minutes of meetings of a range of groups involved in the administration of the school, Jim Carr's diary for the year, the annual school magazine and an account of the early days of the school written by one of the teachers. Some items provided interesting background material while minutes of meetings, for example, provided a means of cross-checking some aspects of the meetings with the entries made in the field notebooks. In addition, the writer gained access at an early stage of the study to the school's collection of newspaper items which had been built up over the years and to the complete set of minutes for all past meetings of the Board of Governors.

A study such as that undertaken at Manoa College raises certain ethical issues which must be considered by the researcher. These issues will be addressed in the next section of the thesis.

ETHICAL ISSUES UNDERLYING THE STUDYIntroduction

Bogdan and Taylor (1975: 30) cautioned that, "Research in the field will always involve the researcher in a great deal of soul-searching and negotiation." The following examples illustrate the point. The researcher found it necessary, constantly, to monitor his daily conversations either at home or with friends or colleagues in order to exclude from discussion any experience or knowledge which may be confidential or damaging to Manoa College or people connected with the school. The researcher was keenly aware, too, that his observations and interviewing would be likely to cause people in the school to look more closely than they might ordinarily look at individuals such as Jim Carr and Don Main or groups such as the Board and perhaps could lead to criticism or dissatisfaction with those people or groups.

Subjects in an ethnographic study do expose themselves to the scrutiny and gaze of their colleagues. In his negotiations with the various parties involved in gaining access and co-operation, the researcher was careful to ensure both freedom of access to data and to ensure that individuals would not be hurt by the study. Continuous tact and sensitivity were required, as Woods noted:

More generally, ethical problems in participant observation cannot be solved by fiat. The pathways to information and understanding are opened up by trust, and the uses the researcher makes of it are safe-guarded by that quality. In other words, if people were

not very confident that you would put the information to good use, they would block your access to it.

(Woods 1977:45)

Anonymity and Confidentiality

Researchers using ethnographic approaches for studying small groups of people commonly seek to cover the identities of their subjects and their communities. Whyte (1955) located his study in "Cornerville," Wolcott (1973) studied "Ed Bell," Lacey's (1970) study took place at "Hightown Grammar" and the present writer's earlier study (Edwards 1979a) was located in "Waimea," a suburb of "Cobham," a major New Zealand city. In like fashion, the present study was located in "Manoa College", a secondary school in "Farmington," a provincial city in New Zealand. Of course, these are not the real names of either school or city. The names of all people involved in the study have been changed and no pattern of naming was used for this purpose. The naming of subjects in this study has been undertaken at random. The intent, of course, is that no individual can be identified.

However, in a small country like New Zealand, the issue of anonymity is very real. It is almost impossible to ensure that people and places cannot be identified. This is especially true of subjects who fill key roles in an organization. While readers are extremely unlikely to be able to identify Whyte's "Doc" or Wolcott's "Ed," this case is difficult to guarantee conclusively in a small country. In this regard, the passage of time is

helpful - people move on, some events fade in the memory. This researcher has found that the ethnographer treads a very fragile path - the more so when subjects "open up" to him and provide very sensitive information. During the fieldwork phase, the researcher guaranteed neither to divulge sources of information nor to pass information from one person to another nor to speak to the media. Bogdan and Taylor (1975: 36-37) support these actions and caution that the researcher must guard carefully his or her field notes. The study at Manoa College has been restricted to this thesis. Apart from discussing the methodology with colleagues in academic situations, the researcher has kept to his guarantee of not discussing the substance of the study with anybody outside his individual subjects. However, in presenting his data, he has striven to ensure that only items actually recorded in the field notes have been used and that all data have been used sensitively. In some instances, quotes from the field notes have not been attributed to any specific individual. Whether or not a name has been used has depended on whether its use was important to the story being told. However, as the ethnography shows clearly, some events themselves are sensitive in nature and some people are difficult to disguise. At Manoa College, the concept of confidentiality was stressed, particularly as a condition of the Board of Governors giving its permission for the study to proceed.

Becker (1969) discussed the issue at length and in conjunction with a selection of actual examples from the literature. His advice was:

Briefly, it is that one should refrain from publishing items of fact or conclusions that are not necessary to one's argument

or that would cause suffering out of proportion to the scientific gain of making them public.

(Becker 1969:275)

Becker explained that his position suggested that the researcher must be able to give himself good reasons for including potentially harmful material and that he must know enough about the situation he has studied to know whether suffering will be proportional to the possible gains in knowledge of including sensitive or embarrassing material. The study at Manoa College did produce some sensitive material - some items have been able to be subsumed under other categories of items so that no problem occurred in using the data. During the fieldwork phase, the writer had no difficulty coping with the confidentiality issue. His guarantees were clear and he was able to act on them. However, in constructing the ethnography, the guideline followed was that outlined by Becker.

Reciprocity

The researcher sometimes felt uncomfortably like a "peeping Tom" - he was always watching people and was frequently on the site, yet not contributing to the life of the school. Wolcott (1970: 119) reported the same feeling and his efforts to show an interest in the people at Ed Bell's school, while he sometimes provided transport for Ed. At Manoa College, the researcher endeavoured, always, to take a genuine interest in the things which people were doing and discussing, to be friendly and cheerful and to do little things whenever possible. After meetings, he would help to replace the chairs and tables in their

correct positions, to collect the cups and take them to the kitchen. At the school swimming sports he spent the day as a timekeeper. On all occasions he tried not to make demands on people and to appreciate the time people spent with him. These points were particularly heightened in the case of Jim Carr who, in effect, was the key informant in the study. With Jim, it was important not to be demanding of his time and to relate to him on the level of a colleague. It was important with Jim to be a good listener and to share experiences. In fact, the relationship with Jim was a positive feature of the study. He proved always to be ready to share every aspect of his school world with the researcher and willingly discussed all manner of personal topics. For his part, the researcher provided an interested, ready and appreciative ear for discussions with Jim. At no point did either Jim or the researcher violate the observer-observed relationship which had been established during their first meeting in the previous September.

The discussion now turns to the phases involved in undertaking the study.

PHASES INVOLVED IN UNDERTAKING THE STUDY

Introduction

Herbert Blumer (1969:39-40) asked a deceptively simple question but one which faces every researcher undertaking a study such as the one at Manoa College: "How does one get close to the empirical social world and dig deeply into it?" In answering his own question, Blumer noted that the technique is not simply a case of "just approaching a given area and looking at it." Rather, he considered:

It is a tough job requiring a high order of careful and honest probing, creative yet disciplined imagination, resourcefulness and flexibility in study, pondering over what one is finding, and a constant readiness to test and recast one's views and images of the area... It is not "soft" study merely because it does not use quantitative procedure or follow a pre-mapped scientific protocol.

(Blumer 1969:40)

Blumer noted that such inquiry has two fundamental parts, each of which distinguishes the procedure required for the direct naturalistic approach to studying the empirical social world: exploration and inspection. (Blumer 1969:40-48)

The Fieldwork Phases

The exploration mode of inquiry has two intertwined objectives. First, the researcher endeavours to gain an intimate and deep understanding with the new area of social life on which his attention is focussed. Second, the researcher shapes and sharpens his inquiry so that his problems, directions of inquiry, data gathering and thinking arise from, and

remain grounded in, the empirical life of the study. The emphasis in exploration is placed on flexibility as the researcher shifts his emphasis, moves in new directions, seeks new relevant data as he responds to the social world under consideration and becomes more familiar with it. The data should be meticulously recorded in detail for later use. Exploration, therefore, seeks to develop as comprehensive and accurate a picture as possible of the area of study in order that the researcher is at home and knowledgeable in the area.

By inspection Blumer meant an intensive, focussed examination of the empirical content emerging in the study. The researcher undertakes this examination of the analytical elements "in a variety of different ways, viewing it from a variety of different angles, asking many questions of it..." (Blumer 1969: 44) From the degree of intimacy and understanding of the situation gained during exploration, the researcher is in a suitable position to ask meaningful and relevant questions, to pose real problems and to seek significant data rather than becoming involved in an artificial exercise. The picture developed of an area's social life through the phase of effective exploration should identify an analytical element, or set of elements, which can be examined in greater depth during Blumer's inspection phase. Blumer's approach, of course, sits comfortably with the concept of grounded theory which is the outcome of the periods of exploration and inspection.

The fieldwork section of this study - during which data were gathered on site - occurred in two distinct

phases which paralleled Blumer's two modes of inquiry. The exploration began when the fieldworker entered the school at the beginning of Term I, 1981, and continued through the month of February. This four-week period allowed the researcher to view the school and its administrative operation from a broad perspective. At the same time, the researcher was able to range freely through the school in order to become familiar with the empirical social world in which the study was being developed and to get to know the people whose daily lives were part of that world. Scott (1965: 277) advised that the observer should concentrate on building relationships rather than gathering data during the initial stages.

At the end of February, the researcher left the field and took time to reflect on his observations of the previous month in order to develop a clearer and sharper focus for the study. The research problem was identified and a series of decisions were made which would allow intensive study of the problem during the remaining ten months of the school year.

The exploration phase during February provided a clearly focussed research problem and a series of decisions which would guide the next phase of the study. In fact, the inspection phase continued from March until the end of the school year in December. The researcher sub-divided the phase into two sections. First, from March to November, the focus was placed on the principal's school world and the researcher began to address the questions raised at the end of February, the selected arenas which would be observed and the beginnings of some theoretical

ideas. Throughout this section of the inspection phase the researcher was developing further ideas and questions and refining his theoretical ideas in preparation for the second section of the phase when, for a week in October, Jim Carr was closely shadowed in his school world for the purpose of testing the ideas which had been developed during the earlier section of the phase. Further question development and refinement of ideas then took place. At the end of this section, informant interviews were undertaken as a means of cross-checking viewpoints of subjects and ideas which had been developed during the study. Finally, a set of propositions concerning Jim Carr's school world emerged. This process through the various phases and their parts is shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF PHASES IN THE RESEARCH PROGRAMME

<p>Exploration</p>		<p>Inspection 1</p>	<p>Inspection 2</p>
<p>Immersion at Manoa College</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * free-ranging * broad focus (February) <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p>Understanding and familiarity Questions Tentative ideas</p>	<p>Jim Carr's school world</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * events * arenas * incidents * people <p>(March to November)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p>Commentary Questions Refinement of ideas</p>	<p>Shadowing Jim Carr</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * the principalship in action (October) <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p>Informant Interviews</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * cross-checking * perspectives * opinions <p>(November - December)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p>Commentary Questions Refinement of ideas</p>	<p>Commentary Propositions</p>

A NOTE ON THE PROCESSING OF DATA

During fieldwork, the observer carried three differently coloured pens. Observation notes were recorded in blue while the red pen was used for adding notes relating to aspects of the methodological approach and a green pen was used for making substantive notes or questions relating to the ideas being developed during the study. These notes corresponded to Schatzman and Strauss's (1973: 99) "ON's," (observational notes) "MN's" (methodological notes) and "TN's" (substantive notes). The authors (ibid: 109) defined analysis as "the working of thought processes" and explained that this is best done on a sequential basis of using the ideas recorded as theoretical notes as the basis of further questioning and examination in a search to identify classes or properties of, for example, people and events and linkages between such classes and properties. This is the process of developing grounded theory. The data are used or examined, Schatzman and Strauss suggested, (1973: 117-121) by "conceptual leveraging" in which the researcher seeks to "pry loose a good story" and to "interrogate the data." The present researcher found himself regularly reflecting on the data which had been gathered and re-reading the field books in a search for questions and ideas to consider further. He found himself referring to the process as "teasing the data" in order to draw out the strands which would ultimately become his story.

This development of cognitive ideas is not, then, a haphazard process. Taba, (1967) in her work on social studies teaching, commented:

The quantity and quality of the concepts and ideas an individual can use seem to depend on the quantity and quality of stimulation he has had, plus the amount of time he has put into active thinking. In other words, the effectiveness with which an individual thinks depends largely on the kind of "thinking experiences" he has had...Of special relevance is the idea that thought matures through a progressive and active organization and reorganization of the conceptual structures. At the moment an individual receives information, he fits it into the conceptual scheme he then possesses. However, when the requirements of the situation do not fit his current conceptual scheme, the individual is forced to alter or extend it to accommodate new information.

(Taba 1967:87-89)

In the ethnography the writer will explain more fully in each section the means by which the data used were processed. However, the basis of the process followed a blend of Taba's and Schatzman and Strauss's approaches. The researcher sought to identify classes and properties in his data and, as groups were formed, to label them and, then, seek to explain the groups and, so, interpret their meaning. Such a process, in fact, provided the only means of reducing and making comprehensible the mass of data which was collected.

Before proceeding to use the data in the construction of the ethnography sections of the thesis, the writer now pauses in order to summarise the problems faced in undertaking the fieldwork at Manoa College.

PROBLEMS OCCURRING IN THE FIELD

During the fieldwork phase of the study a number of problems or issues arose with regard to logistical and ethical aspects of the study as well as with the people involved - sometimes the subjects, sometimes in the strains and anxieties of the researcher. The problems and their solutions are presented here in summary form:

<u>Problem</u>	<u>Solution</u>
Being able to make legible notes in a fieldbook balanced on one's knee and without someone else looking over the shoulder.	Arriving early to find a chair with an armrest and placing the chair on a slight angle away from the person nearest the field book.
Identifying the individual people when moving between one's own work place and the research site so that one is constantly moving between two distinct "worlds" - especially difficult after vacation breaks.	Carrying a staff photograph in the fieldbook as a bookmark; constantly seeking to mentally identify people in group situations; addressing people by name as much as possible
Determining the occasion when somebody may be deliberately structuring information which they want the researcher to hear or see.	Meeting people unannounced; tactfully cross-checking facts in later conversations; listening without comment.
Pursuing the task in the face of competing pressures to be elsewhere or when an event seemed dull or appeared to have little potential for contributing new information or understanding.	Making oneself doggedly keep to the task; being reinforced or rewarded when something unexpected happened.

<u>Problem</u>	<u>Solution</u>
Coping with tiredness during a late evening meeting after a long day in the field when subjects are visibly tiring and "switching off" and the researcher seems to be the only person working.	Moving one's limbs unobtrusively; consciously focussing attention on each speaker.
Discerning the times when it may be inappropriate to make notes.	Being aware of the nature of each situation for the actual participants by being alert for moments of interpersonal stress or tension. These situations provide the researcher with a feeling of his "not just fooling around" but being in a privileged position.
Making accurate transcripts of rapid conversations or events.	Writing as fast as possible, even if roughly, in order to record the factual essence, at least; cross-checking by asking other people later; not relying on memory but realising that every entry must make sense even years later or it is unable to be used.
Keeping up with rapidly occurring events in a complex and busy school.	Ensuring that you are never away from the site for very long; keeping in touch with the school and with as many of the subjects as possible by being with them on-site and always talking to them if met "up the street" or anywhere else away from school.
Wondering what you are missing when you are not there.	Ensuring that you are there as much as possible!

Problem

Answering questions when asked for opinions or advice and, so, changing your role as a participant observer.

Restraining from offering opinions when you, the researcher, are really keen to share knowledge or provide a correct explanation.

Feeling pressed for time on-site.

Solution

Showing an interest in the item with a smile and a bland comment, "Gee, its very interesting." If really pressed for an answer, providing a simple, factual answer perhaps suggesting several courses of action.

Consciously keeping a curb on one's tongue - this feeling happens frequently.

Being prepared before making the visit; having everything ready; reviewing fieldbook notes to refresh the memory of what happened last time; writing any special questions for attention today on a small pink card used as a page marker.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter the writer discussed the practicalities of undertaking the study at Manoa College. The identification of and gaining access to the school were detailed as important first steps in the study. The data gathering techniques were discussed and the writer noted his own part as a tool in the research process. The ethical issues addressed in the study were outlined - confidentiality and anonymity and reciprocity between observer and observed - and the fieldwork phases were summarised. The writer concluded by outlining the approach taken to processing the data. He also provided twelve brief examples of methodological problems encountered in the field and his solutions to them.

The following chapter contains the first section of the ethnography; "telling the story" of the first month in the field at Manoa College and detailing the questions and ideas which emerged from that phase of the study.