Part One

The Methodology
What is Ethnography?

When Hermes took the post of messenger of the goods, he promised Zeus not to lie. He did not promise to tell the whole truth. Zeus understood. The ethnographer has not.

Vincent Crapanzano, 1986: 53

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

● To gain an overview of what constitutes ethnography.

● To understand the difference between attitude and behavior.

● To grasp the main characteristics of ethnographic methodology.

● To understand the advantages and drawbacks of ethnographic methodology.

● To get a general idea of its historical development.

● To identify the main methodological differences between doing an ethnography in sociology and in classical anthropology.

1.1 Introduction

Most forms of knowledge are situated. They arise from certain people, for certain purposes, in a certain historical period whose features they reflect, including its stereotypes and prejudices. Ethnography is therefore not immune to this tendency.

Ethnography is a methodology with more than 100 years of history. It arose in the Western world as a form of knowledge about distant cultures (typically non-Western ones) which were impenetrable to analysis consisting only of fleeting contact or brief conversations. Despite its good intentions (to gain deeper understanding), ethnography is still a colonial method that must be . . . de-colonialized. And you, students in every part of the world, can make a crucial contribution to that end.
Ethnography is gaining increasing currency in social research and applied research, and it may become a mass phenomenon in the years to come. Why? Because we now live in the ‘observation society’ (see Chapter 17).

The purpose of this first chapter is to define the concept of ethnography, to outline its advantages and drawbacks and to outline the tasks of ethnographic research in contemporary societies.

1.2 An overview of ethnography

Read the following two passages carefully.

‘SECONDARY ADJUSTMENTS’
The first thing to note is the prevalence of make-do’s. In every social establishment participants use available artifacts in a manner and for an end not officially intended thereby modifying the conditions of life programmed for these individuals. A physical reworking of the artifact may be involved, or merely an illegitimate context of use (…). In Central Hospital many simple make-do’s were tacitly tolerated. For example, inmates widely used freestanding radiators to dry personal clothing that they had washed, on their own, in the bathroom sink, thus performing a private laundry cycle that was officially only the institution’s concern. On hard-bench wards, patients sometimes carried around rolled-up newspapers to place between their necks and the wooden benches when lying down. Rolled-up coats and towels were used in the same way. Older patients who were disinclined or unable to move around sometimes employed strategies to avoid the task of going to the toilet: on the ward, the hot steam radiator could be urinated on without leaving too many long-lasting signs; during twice-weekly shaving visits to the basement barber shop, the bin reserved for used towels was used as a urinal when the attendants were not looking. In Central Hospital, toilet paper was sometimes ‘organized’; neatly torn, folded, and carried on one’s person, it was apologetically used as Kleenex by some fastidious patients (Goffman, 1961: 207–09).

‘SOCIAL DEATH’
When, in the course of a patient’s illness his condition is considered such that he is dying or terminally ill, his name is posted on the critical patients list. Posting also serves as an internally relevant message, notifying certain key hospital personnel that a death may be forthcoming and that appropriate preparations for that possibility are tentatively warranted. In the hospital morgue, scheduling is an important requirement. Rough first drafts of the week’s expected work load are made, with the number of possible autopsies being a matter which, if possible, is to be anticipated and planned for. In making such estimates the morgue attendant consults posted lists from which he makes a guess as to the work load of the coming week. The posted list is also consulted by various medical personnel who have some special interest in various anatomical regions. County morgue attendant made it a practice to alert the ward physician that Doctor S. wanted to get all the eyes he could (Doctor S. was a research ophthalmologist). To provide Doctor S. with the needed eyes, the morgue attendant habitually checked the posted list and tried, in informal talk with the nurses about the patient’s family, to assess his chances of getting the family’s permission to relinquish the eyes of the patient for research. Apparently, when he felt he had located a likely candidate, a patient whose family could be expected
4 Doing Ethnography

to give permission at the time of death, he thus informed the pathologist, who made an effort, via the resident physician, to have special attention given to the request for an eye donation. (At several places in the hospital: on the admission nurse’s desk, in the morgue, in doctors’ lounges, and elsewhere, there were periodically placed signs that read ‘Doctor S. needs eyes, ‘Doctor Y. needs kidneys,’ etc.) (Sudnow, 1967: 72–73).

For some of you this may have been your first encounter with an ‘ethnographic account’, a distinctive literary genre which in certain respects resembles a novel.

EXERCISE 1.1
Discuss with your instructor or classmates:
● Your reactions to the two passages.
● The emotions that they aroused in you.
● Did you ever think that such things could happen in a hospital?

1.3 Defining ethnography

The two passages above were written on the basis of observations. The authors (Erving Goffman and David Sudnow) were present when these things happened and saw them with their own eyes. A second striking feature is the precision of the observations, the large number of details described and the vividness of the account. The two authors document the normal routines of an organization with great acumen and insight.

But, one might ask, couldn’t these details have been collected in a different way, for instance by interviewing some of the patients? Perhaps, but this would have required the interviewee to possess a high degree of awareness and a great power of recall. Very few interviewees have these abilities. Could the details have been gathered by administering a questionnaire to the personnel? Certainly not. No questionnaire, however well made, could garner all these details. And besides, doing so is not the aim of the survey method, which was invented for other purposes.

So what is an ethnography and how does it differ from an interview or a survey?

1.4 A definition of ethnography

To know things we use our five senses: sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch. But these senses do not acquire knowledge separately, each on its own account. Rather, during the knowledge-gathering process, they constantly interact with each other. In this interaction, however, it may happen that one sense acts as the pivot for the others (see 2.4), rather like the playmaker in a basketball team. Indeed, we can imagine the five senses as five basketball players who alternate in the role of pivot but always need the co-operation of all the others when they occupy that role.
In ethnographic methodology the pivotal cognitive mode is ‘observation’. Of course, it is also essential to listen to the conversations of the actors ‘on stage’, read the documents produced by the organization under study, ask people questions and so on. Yet what most distinguishes ethnography from other methodologies is the role of ‘protagonist’ assigned to observation. Bearing this well in mind, we can now move on to other issues.

Ethnographic methodology comprises two research strategies: non-participant observation and participant observation. In the former case the researcher observes the subjects ‘from a distance’ without interacting with them. Those who use this strategy are uninterested in investigating the symbolic sphere, and they make sure they do not interfere with the subjects’ actions so as not to influence their behavior. There are several intermediate situations between the two extremes of participant and non-participant observation (see 6.3).

Participant observation has the following attributes:

(1) the researcher establishes a direct relationship with the social actors;
(2) staying in their natural environment;
(3) with the purpose of observing and describing their behavior;
(4) by interacting with them and participating in their everyday ceremonials and rituals, and;
(5) learning their code (or at least parts of it) in order to understand the meaning of their actions.

As mentioned, ethnographic methodology gives priority to observation as its primary source of information. This purpose is also served, in a secondary and ancillary manner, by other sources of information used by the ethnographer in the field: informal conversations, individual or group interviews and documentary materials (diaries, letters, class essays, organizational documents, newspapers, photographs and audiovisual aids). However, the over-riding concern is always to observe actions as they are performed in concrete settings. From this point of view, community studies should not be considered ethnographies as, although the researchers stayed for a relatively long period of time in the environment of the group studied, their analyses were based mainly on interviews and documents gathered on the spot. As Heritage stresses, if one is interested in action, the statements made by social actors during interviews cannot be treated ‘as an appropriate substitute for the observation of actual behavior’ (1984: 236). In fact, there is an oft-documented gap between attitudes and behaviors (La Piere, 1934), between what people say and what they do (Gilbert and Mulkay, 1983).

1.5 The gap between attitudes and behavior

Many years previously, the American sociologist Edward C. Lindeman (1885–1953), had argued in this way against surveys in his book Social Discovery:

if, say the behaviorists, you wish to know what a person is doing, by all means refrain from asking him. His answer is sure to be wrong, not merely because he does not know what he is doing but precisely because he is answering a
question and he will make the reply in terms of you and not in terms of the objective thing he is doing (1924, quoted by Converse, 1987: 54).

Numerous studies have shown the extent of the gap between what we say and what we do, between what people think and feel and what they do, between behavior and attitude, between sentiments and acts. Some of the best-known have been collected in the fine book edited by Deutscher (1973). One of them is the pioneering study by La Piere (1934), which focused on the existence or otherwise of consistency between people’s attitudes and their behavior (a topic subsequently much debated in the 1940s and 1950s). La Piere concluded that there was no relation between them: social actors are often inconsistent, unconscious and irrational. A Chinese couple used by La Piere for his experiment traveled around the United States for two years, and on no occasion were they refused service by the proprietors of restaurants and hotels. La Piere then sent a postal questionnaire to the same proprietors that had served or accommodated the Chinese couple and obtained a surprising result: 92% of the proprietors of the cafes and restaurants and 91% of the hoteliers replied that they would refuse to accept Chinese clientele, thus contradicting their previous behavior.

**CASE STUDY**

**Rewriting actions**

In 1954 the American sociologist, Harold Garfinkel, was conducting (together with Saul Mendlovitz) research on the work of a jury during a trial. By interviewing the jurors and recording their dialogues, the aim of the research was to reconstruct and describe how the jurors acted, and in particular how they came to the decision that the accused was guilty or innocent.

Garfinkel (1967: 104–15) noted that there was an informal set of rules that the jurors had to follow to reach the ‘correct’ decision. Nevertheless, on observing the concrete work of the jurors, he found that these rules were rarely applied. Rather, they were used retrospectively to justify a decision taken. This was a way to impose order on a decision-making process that was anything but straightforward. The jurors started from the result of the action and then backtracked to reconstruct the process leading up to it. They therefore used the rules to perform an ex-post rationalization whereby their accounts would show the good sense of any outcome, rather than reproduce what people thought at the time of the deliberative process.

**1.6 The apparent paradox of participant observation**

The ethnographic methodology requires the researcher to participate in the social life of the actors observed, while at the same time maintaining sufficient cognitive distance so that he or she can perform hihe or sher scientific work satisfactorily. The researcher must therefore strike a difficult balance between two
opposing situations which, to paraphrase the title of a well-known book by the sociologist and historian Norbert Elias, we may call ‘involvement and detachment’.

From the philosophical point of view, this balance is impossible to achieve because ‘society and people are so organized that the goals of scientific and empathic understanding (access of meanings) are competitive in principle. It may not be possible to be a participant and a scientist simultaneously’ (Schwartz and Jacobs, 1979: 49). As the Austrian philosopher Alfred Schütz has pointed out, this cognitive impossibility does not concern the scientist alone; it also affects the social actors that the researcher wishes to study:

the actor who lives in his ongoing process of acting has merely the in-order-to motive of his ongoing action in view, that is, the projected state of affairs to be brought about. Only by turning back to his accomplished act... the actor can grasp retrospectively the because-motive that determined him to do what he did or what he projected to do. But then the actor is not acting any more; he is an observer of himself (1953: 22).

The actor who acts/participates is therefore temporally and cognitively different from the actor who observes. Participation and observation are consequently not two contradictory attitudes; rather, they are two distinct aspects of social life (like research). They do not contradict each other because they never overlap.

Participant observation involves another paradox, which has been well described by the Italian anthropologist and linguist Alessandro Duranti:

the more [the ethnographer] immerses himself in social reality and acquires a way of behaving and interpreting reality similar to those of the subjects he is studying, the more their behavior and relative vision of the world seem natural to him and therefore difficult for him to grasp (1992: 20).

From the practical point of view, however,

total empathy is professionally and practically impossible. It is precisely the constant reflecting, taking notes, asking questions, completing questionnaires, taking photographs, recording and then transcribing, translating and interpreting imposed upon us by our profession that prevent us from getting completely ‘inside’ the culture which we want to study (1992: 20).

In light of these considerations the paradox attenuate from the practical point of view, although they still preserve their peculiarity of making research self-reflexive. Being simultaneously, or intermittently, ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ the cultural code is therefore a normal component of the researcher’s role.

1.7 The birth of ethnographic methodology

The birth of ethnographic methodology is commonly dated to the period between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It developed internally to ethnology, a discipline which in the first half of the 1800s split away from traditional anthropology, which was then dominated by the physical and biological paradigm. Ethnology was more concerned with studying people (through comparison of their material artifacts) and their cultures and classifying their
salient features. Before the advent of ethnographic methodology, ethnologists did not collect information by means of direct observation; instead, they examined statistics, the archives of government offices and missions, documentation centres, accounts of journeys, archaeological finds, native manufactures or objects furnished by collectors of exotic art, or they conversed with travelers, missionaries and explorers. These anthropologists considered the members of native peoples to be ‘primitives’: they were savages to be educated, and they could not be used as direct informants because they could not be trusted to furnish objective information. This prejudice was also held towards the poor in the United Kingdom at the end of 1800s.

Ethnographic methodology did not suddenly erupt in anthropology; rather it arose gradually through the work of various authors, among them the English anthropologist of Polish origin, Bronislaw K. Malinowski (1884–1942), and the English anthropologist Alfred R. Radcliffe-Brown (1881–1955). British social anthropology of ethnographic stamp assimilated the positivist intellectual climate of its time and put itself forward, according to Radcliffe-Brown (1948), as a ‘natural science of society’ which was better able to furnish an objective description of a culture than the other methods used by anthropologists at the time. Radcliffe-Brown’s polemic was directed against then dominant speculative or ‘desk’ anthropology, which preferred to rely on secondary sources rather than undertake direct observation of social facts (customs, rituals and ceremonies) in order to uncover the ‘laws’ that govern a society.

Malinowski is commonly regarded as being the first to systematize ethnographic methodology. In his famous Introduction to Argonauts of the Western Pacific – the book which sets out his research conducted in the Trobriand Islands of the Melanesian archipelago off eastern New Guinea – Malinowski described the methodological principles underpinning the main goal of ethnography, which is ‘to grasp the native’s point of view, his relation to life, to realise his vision of his world’ (Malinowski, 1922: 25). To this end, Malinowski lived for two years (between 1914 and 1918) among the Kula of the Trobriand Islands. He learnt their language (Kiriwinian), used natives as informants, and directly observed the social life of a village, participating in its everyday activities. Malinowski inaugurated a view ‘from within’ that American anthropologists of the 1950s would call the ‘emic’ perspective – as opposed to the ‘etic’ or comparative perspective, which instead sought to establish categories useful for the analyst but not necessarily important for the members of the culture studied (for details on the difference between emic and etic, go to www.sagepub/....../..../).

From the 1920s onwards, ethnographic methodology was incorporated into sociology – where it was adopted by researchers who mostly belonged to the Department of Sociology of the University of Chicago (see 3.2) – and then into psychology. Although it was imported from anthropology, however, fully 7 years previously the French mining engineer and later sociologist Pierre Le Play (1806–1892) had used primitive forms of participant observation, when he had stayed with the working-class families that he was studying. The English philanthropist Seebohm B. Rowntree (1871–1954) also used primitive forms participant observation (after 1886) for his inquiries into poverty and living conditions in the London slums. Nevertheless, still today, many anthropologists identify sociology with the survey, deeming themselves the sole (jealous)
1.8 Anthropology and sociology: Methodological differences

When ethnographic methodology was adopted by social research – a disciplinary area different from anthropology – problems of adaptation required its partial revision – a revision which then affected the anthropology of the post-war period. In fact, at the beginnings of ethnographic methodology, according to Benedict’s (1934: 7) authoritative opinion, anthropology differed from the other social sciences in that it subjected societies different from our own to study. But from the late 1940s onwards various anthropologists studied work communities in American and British factories. This gave rise to the ‘Human Relations’ movement and inaugurated applied anthropology, as well as industrial or organizational anthropology. This event marked the demise of the commonplace that social scientists study the industrial societies of the West while anthropologists study exotic societies.

Conducting ethnographic research in a society of which the researcher is part raises epistemological and practical problems which differ from those encountered by the classical anthropologist. Applying ethnographic methodology in the study of cultures alien to that of the researcher is a very different matter from conducting ethnography in an organization (a school, a social service or a business) which is part of the researcher’s own culture. This was well understood by the American anthropologist Clark Wissler. On writing the foreword to *Middletown*, the celebrated study by Robert and Helen Lynd, which he described as ‘a pioneer attempt to deal with a sample American community after the manner of social anthropology [by conducting] social anthropology of contemporary life’ (1937: vi). Clark declared:

> and whatever may be the deficiencies of anthropology, it achieves a large measure of objectivity, because anthropologists are by the nature of the case ‘outsiders’. To study ourselves as through the eye of an outsider is the basic difficulty in social science, and may be insurmountable (1937: vi).

1.8.1 Three main differences: natural attitude, language and being a native

Anthropologists who study societies other than their own find it relatively easy to grasp their salient characteristics. As soon as these anthropologists arrive at their foreign destinations, a wide range of phenomena impact upon them cognitively (because they are extremely new) and need ‘only’ be recorded and interpreted. As Schutz wrote (1944), they are able to exploit the cognitive privilege of the immigrant, which consists in the ability to see the intersubjective nature of behaviors and beliefs which for the natives are natural, obvious, taken-for-granted and normal. Schutz (1889–1959) left Austria in 1939 under the threat of the Nazi occupation and settled in New York: he had thus experienced this cognitive status first hand. However, as Schwartz and Jacobs stress (1979: 251), in this case ‘the attitude created by being a stranger – the sense of being on the edge
of one’s cognitive seat – can decay extremely rapidly’. Instead, anthropologists can ‘maintain their natural attitude’ even while they acquire knowledge about the alien culture. The estrangement technique (see 9.2) may be a way to maintain the immigrant’s attitude as long as possible, so that the ethnographer continues to be surprised, and strangeness and newness are acquired by social scenes that seem normal to him or her.

**Language**

Language is another aspect which methodologically differentiates between the work of ethnographers studying organizations in their own society and that of anthropologists who analyze societies alien to them. Whereas the latter must learn a new language, the former have, at most, to learn a communicative code. Yet, paradoxically, knowing the subjects’ language makes observation much more complicated. If the researcher has the same knowledge (or ‘structures of everyday life’, to use an expression dear to phenomenologists) as the social actors, given that it is from this knowledge that he or she recognizes, codifies and investigates social structures, the researcher will use the same resources (commonsense social categories embodied in everyday language) as those employed by the social actors that he or she is studying (Zimmerman and Pollner, 1970). Unless this circular cognitive process is supported by a reflexive research practice at the level of the resources/constraints used for knowing (see 5.5), it may reproduce knowledge riddled with platitudes (hence the epithet ‘folk sciences’ dismissively applied by ethnomethodologists to the social sciences). By contrast, study of societies linguistically alien to the anthropologist involves methodological problems which concern the relationship between the informant/interpreter and the anthropologist. When the Italian anthropologist, Cristina Giordano, was conducting research in Baluchistan, a district of northern Pakistan, she realized after a while that her informant (a *pashtu* social worker who also acted as interpreter) was altering the questions which the anthropologist was asking her women subjects. The manipulation was not deliberate but resulted from the interpreter’s desire to present the anthropologist in a manner consistent with the social development programmes then on-going in the area.

**Who is a native?**

Finally, the well-known study by Zimmerman and Pollner (1970) introduces a third consideration, this one relative to the distinction between natives and the ethnographer *qua* scholar of organizations and institutions in his or her society. Given that the ethnographer is in many respects a member of the society which he or she is studying, it seems inappropriate to persist with use of the term ‘natives’ for the subjects of his or her study. The term ‘native’ means ‘a person inhabiting their place of birth’. However, it not infrequently happens that, say Mr Brown, who works for a services company, or Mr White, who teaches in a suburban secondary school, live in the same city as the ethnographer and perhaps frequent the same places in their free time. For the ethnographer working in his or her own country – even when he or she travels to areas or regions other than the one where he or she lives – the language (contrary to case
of the anthropologist) continues to be an element shared with his or her subjects, and so are the food, attire, music, television and radio programs and press. Even cultures more alien to the country-based ethnographer – like the Chinese, Pakistani and Filipino communities of the United Kingdom – are communities not of natives, but of immigrants who devote part of their daily activities to integrating with the ethnographer’s culture. The uncertain nature of the boundary between ethnographer and native is evident when doing research in our own societies. This is the same situation of, for example, an Indian ethnographer doing research in India.

The ethnographer who studies his or her own society is in the same situation as the classical anthropologist only on those rare occasions when he or she is researching largely closed societies to which access is particularly difficult: certain ethnic groups, cults or groups engaged in unlawful activities. In all other cases, even if the communities studied may be called Shetland Islanders, Orkneyans or Manxmen – exotic-sounding names resembling those of other, more alien peoples – the modes of dressing, driving and asking for food or drink are not radically different from those of the ethnographer’s own community, in contrast to the experience of an anthropologist working in a foreign land. For these reasons, in what follows I shall avoid the term ‘native’, preferring the more appropriate terms ‘social actors’ or ‘participants’.

1.9 Concluding remarks

Ethnography is a particular form of knowledge that develops through specific techniques. Defining ‘ethnography’ is always difficult because, as we shall see in the next chapter, it is increasingly polysemous in meaning. There are at least three terms that merge with ‘ethnography’: ‘participant observation’, ‘fieldwork’ and ‘case study’. I suggest the following interpretation: the expression ‘case study’ denotes research on a system bounded in space and time and embedded in a particular physical and socio-cultural context. Research is conducted using diverse methodologies, methods and data sources like participant observation, interviews, audiovisual materials, documents and so on (Creswell, 1998: 61). The term ‘fieldwork’ stresses the continuous presence of the researcher in the field, as opposed to ‘grab-it-and-run’ methodologies like the survey, in-depth interview or analysis of documents and recordings. In this case, too, diverse methodologies and methods may be used. Finally, ‘participant observation’ is a distinctive research strategy. Probably, participant observation and fieldwork treat observation as a mere technique, while the term ‘ethnography’ underlines the theoretical basis of such work stemming from a particular history and tradition. Thus, if on the one hand the terms are in some senses equivalent, on the other they connote different practices.

However, if you want to gain a more precise idea, you can consult four comprehensive collected works: Bryman (2001) for ethnography, Pole (2004) for fieldwork, Matthew (2005) for the case study and Hughes and Sharrock (2008) for participation observation.
KEY POINTS

- The pivotal cognitive mode of ethnography is observation.
- Ethnographic methodology comprises two research strategies: non-participant observation and participant observation.
- The birth of ethnographic methodology is usually dated to the period between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.
- The two authors who contributed most to the early development of ethnographic methodology were the anthropologists Bronislaw Kaspar Malinowski (1884–1942) and Alfred Reginald Radcliffe-Brown (1881–1955).
- Conducting ethnographic research in cultures and societies to which the researcher belongs is particularly difficult because he or she is likely not to see (precisely because of their familiarity) the fundamental social structures on which that culture or society rests.
- Ethnography should therefore be used with particular methodological caution in these cases.
- The ethnographer’s main cognitive aim is to abandon the natural attitude that takes social conventions and everyday behavior for granted as normal or obvious.
- This natural attitude prevents the ethnographer from seeing conventions, behaviors or social structures as activities which are constantly, socially and situationally constructed.
- The natural attitude can be partly eliminated by using estrangement techniques. These help the ethnographer maintain the attitude of the stranger as long as possible, so that he or she continues to be surprised and sees social scenes to which he or she is accustomed as strange and new.

KEY TERMS

**Case study**  
(see p. 00)  
Expression denoting research on a system bounded in space and time. The research is conducted using diverse methodologies, methods and data sources, like participant observation, interviews, audiovisual materials, documents, etc.

**Ethnography**  
(see p. 00)  
A methodology which privileges (the cognitive mode of) observation as its primary source of information. This purpose is also served, in a secondary and ancillary manner, by other sources of information used by ethnographers in the field: informal conversations, individual or group interviews and documentary materials (diaries, letters, essays, organizational documents, newspapers, photographs and audiovisual aids). Ethnography comprises two research strategies: non-participant observation and participant observation.
**What is Ethnography?**

**Fieldwork (see p. 00)**
Generic term for the researcher’s continuing presence in the field, as opposed to “grab-it-and-run” methodologies. Fieldwork can be conducted using diverse methodologies and methods, among them ethnography.

**Non-participant observation (see p. 00)**
A strategy where the researcher observes the subjects ‘from a distance’ without interacting with them. Those who use this strategy are not interested in investigating the symbolic sphere and take care not to interfere with the subjects’ actions so as not to influence their behavior.

**Participant observation (see p. 00)**
A strategy with the following features:
- the researcher establishes a direct relationship with the social actors,
- staying for a period
- in their natural environment
- with the purpose of observing and describing their behavior
- by interacting with them and participating in their everyday ceremonials and rituals,
- learning their code (or at least parts of it) in order to understand the meaning of their actions.

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**RECOMMENDED READING**

**For undergraduates:**
Silverman, David (2006a)

**For graduates:**
Atkinson, Paul and Hammersley, Martyn (1994)

**For advanced researchers:**
Delamont, Sara (2004)

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**EXERCISE 1.2**

Take a monograph based on an ethnographic research. Answer the following questions:
- Was participant or non-participant observation used?
- In what setting was it used?
- How long did the researcher stay in that setting?
- What was the purpose of the observation?
- What forms of behavior (routines, rituals, ceremonies) were observed?
EXERCISE 1.3

Now assess the study you have just read:
● Does it give precise and detailed descriptions of the social actors’ routines?
● What have you learnt (from this study) that you did not know before?
● Did you find reading the study enjoyable or boring?
● Was it a study based exclusively on observation or did the researcher use other sources of information (interviews, documents, conversations among social actors or videos)?

SELF-EVALUATION TEST

Are you ready for the next chapter? Check your knowledge by answering the following open-ended questions:
1. What is ethnography?
2. What are the main characteristics of participant observation?
3. What is meant by a ‘secondary source’?
4. What are the ‘secondary sources’ of ethnography?
5. What are the main differences between the use of the ethnographic method in anthropology and in sociology?

Note

1 This expression reflects the education received by this new generation of social anthropologists, who were scientists by training. Malinowski, for example, was a graduate in physics and chemistry from the University of London; Elliot Smith was a biologist; and William H. R. Rivers (1864–1922) was a doctor and a psychologist.