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Book Review

Pelto, Pertti J. Applied Ethnography: Guidelines for Field Research. Left Coast Press. 2013. ISBN # 978-1-61132-208-8, pp 351. Price \$34.95 (Paper)

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The aim of this book is to provide information and guidelines for applied ethnographic research, updating previous texts written by the author with new examples and research situations from the international scene. As one of the books in the Developing Qualitative Research series, edited by Janice Morse and intended for mid-level to advanced researchers and advanced students, this book will make a significant addition to any qualitative researcher's library.

The guidelines for field research in applied ethnography cover, in some detail, research preparation, data collection, and data analysis with additional chapters on ethnographic mapping and participatory or social mapping. The early chapters provide an introduction to ethnography with a summary of the major steps of applied ethnographic field research including the process of gaining entry to research sites. Helpful descriptions of the terminology in ethnography cover topics such as: realism and positivism versus relativism and interpretivism; inductive, deductive, and abductive research; and ideographic and nomethic theory.

The author devotes chapter 6 to a discussion on capturing and managing data, reminding researchers of note taking and recording protocols. Described as a key building block in explaining field work, this chapter reminds readers of the critical importance of photographing, recording field data in detail, transcribing digital voice recordings where used, entering data into the computer, and organizing files for data analysis. Note taking by the researcher or a dedicated note taker are critical tasks in ethnographic data collection although dictating field notes can be helpful when note taking in the field is challenging. Capturing data in the field is not easy but this chapter provides valuable guidelines for the novice and the advanced ethnographic researcher.

Participant observation, often considered the foundation of ethnographic research, is discussed noting criticisms of the unstructured nature of this data collection technique. A separate chapter expands on explorations using more structured forms of direct observation. These two chapters, chapters 7 and 13, are surprisingly not sequential or even combined into a single chapter but provide the reader with valuable insights into the various observation techniques. When available samples are large enough, quantitative data can be collected through systematic direct observation of behaviors and events adding richness to the qualitative data of participant interviews and less structured participant observations. The author also highlights an important question about the extent to which participant behavior changes during direct observation. Although common in studies that use direct observation, research indicates that these reactivity effects often have minimal impact on validity.

The single chapter on data analysis felt insufficient and, although much of the data analysis in ethnographic studies is integrated into the data collection process, qualitative data analysis software, which is becoming an increasingly valuable tool, was not described. The section on writing ethnography identified three valuable writing rules and many useful tips for

writing up ethnographic research. More detailed explanation of data analysis processes would have made the book exceptional.

Noting that ethnography is one of the varieties of mixed-methods research and that most of the examples in the book can be regarded as mixed methods, this book will also be of interest to the mixed methods researcher. Ethnographic research as a mixed method versus a mixed methods research design incorporating an ethnographic component remains an interesting debate. This book provides an important contribution to that debate.

This book embraces ethnographic research in education, marketing, community health, nursing, and more. The examples, although mostly from developing countries and not focused on gerontology, describe and illustrate applied ethnography very effectively. Anthropologists and gerontologists will find the examples and descriptions relevant and interesting. Pencil sketches drawn by Dunja Peltó, the author's daughter, add wonderful insights into the research examples.

The extensive reference list, with nearly 250 unique references, is valuable although only a few of the sources would be considered recent scholarly references.

Although primarily intended for applied research people in the field, advanced researchers and graduate students planning to conduct ethnographic research for their dissertation could learn much from this book.