Guideline for an Ethnography
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I.

"A description of culture, an ethnography, is produced from an ethnographic record of the events of a society within a given period of time, the "events of a society" including of course, informants' responses to the ethnographer."¹

What was probably the first field guide for ethnographers was written in 1800 by a young French philosopher Joseph-Marie Degerando. Degerando emphasized the importance of studying people in the context of their social systems. The type of fieldwork he imagined did not become a reality until well into the twentieth century. Many European ethnographers in the nineteenth century directed their efforts towards the reconstruction of history. "Strictly historical anthropology, when it is concerned with a people's cultural past, does not necessitate very much living among or identifying with, the "natives"."² Often in the past an ethnographer's work was delayed by a cultural event of the population he was researching. For instance, Franz Boas wrote:

I had a miserable day today. The natives held a big potlatch again. I was unable to get hold of anyone and had to snatch at whatever I could get.³
Boas' statement shows the difference between informant-oriented and observation-oriented fieldwork styles.

In the twentieth century, A. R. Radcliffe-Brown and Bronislaw Malinowski brought about a type of fieldwork that involved living in close contact with the population an ethnographer was studying. Participant observation allows the ethnographer to observe the daily routines, social and economic activities, and other aspects of cultural behavior.

"When an ethnographer first enters a strange society, each encountered event is new, unanticipated, improbable, and, hence, highly informative... As he learns the culture of the society, more and more of what happens becomes familiar and anticipatable." The ethnographer can now begin to anticipate events and plan his schedule around them. "To describe a culture, then, is not to recount the events of a society, but to specify what one must know to make those events maximally probable. The problem is not to state what someone did but to specify the conditions under which it is culturally appropriate to anticipate that he, or persons occupying his role will render an equivalent performance." The key to credibility now is to refer to the informants' interpretation of an event and not simply how the event occurred.

The other most commonly used method of field work is
informant interviewing. Fieldworkers obtain their information by interviewing carefully selected informants from a community. Informant interviewing has its advantages when time is a factor and when matters of interest can be readily discussed. Participant observation and informant interviewing would both produce adequate ethnographies from certain parts of Appalachia; however, a combination of the two methods had definite advantages.

The following guideline would now seem proper for making an ethnographic statement.

1) Discover the major categories of events or scenes of the culture.

2) Define scenes so that observed interactions, acts, objects, and places can be assigned to their proper scenes as roles, routines, paraphernalia, and settings.

3) State the distribution of scenes with respect to one another, that is, providing instructions for anticipating or planning for scenes.

II.

An important variable one must consider when beginning fieldwork is the manner in which you are to be introduced to the people being studied. For instance, if the subject of the ethnography was an Appalachian community it would help to be introduced by someone who knew both you and a member of the community. This is not always possible, but
if you are introduced by someone the community trusts, then you will probably be accepted more readily and therefore be able to make headway faster in your research. This case would especially hold true if it was determined that you enjoyed many of the same activities as the people in the community. Finding out from a trusted friend the interests of another is much quicker and easier than going through a troublesome and often tedious "feeling out" period.

Another problem which could be encountered when approaching an Appalachian community is seen in the conflicts produced in the modern world by racial, ethnic, and other social differentiations. Many Appalachian areas are often defined as socially and, or economically deprived in relation to our national social systems. "Entry into their communities is often made difficult by the established relationships between the (community) and persons of the (supposedly) dominant social category, of which the anthropologist is usually a member. In some instances it may be that any style of initial interaction between the would-be fieldworker and the intended research community is "wrong" and will create problems." Peatti and Gretel Pelto also note in their Handbook of Social and Cultural Anthropology "that formal behavior and language, especially when acted out through the
the official (superordinate-subordinate) channels may be regarded as necessary by both officialdom and "the people" yet they stamp the fieldworker as associated with the superordinate social system." However, it is a two-way street. Bypassing official channels can possibly do more harm than good because on one hand it may cause suspicion on the part of the natives, and on the other hand the ethnographer has fooled himself by believing he has avoided the negative image caused by associating with officials.

Being informed is another important consideration when preparing the fieldwork. It is necessary to read all available information pertaining to the culture you intend to describe. I am alarmed at the amount of material I have been able to find on both the subjects of Ethnography and Appalachia in our own library. There are at least twenty-six periodicals and the same number of books relating to both subjects in the library. While some sources have been more informative than others, they have all added something to my understanding of the subjects. And, more often than not, the key to a specific question lies in the bibliography of the book which raised that question. Knowledge of the community you are investigating can only serve to hasten the past at which you come to understand the happenings in that community.
III. FIELDWORK

Fieldwork is not, as is often thought, like a game of chess with a diagrammed set of moves. The direction fieldwork takes cannot be predicted and the sooner this is understood the sooner the ethnographer can go on about the business at hand. The ethnographer will make a lot of mistakes, but then that is how one learns and the prerequisite for the trial and error process which is called fieldwork. This is not to say that there are no (more or less) standard techniques involved in collecting and interpreting data in the field; however, the effectiveness of the use of these techniques is up to the people being studied, the environment they are being studied in and the ethnographer himself. Techniques of fieldwork will be discussed later in this section of the paper.

A) Establishing Rapport

The experiences of others can help form the proper attitude of an ethnographer about to go into the field. Acceptance of local food and drink, use of the local language, participation in the local social scene, avoidance of authoritarian and judgemental behavior, flexibility and friendship are all subjects or principles to keep in mind upon entering the field.
"Over and over again fieldworkers have reported that their willingness to accept local food and drink was a first step to fieldwork rapport. In a great many instances the anthropologist immediately establishes himself as a different kind of person from government officials, wealthy traders, or other outsiders by simply eating or drinking with the local people." This can be especially true in Appalachia as is recalled by an outsider; in the case an assistant to a minister, who visited an Appalachian community.

"I stopped by the house one late afternoon and she insisted I stay for supper because her father would be home from work in a short while... This was one of the poorer homes... There were no screens and windows and doors were open for the entrance of flies, dogs, chickens, or whatever other form of life that happened to wander through. The meal was one of the least appetizing I ever encountered. We had fatback, corn floating in greasy water, and snap beans. And, of course, corn bread. Corn bread was an accomplishment of every meal in these mountains, not the effete sophisticated corn bread of recipe books but a hard crust bread made with corase meal, water and salt that stuck to your ribs and stayed by you."

It is important to remember that the pain which may accompany a meal will most likely pay off. Also, in order to establish and maintain social contact, many anthropologists have even
taken up smoking because of the symbolic value of tobacco sharing. Adding a personal note, I remember the old man who took care of the property we used in our fall field survey course offering a cigar to Jim Adams. This may be a coincidence but in any case it did seem like a nice gesture.

Turning to the use of local language, "the attribution of positive social value to persons who "talk like us" is universal in human cultures. "For the fieldworker this usually means in practice that his first groping attempt to learn the local vernacular are important steps toward the building of rapport." In principle this effort might not be as effective in Appalachia as it would be in South America, but not all Americans talk alike and it could be an advantage to both neutralize the extremes of one's own language and to pick up a bit of the lingo of the people being studied. A stranger who makes the extra effort to fit in will most likely be given a little extra consideration when it really counts. It is also important to realize, however, that an over eagerness in this area could offend the local people. Also, personal attire could be used in a similar manner.

Joining in local social functions is a good aid in building a relationship of trust. Much of your best
data will be collected when you are not searching it out with pencil and paper. Also participation in such events as singing, dancing, etc. indicates a desire on your part to be accepted, while at the same time non-participation in social events indicates a desire to remain apart. It is also worth noting that one should not attempt to join in all social events right away. Beginning with the simpler, less complicated and lighter events is best and then cautiously step by step follow up on more intriguing events can proceed.

In Appalachia one could initiate this type of social interaction by offering to help work around the community or by attending religious services. While this type of active participation takes time away from notetaking, it is often much more effective in understanding exactly how things are put together.

One of the most important bits of advice to keep in mind in fieldwork and one of the most difficult to perform well is the avoidance of authoritarian and judgemental behavior. It is difficult to avoid judgemental and authoritarian behavior because of our years and years of learning a set, "correct" way of doing things. We are biased as to what is right and wrong and, sadly, our bias does not always lean in the right direction. One needs
B) Fieldwork Techniques (collecting data)

"The matter of establishing a role in the field situation can be conceptually separated from the complex problems of making objective observations on life styles and behavior patterns." Traditional field techniques are used to collect and accurately record an ethnographer's data. Usually only a small number of techniques is used for an ethnography, but it is important to be familiar with them all.

FIELD NOTES

Field notes are simply a method of keeping a current record of events and experiences in the field. A wide variety of observations are usually recorded because it is often impossible to tell which will be important, until you become familiar with the community. Entries into a field notebook should include the time, place, and people present at an event.

MAPPING and CENSUS TAKING

Mapping consists of making note of the layout of a community and especially the most frequently visited structures. This could be very important in a small Appalachian community but would not be needed in many of the more secluded areas of Appalachia. This method
can provide data on who goes where, and when, and therefore can also determine what kinds of groups there are within a community.

Census-taking adds to mapping data. It consists of going from one dwelling to another and listing the family units.

**GENEALOGICAL METHOD**

The genealogical method is necessary to find out the kinship system of a community. Once the kinship system is known, marriage rules, obligations, etc. can be found. The genealogical method was devised in 1910 by W. H. Rivers and the procedure is as follows:

"Researchers ask each informant about his or her genealogy, or family tree. The following information is requested: the names of their children in order of age and the marriages and offspring of each; the names of the mother's parents, and the names of their children and the marriages and descendants of each. They also ascertain whether one or more wives or husbands are permitted and whether previous marriages have occurred. In collecting the information the descendants of both the male and female lines are obtained. The descendants in one line are recorded on a separate sheet of paper, with cross references made to other sheets for descendants in the other line."

This method can be expanded to include questions on the terms that would be applied to their genealogies.
LIFE HISTORIES

An ethnographer can vary the informant interviewing technique and use extensive accounts of the life histories of a carefully selected few of the informants. A great deal of information about the community can be learned from the description of the sequence of events which make up a life history. Life histories can tell the best and worst of a community as informants tell their perceptions of the past, present, and future.

PROJECTIVE TECHNIQUES

Projective techniques are the use of psychological tests on individual informants to attempt to expose hidden aspects of their personality. "Informants are given a specially designed picture with ambiguous meaning and then they are asked to describe what it means to them." This process forces the informants to use their imagination and their response says something about their psychological makeup. There are many of these tests. Some have come from clinical psychology and others have been developed by anthropologists.

INTERVIEW SCHEDULES AND QUESTIONNAIRES

Interview schedules and questionnaires are used in a
survey of a large population in order to expose trends and perhaps hidden aspects of a society. The same questions are posed to everyone and the content of those questions varies depending on what is being searched for.

CASE STUDIES

Anthropologists have translated the technique of studying law cases to a use in an ethnography. Case studies are used to investigate specific events such as what takes place between a student and a teacher. This is a fairly indepth observation.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Photography is very helpful in anthropology. It can make mapping much easier, it can help translate a fieldwork experience to others and it can serve as a device to spur a reaction from those you are studying.

IV.

I will not say much about Appalachia other than the fact that it is a very unique yet very misunderstood area of our country with many areas open to ethnographic work. The source I found most helpful in giving me insight into Appalachia was the periodical "Appalachian Heritage".
Bibliography

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