

Research Design of School Social Events

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Introduction

A number of research studies mention the contexts and activities of elementary aged children during the transitions between the classroom and other areas of the school. The majority of the studies located are ethnographic in nature. The purpose of this review is to examine the various methodologies used in these and related studies in preparation for a future study of this nature. In other words, this is a methodological review of the literature, in contrast to a substantive literature review (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p. 154). Part of the final section, on interpretation and integration, also reviews some of the theories used in these studies.

While elementary school transitions are noted in a number of studies, these descriptions are usually peripheral to a study of other subjects, such as recess, classroom processes, teacher control, and so on. Only one study could be located that specifically targeted transitions as the sole focus of attention, and that study (Herrera, 1988) was of middle school youngsters. While the school he studied included sixth, seventh and eighth grades in a Boston school, nearly all of his study involved only the latter two grades. Furthermore, as is common with middle and high school schools, these youngsters changed rooms for every class period, unlike most children at the elementary level. Thus while Herrera's study might be considered the best example of studying transitions in detail, and significantly inform a study of elementary level transitions, the difference in setting as well as age of students can be expected to require some variations in approach. For this review Herrera's study will be considered in detail to critically examine the methodology used, but also be supplemented by an examination of the methods used in studies of elementary school classroom and recess studies that, at best, describe transitions somewhat tangentially.

In each section of this report, studies have been chosen and arranged by several criteria. Primacy has been given to studies that provide greater detail about methodology; a number of apparently good studies have been omitted because of the paucity of such detail. The second guideline for inclusion and order is the amount of content related to transitions [e.g. the Metz (1978) study sequentially follows Herrera in most sections because about half of that study relates to transitions [although they are also middle school transitions], and Goetz (1975) follows Metz because this classroom study includes numerous comments related to transitions, etc.]. A third criterion for inclusion is the variability of contexts: Three studies focus upon recess in contrast to the classroom emphasis of the majority of other studies cited, even though two of these have negligible content specific to transitions. School transitions probably have commonalities with both classroom and playground experiences, as it is considered by Kalekin-Fishman (1987) to be midway between the high control of the classroom and lower control of the playground. This might suggest that the methodologies of both classroom and recess studies might inform the methodology of transitions.

The eight point outline for this review is taken from the general organization of LeCompte and Preissle's (1993) qualitative design textbook, and adapted specifically from their stages of research (p. 137). The emphasis throughout will be design and methodology, although substantive content will be included when it clarifies methodological and design issues. Each section will be introduced with a brief description of what each aspect of design involves. At the conclusion of each section I will attempt to summarize and synthesize the various approaches used, and suggest possible applications to a proposed study of elementary school transitions.

Purpose/Question

The question or purpose of research indicates the topic and scope of the study. The goals or purpose indicate the intended end product of doing research, which may need to be changed during the study. In contrast the question for research specifies the problems or hypotheses to be examined as a means of reaching those goals or purposes (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p. 37).

Herrera (1988, pp. 2-3) considered three purposes in his research of an urban middle school's public places. First he wished to find what routines students and adults in the school followed. Second, the interactions in those public places were to be described, including body language [facial expressions, body space, gestures, etc.] and paralinguistic factors [characteristics of speech such as rate, pitch, specificity, etc.]. Third, he wished to observe the logic and sequence of patterns of behavior that both adults and students manifest, including problem solving in conflict situations. Three theoretical questions are given to circumstances observed: 1) What was the trigger?, 2) What maintains the social context?, and 3) What is the function of that context? (p. 12).

The questions that guided Metz' (1978, p. ix) research involved examining how students and others in the school maintained order and safety while simultaneously attempting to provide education. More specifically she searched for the social processes and structures that influence student and adult activities in schools, including those not realized by these individuals (p. 8).

The questions that drove Goetz' (1975) study included a concern for what actually happens in classrooms, specifically the interaction patterns between students and teacher, how such interactions are perceived by those involved, what interactions take place between students, sources and variations in interactions, how interactions influence the goals and attitudes of participants, functions and goals that are latent or manifest, and the degree of influence by non-school factors such as the home or teacher roles (pp. 5-6).

Goetz describes substantive concerns in her study which include the perception and experience of classroom social reality by those involved in that context, as well as the belief and behavior mechanisms that perpetuate the social reality of the classroom. The emphasis upon experience and mechanism correspond with the emic and etic orientations of the two respective theories used, symbolic interactionism

and functionalism (pp. 15-16). Jackson (1990, p. xv) states that he did not enter his study of classrooms with clear-cut questions, instead he stated that he simply wanted to discover "how classroom work" (p. xvi). He came to realize that he wanted to interpret the activities of the classroom, but had a difficult time making a precise statement of what he wanted to observe.

In her study of a kindergarten classroom, Cox (1980, p. 3) considered the purpose as the adding of data about becoming a student in American society, an important aspect of education. This involved the examining of the components of the student role and how those were learned in kindergarten (p. 4).

The purpose of Bossert's (1979, 14) research was defined as the possible relationship between social relationships and tasks within the classroom. He examined the effects of children having an authoritarian teacher one year and a more permissive teacher the next, compared with the opposite configuration, as well as students having two authoritarian teachers sequentially, and finally having two more permissive teachers in successive years. These comparisons were developed after he had spent time in the field doing initial observations related to his original purpose, which was more general and vague.

Best (1983, p. 1) describes her concern with reading disabilities and how traditional explanations of environmental influences, physical factors, maturational development, and teaching methods failed to account for the high number of boys with the disorder. She had a hunch that gender related peer group behavior might somehow influence reading skills, but she did not feel her hunch qualified as a hypothesis when she began the research. After the first year of study, Best determined that the influence of peers upon performance in the classroom was a powerful factor only with boys [teachers were more influential with girls] and thus the question changed to why boys rather than girls were more influenced by peers, which in turn caused her to focus the study upon socialization into one's gender role (p. 4). While the purpose or question of Mehan's (1979) research is as much implicit as explicit, he mentions the methodological goal of describing how student-teacher interaction is organized. This goal involved discovering several "recursive rules" in the interaction that would include all of the data comprehensively (pp. 32-33).

Baker (1985) initiated her recess research with only one question, "What occurs during recess periods?" (p. 6). Subsidiary questions included how children know what they will do and when, relevant kinesic and verbal behaviors, evidence that recess is a distinct cultural grouping, and indications of possible educational value of the events of recess. She later delimited her focus to children's folklore episodes on the playground (p. 136).

In contrast with Baker, Thompson (1989, p. 5) describes her recess study as examining the "why's, wants, and concerns" as well as attitudes and feelings about recess. These can be a means of becoming "anthropologists of childhood," she maintained. The key question that concerned Borman and Lippincott (1982, p. 129) was whether first and second grade children made use of "transitional games" during recess which involved the learning of strategy yet had a predominant emphasis upon physical skill. They also expected to observe the roles of aggressor and victim, winner and loser.

Summary and Applications

Several studies, notably those of Jackson and Baker, began only with a general question and delimited the topic while in the field. This approach is consistent with LeCompte and Preissle's comment at the beginning of this section. An initially broad, encompassing view of the topic is consistent with Agar's (1980, pp. 9 & 13) notion of "funneling" the scope of interest during ongoing research. An initially broad scope is more likely to produce the comprehensive description suggested by Mehan. It is also more likely to generate a wide variety of hypotheses which could be refined and/or verified later in the study or in subsequent research.

As will be noted later in this review, the hallway is a common context for most school transition, thus a possible general question might be, "What happens in elementary school hallways?" The goal or

purpose could be to reveal and categorize behavior patterns and interactions within the hallway transition context, and describe how those patterns and interactions are understood by students.

A study of elementary school transitions is most likely to highlight, like Herrera, Metz, and Goetz, routines of behavior, including the logic, sequence and functions of interaction and social control, as perceived by participants and adults. Triangulating adult and student viewpoints might especially be fruitful to analysis.

Research Design

Ethnographic design tends to be more fluid than other varieties of research (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p. 30). The specific design being considered in this review is ethnography, which tends to be more descriptive, generative, inductive, constructive, and subjective [i.e. emic] than other varieties of research (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, pp. 39-46). In this section I will consider some of the general design variations and descriptions in the studies surveyed.

Characteristics and Varieties of Ethnography

Herrera (1988, p. 37) considers his research design to be primarily inductive and qualitative, as he desired to observe the dynamic interaction within hallways and other public areas of the school. More specifically he designated it as primarily topic-oriented ethnography which focuses on a specific setting and seeks answers for precise questions (pp. 40-41). However he also maintains that it contains elements of three other kinds of ethnography: comprehensive ethnography, hypothesis-testing ethnography, and constitutive ethnography.

Both "thick" and "thin" descriptions are used in Herrera's study (1988, p. 10) -- events are given considerable detail, while interactions that are merely interludes are briefly considered. He considers his own descriptions to represent an etic perspective, whereas quotations from those in the situations are considered to represent participants' emic perspectives.

Goetz (1975, p. 2) emphasizes the anthropological/ sociological roots of ethnography, which emphasize interrelationships and systems, in contrast with the more individualistic emphasis of psychology. Changes of curriculum or teaching methods fail to result in educational improvement because the broader social environment is overlooked; how the culture of the school functions, and its relationships to the general culture of society, are crucial to understanding and influencing education (pp. 3-4). Culture is traditionally studied by anthropology using ethnography, the methodology of choice for studying school culture.

Cox (1980, p. 4) describes her study as a microethnography because it involves the study of only one institution even though it has a number of social settings. She notes that it is also topic-oriented ethnography because of the concern with one aspect of cultural behavior [learning a role]. Cox considers her work to be classroom ethnography (p. 5).

Baker (1985, p. 8) denotes her work as microethnography, as it did not involve a cross-section of third graders or even the entire school, but rather the population was a combination of three classrooms that held a simultaneous recess. She concentrates upon providing "thick" descriptions of recess behavior (pp. 8-9).

The perspective of the researcher is important to research design. Jackson (1990, p. xii) took on the perspective of an anthropologist, entering an ordinary classroom but imagining the context as if it were an exotic culture.

Bossert (1979, p. 20) used both longitudinal and comparative case study designs. They were longitudinal in that the same children were followed over two years, with two different teachers, and comparative because two different classrooms at the same grade level were compared and contrasted. Metz (1978) also used comparisons between different schools.

Thompson (1989, pp. 11, 12) contrasts ethnography with "ethnographic research," citing Lutz, concluding that ethnography includes thick description and involves discovering variables that are recurrent and important. "Ethnographic research," the approach she uses, emphasizes only a single issue or a short encounter, which falls short of being an ethnography. She believes it could also be termed a microethnography since it is a mini study lacking the breadth of a standard ethnography.

Advantages and Limits of Qualitative Research

Both Jackson (p. xi) and King (1978, p.2) describe their increasing dissatisfaction with more quantitative methods as an important impetus to doing qualitative research. Essentially they believe that they were estranged from the process of research and were missing important information through traditional methodologies.

Mehan (1979, pp. 6) comments that survey approaches to studying schools may reveal gross differences but fail to indicate the specific social processes that take place therein. Tabulating frequencies of specific variables can overlook how context relates to activities, while ethnography can reveal such relationships (p. 8). Time sampling approaches, such as the Flanders system, treat the actions of student and teacher as isolated, overlooking the contingencies between the teacher and student behaviors (p. 12). Mehan concludes that counting behaviors has some limited uses in classroom contexts, but can easily neglect important details in the ongoing activity (p. 14).

Field research, in contrast, is more holistic in its orientation (Mehan, 1979, p. 14). Systematic patterns of behavior emerge from a field study as observers participate to some extent. The goal is to describe ongoing activities rather than develop correlations (p. 15). However, Mehan admits to some weaknesses to the field research approach: Researchers may go into great detail about more ideal examples of categories, yet neglect to state whether examples are typical or representative of general behavior, not give criteria for including some instances and not others in categories or descriptions, and make use of summaries that do not preserve the original form of the findings, thus delimiting alternative ways of interpreting the content (p. 15). To help minimize these problems Mehan suggests that researchers use videotape, which allows repeated and more extensive examination of data (p. 16). He links his study with "microethnography" because of his method of data analysis, i.e. ethnographic study using micro levels of analysis (p. 16). King (1978, p. 8) expresses particular concern with how difficult it is to determine young children's meanings of events; while those meanings are important, it is difficult to interview children in the first few grade levels of school because of their apparent inability to reflect. He suggested that subjective views of children might be inferred from emotional reactions and spontaneous speech, as well as occasional conversations with the researcher.

Summary and Applications

Ethnographic design is likely to produce thick descriptions, as mentioned by Herrera, but I wonder if the distinction between ethnography and ethnographic research mentioned by Jackson is viable -- if one has thin description with no detail about the context, might this not be some other kind of qualitative research? Ethnographic design is an anthropologically based perspective of school culture, as noted by Goetz and Jackson. If the thick description is missing, can it be considered ethnographic?

One key aspect of ethnography is the lengthy stay in the field, which makes longitudinal design more possible. However, the term longitudinal is somewhat ambiguous as it was applied by Bossert to a two year study, but is sometimes used by others for studies only last a few months. In the first edition of their text, LeCompte and Preissle suggested that six months to three years was a typical time frame, but this

comment was dropped in the second edition. The general point, I believe, is that the study must be more than a few days or a couple of weeks, as found in some experimental research designs.

There appears to be some diversity in the way the term "microethnography" is used in the sources studied. Thompson focuses on the general lack of breadth of such a study, Cox emphasizes use of a single school site in using this designation, Baker concentrates upon the usage of only part of a school, and Mehan uses the term to describe data analysis. The divergence in usage of this term may imply that the designation "microethnography" is not fully standardized, referring vaguely to something smaller than a regular ethnography either in terms of site or level of analysis.

Consistent with Herrera and Cox, the study of transitions would be topic oriented ethnography because the transitions focus upon a setting [hallways, although bathrooms and corridors could be alternate settings]. Probably the term "microethnography" would be appropriate for a single-site study of school transitions, as Cox uses this term. If multiple schools are used, would "ethnography" be the preferred designation? This would seem to be the case only if one assumed that somehow the multiple sites represented school or student culture in its totality. Comparative design of two or more social contexts, as used by Bossert and Metz, would be helpful for making generalizations in transitions research [Herrera studied only one school but compared different areas of the school reflecting two subcultural groups and one "general" group].

An emic perspective is important to ethnographic research. I sensed that Herrera used this term a bit loosely when he concluded that using quotes from those in the setting made the study emic. Would not his study have been enriched by interviews with teachers and students in which they reflected upon their experiences in hallways? He did interview some administrators, but that would hardly represent the views of teachers and students. Quotations from students and teachers in hallways probably do not indicate careful reflections upon experiences in that context, or even their cursory views of those experiences.

King's comment that young children's meanings are difficult to ascertain during the first few grades of school is important [I have spoken with other researchers have made the same comment]. In contrast, Thompson maintained that the semi-clinical approach of Piaget yielded children's views of the playground [I was not impressed from her report that those comments involved much reflection, however]. King's suggestion that spontaneous speech and emotional expressions may be the best ways of gaining meaning from younger elementary children, may prove to be relevant in transitions research.

Choosing and Describing the Setting

The selection of a site for study is an important aspect of research design. Selection of a group to study may occur on the basis of initial definition of the group, theoretical direction, curiosity, or other influences such as convenience. More importantly, the researcher is to identify the setting, how that site was selected, and some of its general characteristics (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, pp. 57-59). In this section the various research studies will be examined to observe how the researcher chose a particular setting, why it was chosen, and the specific aspects listed.

Choosing the Setting

The general site for Herrera's (1988, pp. 42-43) research was selected on the basis of advice given by school system administrators who suggested a school considered likely to participate in research. Within the school, public places [hallways, lunchroom, areas where busses arrive and depart, and special rooms] were chosen to observe the means of control utilized (p. 2). He assumed that education cannot be confined to the classroom, but occurs in these public areas as well (p. 5). Indeed, the content and process of teaching in the classroom was revealed in these areas of the school, but particularly in the hallways. Public areas of the school reveal a learning environment in the form of communications and routines (p. 8). [Herrera later (p. 23) cites research and conclusions by Metz as support for the argument that hallway activities influence classroom learning and vice versa]. Public areas were considered important sources of information about student life because the formal procedures and rules specific to the classroom do not apply [although he

found that these were not replaced with informal interaction] (p. 7). If there are no rules, the risk of student injury is particularly high in hallways, which provides a rationale for high control of students in that context (p. 24). When a study attempts to generate hypotheses, rather than verifying preexisting hypotheses, the selection of research site need not have a representative location, teachers, or students (Goetz, 1975, p. 20). However, Goetz cites the possibility of asking those studied what they represent rather than specifying representativeness from the onset.

A small city in the northwest was chosen by Cox (1980, p. 4) for her study. This site was chosen because it was near her work place, entry was expedited [her daughter attended the school and Cox knew the administrators and teacher], and the schedule of the kindergarten fit her teaching schedule (p. 5).

Choice of a research site was aided by questionnaires in King's (1978, p. 2) study, although he also made observations in several schools prior to deciding upon the primary research site. King used the results of the initial survey in his report, but considered it a relatively unimportant component. Several schools refused to let him do interviews and one refused to participate in any capacity. He later chose a second school site thought to be distinctive from the first to find commonalities, and finally added a third school to make comparisons. Commonalities found in differing social contexts [lower versus middle classes] makes commonalities discovered more likely to be generalizable to yet other contexts (pp. 2, 103) [much the same point about generalizability is made in Mehan (1979, pp. xi-xii)].

Bossert (1979, p. 14) chose the third-grade classrooms he studied by asking the principal to describe the teaching methods of teachers at that level. His criterion for choice was that the teachers used different approaches to teaching. Teacher backgrounds and the kind of students in each class were specifically ignored during selection. However Bossert noted that classroom assignment of students was balanced by level of achievement and number of behavior problems. Systematic differences in interaction began to surface between the classrooms, thus Bossert wanted to determine if those differences were due to the teachers or students involved, or due to the organization of tasks (p. 15). To accomplish this, the following school year each of the two classes was divided in half and assigned to different teachers, forming four comparison groups [half of each group of students was taught by each of the two previous teachers]. Again the groups were balanced for behavior problems and achievement levels. The fourth grade teachers also differed in teaching styles, in a similar manner as the third grade teachers.

The choice of a San Diego classroom site for Mehan's (1979, pp. xiv-xv) study was due to a previously developed relationship between the school's principal and the University of California, San Diego. The school had been used for an earlier research study conducted by the university.

Baker (1985, pp. 32-34) lists three reasons why she chose the site of her study. First, the school she studied held free play recess, unlike many schools that are dropping it from their schedules. Second, she had observed the folklore of two of the children one year before the study, and thus realized that if it was not naturally emergent on the playground, those two students could be used to initiate folklore episodes. Third, the researcher was a teacher assistant at the school [she later describes supervising teacher assistants there], and thus rapport was more easily established. She also notes the physical accessibility of the research site, as well as lack of research being conducted at that location.

Thompson (1989, p. 6) chose the location of her recess study because two different playgrounds existed at the kindergarten. This allowed the children to compare their experiences in the two play contexts, a component of her study.

Describing the Setting

Herrera (1988, pp. 45-46) provides a fairly detailed description of the school system, the school district, and the specific school studied (pp. 45-46, 87-92). The initial setting description includes the general school system [a Boston public school], the ethnic composition of the school, the organization of the school building [by clusters: Hispanic, Vietnamese, and regular], and staff, including their ethnic

identification. A second, more detailed description includes the organization of the school system, enrollment, ethnic composition of the school system, and historical details with emphasis upon the increasingly interracial character of the schools. He then describes the ethnic identity of the leaders of the schools, as well as the physical characteristics of the surrounding community and school buildings (pp. 90-92). Throughout the report he provides more specific descriptions of each area of the school as it is the focus of observation and analysis. A drawing of all three floors of the school is provided in an appendix (p. 220), as is a drawing of the cafeteria (p. 236). Specific drawings of each cluster area are included with diagrams of traffic flow between rooms (pp. 110, 117, 139) as are charts of communication and movement for bus and cafeteria contexts (pp. 101-102, 179-180, 182-186).

Metz (1978, pp. 6-11) briefly portrays the communities surrounding the two sites studied, including economics, size of the city, and the mixture of upper middle class and poor [these characteristics were mirrored by the school population, she noted]. The role of leaders in desegregation, described as "progressive," was specified (p. 9), as well as the distinctives of the African American population (p. 10). The historical era of the study, the late 1960's, was also detailed, as was a comparison of the learning environments of the two schools (pp. 7-8). The schools were described in terms of the social and racial matching that had recently occurred, both by school and classroom. Tracking methods in the school was also examined (p. 8). The physical and social context of the school is very briefly summarized early in Goetz' study (1975, pp. 19-20) and detailed thoroughly later in the report (pp. 60-137). Indeed the latter description becomes fused with the study itself in the careful analysis made of social networks of both students and teachers -- these are environmental contexts which influence the findings of the study, but the description of the contexts themselves required social research and analysis.

Goetz (pp. 60-64) begins her comprehensive portrait with the physical location of the school, including the demographics of the surrounding community [locations, occupations, ethnicity, number of children, and orientation toward education]. The perceptions of the principal, teacher, and students of the surrounding community were also considered thoroughly (pp. 64-70) using interviews and student writings. The general physical layout and organization [personnel employed, consolidation of district, kind of school design] of the school itself was described in detail (pp. 70-76), including drawings of the school. The interactions between staff and faculty are examined (pp. 76-88), as well as the relationships between the school and surrounding community (pp. 88-90). The expectations of parents and teachers regarding student careers are addressed (pp. 90-96, also see pp. 64-70). Periodic school events are described (pp. 96-99) and the general routine of the school day (pp. 99-104) is summarized [this is elaborated in a full chapter later in her study (pp. 138-173)]. The relationship between the school and specific classroom studied is the subject of considerable analysis (pp. 105-137), including a detailed description of the classroom [a map is provided later on (p. 140)] and how that relationship affects student and teacher movement and activities (pp. 107-112). The social networks of teachers and others in the school, the social networks of students and other children and adults in the school, and the normative and value frameworks of the school fill out Goetz' picture of the school (pp. 112-137). Again, this description blends with the research, providing both context and content of the study. Cox (1980) gives an entire chapter of her dissertation to describing the research setting. The physical location, population, economy, politics, religion, and surrounding area are briefly considered (pp. 21-22). This is followed by a more exhaustive description of the school, including a brief history with emphasis upon the previous and current sociodemographics of the population that have some bearing upon the school [a map of the community is included] (pp. 22-25). The structural layout of the school is detailed and a drawing of the school included (pp. 26-27) followed by time schedules of the kindergartens (p. 28). The physical environment of the classroom is also described and mapped by Cox (pp. 28-31). The demographic characteristics of students are briefly described [including the teacher's opinions of those characteristics] (pp. 25-26) and later elaborated (pp. 31-33), including population turnover, racial makeup, and family characteristics.

The three schools studied by King (1978) were described in terms of social class, occupation of adults, family characteristics, style and quality of housing, school building architecture, and social services available (pp. 78-82, 85). He used survey data from research he had earlier conducted, a social services survey, census data, interviews, and a brief observation to compile this information.

King (1978, pp. 17-19) reports that he made a 26 page description of the contents of one classroom he observed, although he was able to summarize the architecture and objects in the room into a two page outline for his report. He also provided a two page description of the typical schedule of events for the school day.

Only one paragraph is given by Bossert (1979, p. 20) to describing the physical and social context of the school studied. He specifically notes that it is not meant to represent elementary schools in the United States generally. He emphasizes the selective nature of the school [private, upper middle class] and the exceptional autonomy given to teachers. In contrast with this very brief description of general context, the characteristics of the four classrooms studied, as well as the teachers, are given an entire chapter of the book. He notes that the physical environments of the classrooms were quite similar but those contexts had little influence upon the structures of activities or interactions (p. 21), thus he highlighted stylistic and structural elements of teaching rather than physical aspects of the rooms. Best (1983, p. 1) describes the elementary school in terms of general region and social class ["one of the most affluent counties in the United States"]. Little else about the school and student demographics is provided.

Mehan (1979, pp. 24-25) devotes four paragraphs to portraying the research setting. Buildings in the surrounding neighborhood are briefly described, as well as sociodemographic features of the community [income, unemployment, occupations, education levels, size and female head of households]. Ethnic changes to the neighborhood are summarized as is the ethnic composition of the school. A drawing of the school classroom is included.

The physical location of the town is revealed, as well as population characteristics, layout of buildings and railroad, interests and activities, and annual events of the community, in Baker's (1985, pp. 34-36) ethnography. The physical layout of the school, including position of classrooms, is considered as well as some of the daily events. The playground, the specific location of the study, is considered in detail, including topography (a drawing is included), equipment available, and location of games (pp. 38-52).

The context of Borman and Lippincott's (1982, p. 129, 130) study was described as an inner-city school playground. More specifically, the context was determined by the emergence of three different games observed: hopscotch, kissers and chasers, and tag.

Entering the Setting

Following the advice of school system officials, Herrera (1988, pp. 43-44) approached the school principal with a research plan, which included reasons research was needed in that kind of school, the general research design, and the intended focus. He also prepared to verbally present details on his specific methods of obtaining data. During the initial meeting with the principal, reciprocal agreements were made, including a promise of confidentiality of the school and participants and a mutual promise of freedom of activity.

The second level of negotiating entry was a meeting with the district superintendent, in which again the general parameters of the research were explained. The locations within the school to be researched were approved, while the superintendent specifically excluded lavatories from the study. Again confidentiality was assured, a matter stressed by the superintendent (p. 44). Herrera (1988, p. 42) states that being given permission to conduct research does not require that every person to be studied grants permission, nor that every aspect of the research has been granted. Thus the researcher must negotiate permission of participants for interviews, a second level of entry. In addition he was required to obtain permission to view school documents (p. 44).

Metz (1978, p. 11, 260) obtained permission from the principals of the two schools studied, and sent letters asking permission from parents, followed up by telephone calls to non-responders. Several parents questioned the researcher during the follow up calls, but she reassured them that youngsters would only be questioned about school life (p. 261). Principals were also uncomfortable with Metz talking with

students outside the formal interview. She comments that the uneasiness of both parents and principals may reflect the relationship between schools and parents.

Goetz (1975, pp. 292-293) describes considerable difficulty in finding an accessible research site. The eventual choice of setting was as much a matter of fortuitous circumstances as it was deliberation. The teacher and researcher had become acquainted prior to research, and selection of the classroom as a research site was suggested by a mutual acquaintance. The instructor responded positively to the initial suggestion of research, and subsequently asked the principal if Goetz could conduct research in her classroom (pp. 118-119, 294). During an initial interview with the principal, he expressed fear that the researcher might in some way upset parents, and expressed general distress about the conducting of research. He apparently presumed that a researcher would negatively evaluate the school. However, permission was granted and the principal was cooperative thereafter.

As noted earlier, entry was facilitated in Cox's (1980, p.5) study because she knew the school administrators, had a daughter in the school, and had taught the classroom teacher. The school board approved her research proposal subject to approval by the principal and teacher, which had been obtained previously. In contrast to a research proposal, King (1978, 4) gave little indication of what he was looking for in doing observation because, as he admits, he really did not know. Permission was received from the headmistress of an early elementary school to do his research. Initial entry was by a brief visit to the research site, during which no notes were taken, then observations gradually took longer and longer periods of time until eventually they extended throughout the entire school day. Three successive sites were observed, following this same approach.

Baker (1985) describes her entry as being initiated by "key gatekeepers" (p. 10). The first gatekeeper was the university professor that supervised her as a teacher assistant at the school. She initiated the research through a pilot study at the school for a sociolinguistics class, as well as independent observation of two girls in the third grade of the school (pp. 53- 53). She then approached the principal of the school, who had been very accessible during her previous time at the school, and asked permission to do the pilot project as well as eventual dissertation research (pp. 54-57). The principal was asked if permission was needed from a higher level, and he stated this was unnecessary. She also approached the three teachers of the classes, two for whom she had supervised student teachers (pp. 57- 61). An outline of the project was presented as well as guidelines that would ensure non-obtrusiveness [i.e. not interfering with teachers on the playground]. The initial proposal was thorough, but she allowed the expression of concerns and questions [apparently by school officials] (p. 10).

Thompson (1989, p. 6) mentions approval by the University prior to entering the setting of her research, as well as gaining the permission of 16 of the 19 children's parents -- the other 3 children were not included in her study.

The first grade children in Borman and Lippincott's (1982, p. 131) study were described as being informed about the recording of their play.

Summary and Applications

Choice of school locations in the studies examined was quite varied. Ease of entry and preexisting relationships are the reasons provided by Cox, Baker, and Mehan [the difficulties finding a location for study noted by Goetz further confirms the importance of this criterion]. It is important for the school to have characteristics that allow for the activity to be studied [Baker sought a school that had a free play recess, likewise in a transitions study the chosen school needs to have several activities outside the classroom during the day so that there are a number of transitions to be studied]. King notes that when multiple sites are used, variations between sites make commonalities more likely to be generalizable, which would also be important for a multiple site transitions study. King notes that additional sites can even be added after a study begins. Agar (1980, p. 23) also comments that site selection can be fortuitous. Specific locations within a particular school are similarly varied in the studies cited. Teaching approaches were the

criterion for choice of classrooms in Bossert's study. Knowing a certain teacher may have influenced Goetz' and Cox's choice of classrooms. Interest in a certain grade level apparently directed some researcher's choices. Lancy (1993, p. 9) comments that contexts that are confined by time and place best suit the phenomenological framework of qualitative research, a criterion clearly met by hallways to be researched in a transitions study. Herrera [borrowing heavily from Metz' earlier work] makes a strong case that education takes place in the hallways of middle schools, and hallways also reflect the education from the classroom. This provides an important rationale for intensive study of that area of the school at the elementary level as well. The framework for a comprehensive description of setting can be distilled from the above studies. That framework includes: 1)the community -- region, unemployment, ethnicity, social class, social services, family characteristics, politics, religion, occupations, population turnover, style and quality of buildings, size of city/town, views of education, and career expectations for children, maps of community.

2)the school system/district -- ethnicity represented, social class.

3)school buildings -- architecture, physical locations of rooms, hallways, offices, & playground. Drawings/maps often included.

4)organization of school -- socially, organizationally.

5)history of school.

6)leadership of school -- ethnicity, progressive/ traditional.

7)annual schedule of events -- of school or classroom.

8)classroom -- physical description, drawings/maps, relation to rest of school or other teachers.

9)teachers & other staff -- ethnicity, background, perceptions of community, career expectations of children, interactions with one another and children, degree of autonomy, years of experience.

10)students [detailed at length in the next section of this report].

All aspects of the above ten categories are not represented in any single study cited, but this compilation suggests areas that may need to be included in descriptions of settings. It is interesting that Goetz uses these contextual factors as part of her research analysis. Herrera's diagrams of traffic flow during middle school transitions are also noteworthy, suggesting a possible area of analysis for elementary transitions research as well.

Permission to conduct research and gain entry was quite varied in the studies cited. The most commonly cited source of permission was the principal, mentioned by Herrera, Metz, Goetz, King, Baker, and Cox. Parental permission was obtained by Metz and Thompson, while teacher permission is specifically noted by Goetz, Metz and Cox [this was implied by others]. Only one mention of permission is noted from the superintendent [Herrera], the school board [Cox], a university [Thompson], and the children studied [Borman & Lippincott]. It is quite likely that other permissions were gained but not mentioned, particularly permission from the university for dissertation studies, and ethics committees for any university-related study. Herrera mentions permission from those interviewed, but he only interviewed administrators. The variation in permissions requested and granted puzzled me as I anticipate dissertation research. I suspect university procedures and committee members will provide guidance in this area.

In two cases [Herrera and Baker] entry was expedited by a written research plan or outline, including reasons for the research, design, and focus. In other cases the research plans were apparently given verbally. Permission also involved pledges of confidentiality [Herrera and implied by most others]

and unobtrusiveness [Baker, Herrera, and implied by most others]. The pledge of confidentiality appeared to be somewhat compromised in Herrera's study, as he described the school as being within the Boston school system, provided a great deal of description of the surrounding community, and even included a map of the school. Would not most public educators in the Boston school system, as well as many people in general in that area, be able to determine the location? I wondered if I might even be able to determine the precise school by simply describing the school to someone in the Boston area. I would hope to be able to protect confidentiality to a greater extent in my proposed research.

Participants

Once the setting has been chosen, researchers must decide which individuals within that setting will be studied. Sampling may be done using probabilistic assumptions so that the sample represents the whole group (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, pp. 56, 60). Conversely, researchers may choose students by variety of classroom setting, comparing and contrasting their findings. More typically ethnographers use a dynamic selection process which changes during the research process (p. 65). Nine criteria have been described for selecting groups and subgroups either before or during research (pp. 69-78), with four additional strategies of selection that are more commonly used later in the research process (pp. 250-253).

Selecting Participants

The youngsters in Metz's (1978) study were chosen in two different ways. The twenty children interviewed were carefully selected to balance gender, track of study, and history of disciplinary action (p. 12). She gave preference to students that had earlier been observed in classes so the behavior seen previously could be utilized [this may have introduced some bias in selection, she notes] (p. 256). Teachers were chosen by Metz based upon grade level taught [eighth grade] and variety of subjects taught (p. 255). In another segment of her study, Metz used selective sampling procedures. This involved seeking crisis and conflict situations in the school, whether they were overwhelming or trivial. She stated that the observations were clearly influenced by this strategy, as she might write several pages about a thirty second time period and perhaps only a brief paragraph from fifteen minutes of a class period (p. 12). Metz emphasizes that this purposive sampling procedure can produce subjective interpretations, but she used the awareness of her prejudices and preferences to help her observe those aspects she would generally be tempted to deny. She also minimized subjectivity by avoiding conclusions unless several sources confirmed those ideas, and a preference was made for different kinds of sources of data for conclusions [e.g. observation and interview] (p. 13). When ideas were described that did not meet these rules, notations in the report warned of the tentativeness of the conclusion. Because purposive sampling was used, generalization about how common events were, could not be stated, although broad approximations were noted [e.g. "few" or "most"]. Participants in the study by Cox (1980) were selected because she wished to examine the genesis of the student role in school. Thus kindergarten, the first level of elementary school, was the logical choice, and the first day is given a prominent place (pp. 37-43) because it underscores the very initial phase of this learning process.

Jackson (1990, p. xxiii) began by studying two fourth-grade classrooms, and later extended the study to a first grade and later a second grade class. Similarly, King (1978, p. 4-5) began by observing one class, but soon decided to observe other classes within the five to eight age range, and eventually extended his work to classes in this range of ages in three different schools. Describing Participants

Implicit in some of the selection criteria noted previously is description of participants. Most researchers also describe the children studied in greater detail beyond selection guidelines.

As noted earlier, the students studied by Herrera (1988) and Metz (1978) were both in middle school. Herrera's population was described by ethnicity, with the large majority being African American, Hispanic, or other minorities. Similarly, the junior high school studied by Metz was a desegregated urban school, with a population dominated by African Americans from working class families, although unlike Herrera's school the desegregation had been willingly initiated and encouraged by local leaders (p. 9). Metz

considered the students she studied as being unlikely to cooperate or be civil (p. x), as students tended to challenge the school rather than accept it (p. 11). Most of the upper class youngsters were cooperative in interviews, and seemed pleased to be interviewed, while those in the lower tracks either adjusted quickly to the interview context or appeared somewhat embarrassed [perhaps confusing the researcher with a court worker or psychologist]. However, consistent with Metz' expectations, most students readily criticized teachers and those that did not apologized for their failure in this respect (p. 261)! Metz particularly emphasized that the students she studied were non-typical because the school had recently been integrated and therefore the school was still unsettled (pp. ix-x).

In her innovative approach Goetz (1975) makes description of the classroom children a part of her study, as she compared views of the youngsters and occupational aspirations for the children by parents, teachers, and others in the community.

In his description of the early elementary student population King (1978, 83) included the percentage of youngsters receiving free lunches, the student/teacher ratio, and the number of years of experience each teacher had. Interestingly he then fuses a detailed description of the participants into part of the study, including teachers' typologies of students (p. 86), reading and arithmetic scores as they were interpreted by teachers to describe students, speech characteristics and general knowledge of students as portrayed in teachers' depictions of students (p. 87), and teacher representations of home characteristics of children, including income, family size, employment, and broken homes (p. 90).

The students in Best's (1983, p. 1) study were six to eight years old at the beginning of the study. While she considered race as a potential variable in her work, all of the initial children studied were white (p. 2). However she felt some of the findings might relate to African American children who are rejected from their peer groups. During the second, third and fourth years of the study, racial balance was achieved at the school, as "the school became known as a little United Nations" (p. 2). At the same time vandalism was maintained at a very low rate. The focus throughout her study was upon children, and teachers -- though a very important aspect of the environment-- were considered to be merely part of the environment of children rather than taking "leading roles in the drama" (p. 3).

The students in Mehan's (1979) study were only briefly described. They were in a class that mixed first through third graders from a very impoverished area of San Diego (pp. xi-xii). Baker (1985, pp. 8, 33) notes the single grade level of her participants, as well as the multiple [three] classrooms at that grade level. Mexican American and Anglo children were equally represented, but only two African American females were present. The kindergartners Thompson (1989, p. 9) studied were children of students or employees of the university, and thus were more homogeneous than most children in public schools. She studied them near the end of the kindergarten year so they would have some common experience together (p. 6).

The children observed by Borman and Lippincott (1982, p. 129) were described as seven-year-old Appalachian children from an inner-city area. The employment of parents was cited as evidence for socioeconomic class (p. 130).

Summary and Applications

Categorizing the selection procedures described in these studies is sometimes difficult. Using LeCompte and Preissle's (1993, pp. 72-78) designations, Metz apparently uses quota selection in attempting to balance gender, track, and history of the children interviewed. Her later seeking of students in conflict situations might possibly be considered an extreme case selection procedure. Cox's selection of kindergarten to study the genesis of the student role appears to be use of the ideal case strategy. Herrera and some of the others cited apparently might used a variation of comprehensive selection, in that an entire classroom is studied, or as with Herrera, a section of the school is studied. I must confess to considerable reservation in attempting to classify the above selection strategies, as these strategies are not named by these researchers and their descriptions do not precisely fit all of the characteristics described by LeCompte

and Preissle. In my projected study of elementary school children, I believe the selection of participants might be considered a variation of comprehensive selection, in that the entire population of a school could theoretically be involved. Children would be observed that go into the hallway, for whatever reason. Yet I suspect a single class would be most likely to be in a hallway at any given time, which would be less than comprehensive at that moment. If the whole school day was studied, theoretically the selection would be comprehensive [unless some students never entered the hallway]. Quota selection would be more likely in determining which students would be interviewed in the projected study.

Some of the commonalities across the descriptions of participants can be generalized. Characteristics of teachers were considered in the previous section on setting. For students, characteristics considered include:

- 1) race/ethnicity
- 2) grade level/age
- 3) degree of cooperativeness/other reactions
- 4) academic track
- 5) student/teacher ratio
- 6) teacher typologies of students
- 7) home environment [see previous section on setting]
- 8) number of students
- 9) common experiences with peers
- 10) socioeconomic status

These constitute suggested aspects of students that might be described in a study of elementary school transitions.

Researcher Role and Experience

Ethnography, perhaps more than any other research tradition, emphasizes the distinctive contribution the human researcher brings to the study (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, pp. 86-87). The researcher is considered the instrument in ethnography (pp. 91-91) and thus relevant past experience of the researcher, as well as the role the researcher takes in the setting, can influence perceptions. Rather than trying to minimize these influences, [the notion of complete objectivity has been obsolete since the 1920's - see LeCompte and Preissle, p. 145], ethnography characteristically emphasizes that they be carefully described and examined so readers can better understand how role and experience

may have influenced findings. In addition, ethnographers attempt to suspend preconceptions by not making assumptions or taking things for granted as they attempt to understand the perspectives of participants (pp. 44-45).

Researcher Experience

While the relevance of the researcher's past experience is an important factor in ethnography, it is a bit surprising that so little space is given to self-description in the studies examined for this review. Most commonly a brief vita or less is the only such analysis provided.

Metz (1978, pp. 257-258) emphasizes her lack of teaching experience and lack of background in education may have made her more credible to those she studied. Other personal characteristics, being a woman, a student, and young, were thought to make her less threatening to the students studied. She also described herself as "mild mannered" and she made conscious use of her style with her other characteristics as part of her strategy of research. All of these factors combined to influence the role she embraced, that of being a learner, to be considered later in this section.

Goetz (1975, p. 310-315) describes preconceptions that may have influenced her findings, and kept her from a "disinterested, outside perspective." She admits a bias in favor of formal education. At one point differences of perspective and values from the teacher surfaced, which were partially resolved by Goetz accepting the teacher's reference point and acknowledging that some of the same objectives they shared could be accomplished in diverging ways. She also notes that her position as a teacher trainer at a university may have influenced the teacher of the class studied to expect feedback (p. 297).

University training and teaching was thought to have facilitated Goetz' understanding of the language of education and her overall effectiveness, in part because the culture of the school is better understood (p. 311-312). In contrast Jackson (1990, p. xiii) felt the familiarity of the classroom tended to lull the observer into inattention. As Lancy (1993) noted, researchers who have been teachers tend to be as aware of the classroom environment as fish are aware of water. His vivid analogy is compelling, but it is also possible that Goetz' teaching experience made her even more aware of that environment than a casual observer.

Other sources of prejudice and influence that were unknown were also possible, Goetz suggests. Admitting sources of bias clearly and in an obvious manner, as well as describing as objectively as possible, may be preferable to absolute neutrality, she concludes.

The above comments about past experiences and possible biases of the researcher are the most extensive found in all the studies examined for this review. Two others included a brief vita at the conclusion of their dissertations (Herrera, 1988, p. 250; and Baker, 1985, p. 452), although Goetz' vita is by far the most complete of all those studied (p. 316). In addition, Cox (1980, p. 5) notes that she had taught the teacher of the class she studied.

Researcher Role

The researcher role can vary from complete participant to detached observer, with intermediary positions of participant observer or observer as participant (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, pp. 93-94). Actually these roles can change as a study progresses, and in longer studies the participants tend to forget the researcher is observing and may consider her or him solely a participant (p. 94). The role established affects the information acquired as well as which sources will provide information (p. 101).

The initial role given Herrera (1988, p. 46) was provided by the principal who introduced him as "someone who 'wants to know more about urban middle schools and will help me in my office'." For the first three weeks he lounged around, simply observing activities and drawing maps of the school environment. This was intended to help him become acquainted with the building layout as well as reduce the influence of being an observer (p. 47). His presence was conspicuous, and people often observed the maps he was drawing, and offered advice for improvement. Casual conversations during this time [primarily with administrators apparently] provided the relational framework from which valuable information was derived later in the study. [It appears to me that the relational framework being described was more with administrators than with teachers or students.] Systematic observation did not begin until four weeks into the study, when the presence of the researcher was thought to have less effect (p. 48).

Subsequently he made use of two roles, one more passive and the other more active (pp. 52-54). His passive role was that of a spectator, watching and taking notes. The second role was as an active observer, by positioning himself in locations typical for either school adults or students, to gain more of the perspective of each.

Roles are often acquired when a researcher meets teachers and students. Metz (1978) was introduced by the principal to the teachers. After that point the principal had little to do with the researcher's activities. In each class Metz allowed the teacher to decide whether to introduce her or not, and suggested that she simply be identified as an observing university student [student observers were common in the school] (p. 259).

Metz also described her role to others as that of a "learner." She notes observing that this role often resulted in helping make wary individuals more comfortable as they began informing her. She also emphasized the need to avoid displeasing those in authority within the school, and a good reputation tends to be communicated throughout the school population. Since those studied realized she had access to many details about their school [she conveyed this by asking about specific events or analyses made by unnamed persons], they were more open to revealing information that they probably would not share with outsiders. During interviews youngsters sometimes grasped Metz' role as a researcher, but others only understood she was writing a lengthy paper on schools.

Goetz (1975, p. 303) attempted to convey her role to students by initially stating that she wanted "to study third graders." However, occasionally students and teacher asked her to "keep an eye on things" emphasizing supervision which contradicted her research-oriented role. Goetz specifically disclaimed the role of teacher or authority in interactions with students [e.g. she referred many instructional matters to the teacher] may have influenced findings. In addition, ethnographers attempt to suspend preconceptions by not making assumptions or taking things for granted as they attempt to understand the perspectives of participants (pp. 44-45).

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emphasizing supervision which contradicted her research-oriented role. Goetz specifically disclaimed the role of teacher or authority in interactions with students [e.g. she referred many instructional matters to the teacher] and attempted to "expunge . . . teacher-like behaviors" (p. 312). Eventually the role of friendship predominated in the classroom, while a student role was virtually assumed outside of the room (p. 304-305). A bit later, in reaction to a student inquiry, her role was expanded when students learned that the observations would eventually become a book (pp. 305-306). They conversed occasionally with the researcher from time to time, and made comments about research-related activities [e.g. discovering the field notes, seeing their names in notes, discussing the book being written, and even directing the researcher's attention to certain interpersonal activities].

In her relationships with faculty and staff, Goetz maintained a general teacher-like stance. This is implied by the fact that teachers generally interacted with her much as they did the teacher she studied (p. 308).

It is possible that those studied may act differently during a study because of the presence of the researcher. A lengthy study helps avoid this problem (Goetz, 1975, p. 297). Goetz attempted to minimize her influence upon the classroom by not giving the teacher evaluative comments until the end of the study. This caused some difficulty, however, as the teacher desired some feedback (p. 297). The researcher cited several instances in which her own behavior might have affected the students and teacher she studied, including reactions to the teacher [either approval or withholding any reaction], asking the children to write essays, reactions ["I listened, questioned, probed"] to the problem of a student, and even her own appreciation to the teacher for allowing the study (pp. 295-309). [I also wonder if reduction of need for the teacher's approval and attention, and expansion of opportunities students had to interact, described on p. 305, might also have influenced classroom behavior.] Goetz comments that maintaining a neutral stance in relation to others in the study is difficult and perhaps not even desirable (p. 298) because it can interfere with establishing needed rapport (p. 299). She suggests that ethnographers might communicate reactions, but document them and describe how those reactions might have influenced data and analysis (pp. 299, 302).

Cox (1980, p. 6) describes her role as that of a participant observer, beginning on the first day of school, although she attempted to be as unobtrusive as she could initially. She sat in the corner writing notes most of the time, although she mingled with the children during the structured playtime. Thus the children came to understand her to be a kindergarten worker of some sort, but not a teacher.

In the King (1978) research, students inevitably defined him as a teacher or assistant, even though he avoided aspects of both of those roles. He attempted to create social distance from students by standing upright rather than moving to their level as teachers did. He smiled when students talked to him, but referred any questions they asked to the teacher. He avoided eye contact with students. This nonparticipant observer role was taken to avoid influencing events (p. 5) as well as to avoid interruption of his observing (p. 4). During interviews with teachers he tried to convey his desire for understanding, and after several weeks he reported that teachers came to see him as benign and not a threat (p. 6).

In the Bossert (1979, pp. 19-20) study, the researcher avoided a passive observer role in favor of frequent interaction with teachers and children. Children sought assistance and conversation with the researcher, and rapport was developed through their interaction. He noted that this rapport sometimes interfered with the taking of notes, but the information that resulted from these contacts justified the interruption of note-taking and possible decrease in accuracy of the record. Conversations with children took place during recess as well as during work periods. Bossert was accepted as an observer because visitors often came to the school.

Best (1983, p. 2) remarked that to take a non-participant observer role tended to dampen teacher and student behavior, thus she became a participant observer. This involved eating lunch with children, being a friend, working with them on projects in class and playing with them at recess. Even though she did not take a teacher role, the children studied considered the researcher part of the school organization

because she was an adult within the context of the school building. However, they also saw the researcher as "on their side."

In her recess study, Baker (1985) briefly describes establishing her role as a researcher with teachers (pp. 61-66). She found that the teacher on recess duty would sometimes look in her direction when disciplining youngsters, apparently seeking approval or expressing embarrassment for the researcher observing the transaction. Baker attempted to alleviate embarrassment by mentioning her own teaching and playground responsibilities. She eventually began turning away when confrontations between the supervisor and a child appeared imminent. Covert instruction of monitors to allow her a researcher role was required, which took much of the time during the first three weeks of research. Initially teachers tended to move wherever the researcher went for the purpose of "teacher talk," which significantly interfered with observing. Baker excused herself from the teacher and moved to another area, in an attempt to better observe. Monitors also tended to impose the responsibility of discipline or mediation of children's conflicts upon the researcher, which was refused. I suspect that some of these role difficulties were in part because she had been a student teacher supervisor at the school.

Baker emphasized the need for a role close to children so their reality would be more observable from a vantage point as close to that of a child as possible (p. 8). She was required by the children to perform what was considered "rites of passage" to enter into that culture (p. 11). Considerable analysis is given to this process by which children gradually allowed Baker to examine their distinctive recess culture (pp. 66-120). Initially children directed her to certain areas of the playground and the researcher was rarely allowed to observe without a child at her side. Children constantly asked why Baker was on the playground, which was answered by simply stating she wanted to watch them play. This occurred repeatedly for several days. Sometimes they would try to outdo one another in some task, for the researcher's attention. She began to walk away from such displays because they required some sort of evaluative reaction. The researcher came to realize that the constant questioning of her role was not from the desire to acquire information, but rather to keep the researcher occupied and restricted to one area of the playground. She refused to grant permission or give other assistance normally expected of teachers and other adults at the school. Eventually this initial surveillance stage began to recede and the researcher was able to take on a role of being "a worthless intruder, an inconvenience to their purposes and needs." Children were a bit perturbed that she did not react as other adults at the school reacted, feeling that she was not performing her job as expected. She found that changing her manner of dress [from that of teachers to casual styles] resulted in the students treating her less and less like an adult or teacher. Eventually students almost completely ignored the researcher, although they never accepted her as a full participant in the recess culture; she was able to achieve a level of acceptance by the children and participate in some, though not all, of the playground activities. She noted that the change in role from only observing to playing with them, as well as increasing acceptance by the children, corresponded with changes in touch patterns -- from pats, to stroking, and finally to "jovial jesting."

Summary and Applications

While the relevance of the researcher's past experience is an important factor in ethnography, it is a bit surprising that so little space is given to self-description in these studies. Metz and Goetz are unusual in the self-reflective comments they provide; more commonly a brief vita is the most complete picture given by authors, and these only in dissertations. This seems to be a major oversight in the studies considered, as the background of the researcher can clearly affect not only observations but analysis of qualitative data. If this background is to be openly examined for its potential influence upon research results, how can this occur without a full description of relevant past experiences?

I hope to include a fairly extensive description of my background, relevant both to the ethnographic method and educational contexts, in the proposed transitions research, so others can evaluate the research for potential bias. My professional educational background, being a college educator, would provide the familiarity with language noted by Goetz, yet the vastly different level of experience (college vs. elementary school) should help me avoid the inattention mentioned by Jackson. Using Lancy's vivid analogy, I'd be a fish in different water -- or at least a very different fishbowl.

The role taken by ethnographers varies somewhat from study to study. The role taken is strongly related to the research method [interactive vs. non-interactive], to be considered in the next section of this report.

A neutral stance toward participants is difficult and perhaps undesirable, Goetz commented, due to the need for rapport. Attempt to avoid giving feedback to avoid influencing the environment resulted in less rapport. No reaction can still affect what occurs. Similarly, King attempted to avoid any role or interaction with participants, but also admitted that it took several weeks before he was no longer seen as a threat to those he observed. Lancy (1993, p. 240) comments that the non-role option is probably threatening because the researcher may be considered a spy.

The entry role taken by Metz, a school observer, seems like an excellent role, especially if students have had previous observers from nearby colleges or universities. This is similar to the part of Herrera's role as "someone who wants to know more about schools," but quite inconsistent with the other aspect of his role of "helping the principal." [From the tone of Herrera's dissertation, I suspect the latter part of the role, being an assistant to the principal, was dominant. His writing implies that he was almost always a distant observer of students {though sympathetic to their plight}, and although he mentions having informal conversations with teachers, his rather critical comments about nearly all the teachers studied suggests distance in this relationship as well].

Another role taken, that of being a writer, was mentioned by Metz and Goetz. LeCompte (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p. 96) notes that this can become problematic, however, as students may "perform in ways they believed would make good copy" as they had seen on television programs.

Bossert attempts more or less a friend or helper role with children, and was apparently quite successful. However, he noted that this role interfered with observations, interference that he believed was justifiable to gaining an emic perspective.

Baker's eventual role, subsequent to the "rites of passage," as a playmate and peer, is somewhat similar to Bossert's. Yet she was not completely allowed to assume it by the children, probably because she had the appearance of an adult. Her attempt was informative and may have helped her observe some aspects of the children's perspective, yet it was in the end only an approximation of the peer role.

The role of teacher is specifically disclaimed by Goetz, Cox, King, and Baker. Best refused to take the teacher role, but was still identified with the school organization and yet considered on the side of children. While disclaiming a teacher role with children, Goetz affirmed aspects of that role with staff and teachers. The variation of role according to location [teacher's lounge vs. classroom] is interesting and might be quite useful, but might produce some complications in hallway contexts of a transitions study, where contradicting roles might be expected by teachers and students present.

I find the roles of student observer and friend/helper roles the most personally appealing of the options presented. In a transitions study, the student observer role would appear to be most compatible with observing in hallways and videotaping. While the friend/helper role might be useful in interviews, I doubt if a role change could be established in the brief time of the interview. Instead, I suspect the student observer could be continued, with an emphasis upon friendliness and rapport in the interview context. The writer role would be a good back up, should the student observer role fail.

It would almost appear that if one chooses to be a participant, influencing the environment is inevitable. To be a distant non-participant hardly seems compatible with the rapport needed to develop an emic perspective, basic to ethnography. Perhaps the goal is influencing the environment as little as possible, but simultaneously placing an emphasis upon participation and documenting the effects upon the environment when possible.

The comment about Herrera "lounging around" is similar to what LeCompte and Preissle (1993, p. 113) term "mapping" and "shagging around." This time of becoming acquainted and simply being present in the school environment can reduce researcher effects. This would be an important factor in hallway observations and videotaping in a school transitions study. Perhaps the videorecorder could somehow be disguised in a box or poster in a window [would students ever come to ignore a videorecorder completely?].

Data Collection Methods

LeCompte and Preissle (1993, pp. 158-233) categorize the methods of data collection into two general categories: interactive and non-interactive. In this section I will consider the timing of data collection, methodologies of collection, and methods of recording data.

Frequency and Duration of Data Collection

Herrera's (1988) study was longitudinal in design, taking place over one and a half years (p. 21). His observations were scheduled for two and one half days each week for three weeks, then one day each week thereafter (p. 46).

Metz (1978, p. ix) conducted research for more than one year, compiling more than a thousand pages of field notes and three thousand pages of transcripts of interviews. Two months were spent at a ninth grade school as a pilot study, then she conducted the study at two schools concentrating upon eighth grade students for the entire school year (p. 11).

Goetz (1975, p. 294) observed a single classroom over a period of five months. She reports varying the schedule of observations, sometimes accompanying the teacher to lunch or at recess while at other times staying with the children (p. 308).

Cox (1980, p. 6) observed a kindergarten class for two hours a day [though not every day], the full school day for that section of children between September and June. Thus about 132 hours of observation took place over a 66 day period.

King (1978, p. 4), as noted earlier, used successively longer periods of time each visit until full days were observed. In all, 32 field notebooks were filled with half a million words, describing events over a 600 hour period and involving thirty- eight teachers (pp. 4-5). King concentrated his attention upon recurring events common to most classrooms (p. 7).

Bossert (1979, p. 14) watched two classrooms over a six month period about three to four hours each week. He observed for 40 to 60 minutes each time, and observations were rotated so that all classroom activities could be sampled.

Initially in the Mehan (1979, pp. 25-28) study the researchers observed the classroom regularly to gain an overall perspective of what occurred and to determine a schedule for videotaping. Only the initial hour of classroom behavior was videotaped during the first week, then one hour each day was recorded on each third week. Taping extended from the first day of the school year until April, when the research focus changed. The taping of events over an entire school year helped determine if activities change with time and the generality of the events. Mehan notes that the event schedule and physical environment influenced placement of the videocamera.

Twice each day, during each of two recess periods, Baker (1985, p. 328) examined children on the playground. These observations took thirty to forty minutes each day over a one year period. She also compiled several hundred pages of transcriptions from twenty hours of audio tape.

Best's research (1983, p. 1) was conducted over a four year period. The kindergartners in Thompson's (1989, p. 7) study were interviewed over a period of two months.

Borman and Lippincott (1982, p. 129) observed children over eight weeks, thirty minutes a day, producing twenty hours of videotape. These observations took place at the same time each morning [during recess prior to the beginning of school], and conditions were not considered to have varied over that time (p. 130-131). The length of interviews varied from study to study. Metz spent about forty minutes with each interview (p. 257). In contrast, Thompson's (1989, p. 15) interviews lasted only ten to fifteen minutes in a small room near the kindergarten class.

Interactive Methods

Ethnography primarily involves participant observation as the method of data collection (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p. 195). Interviews are also regularly used for the purpose of triangulation of data.

Herrera (1988, 50-52) states his basic approach was participant observation. This was used for a number of reasons, including the fact that it allows multiple variables to interact simultaneously, and that significance is the result of what people value rather than being determined statistically. This approach also was seen as an open-ended approach that allows analysis to begin immediately. If data fails to provide sufficient detail, immediate changes in data collection strategies can be made.

Herrera positioned himself so that both student and teacher/administrator viewpoints were possible. For example he stood in the center of the hallway during class changes, which was considered relatively normal for an adult in the school. He also located himself near the door of the bus, observing adults much as students did as they left the bus, then took the position of adults observing the buses, and finally two other alternative vantage points of the bus (p. 55). In general hallway observations, he varied his position according to a numbering system he developed so that different aspects of student movement and activity [rate, verbal content, etc.] would be clarified (pp. 55-56). To reduce the amount of information studied, Herrera purposefully reduced the area of the hallway observed. The different areas of hallways observed provided helpful comparisons and contrasts (p. 56).

Informal conversations with teachers were also used by Herrera in an attempt to gain more of an emic perspective, as well as confirm the results of observations (p. 58). These occurred spontaneously or during the teacher's free period. Generally he found the instructors willing to talk about their viewpoints and concerns regarding the school (p. 59).

Informants were used to some extent in Herrera's study. He chose two members of the staff who had high involvement in hallway and lunchroom social activities, and they sometimes encouraged him to talk with others who would give additional insights or confirm hunches (pp. 59-60).

Interviews were conducted with school personnel, including regular talks with the principal, and several interviews with administrators. All interviews included open-ended and semi-structured questions developed during the study, all of which were asked of those interviewed [questions were listed in an appendix (p. 225)].

Metz (1978, p. 11-12) describes her work as participant observation of students in hallways and other public areas of the school, although most of the time she was limited to watching and listening rather than interacting with students because questioning students was discouraged by principals (p. 261).

When in a classroom, Metz generally sat in the back of the classroom, and most students ignored her (pp. 259-260). Occasionally students attempted to get her attention by humorous actions, but the researcher learned to ignore those actions. During conflicts between a teacher and student, she put a blank expression on her face and did not write.

She also observed teachers in the cafeteria and teacher's lounge. Her observations involved alternating location and those she was with to avoid the appearance of preferring some person or group. Metz also avoided comments on topics related to the school or controversial subjects, "answering" a question with another question, making bland responses, or agreeing that the issue was definitely a problem (pp. 258-259). If those present pressed the issue further, which rarely occurred, she would plead her role as a learner to avoid a definitive answer. However, in discussing topics not related to the school, she made extra effort to participate so she could develop more rapport and balance the interaction. Metz also commented that she used quiet styles of dress as well as a facial expression and body position indicating interest without disapproval or approval in her interactions.

Metz also interviewed all teachers observed, twenty children, and administrators of the schools. Students were asked to come to interviews by sending a request [which became a hall pass] by messenger to the student's classroom (p. 259). Interviews allowed for free responses of participants (p. 12). Teacher interviews took place in empty classrooms or offices of administrators during a free period (p. 256), while those with the junior high students were done in a guidance worker's office or a storeroom during study hall. In Metz' study, the most cordial teachers were interviewed first so they would communicate a positive impression of the researcher to others (p. 258). The interviews were initiated with an explanation of what would happen and an opportunity for the student to defer [only one actually refused] (p. 260). The researcher found that parents of children in higher tracks had often explained to their children an interview would take place.

Participant observation and interviews were used by Goetz (1975, p. 16) as the primary means of obtaining data, supplemented with several artifacts. She also used four informants among students, two of which were leaders in the class while the other two were more marginal, thus providing somewhat of a cross-section of the students' viewpoints (p. 307). Goetz varied the perspective of observations so that the entire range of situations and events would be represented. This was accomplished by devoting one entire day of observation to each child, and several days' central attention to the teacher and other members of the staff (p. 309). Including a wide variety of activities and events also helped broaden the perspective.

Cox's (1980) observation concentrated upon those actions that defined and structured the student role, the object of the study. She supplemented in-classroom observations with interviews of the teacher and principal (p. 34).

Each teacher at the school studied by King (1978, p. 2) was interviewed in a relatively unstructured manner. The meanings conferred by teachers were obtained by asking teachers why they did certain actions, using specific rather than abstract questions.

Observations, conversations of an informal nature, and formal interviews with teachers and children were implemented in Bossert's work (1979, p. 17). The formal interviews with teachers concerned the problems and progress of students, and took place during the third, seventh, and twenty-first weeks of the study. The children were all interviewed during the ninth and tenth weeks, in which they were asked to compare the current teacher with that of the previous year, and their peer and classroom task preferences. [The outline for the formal interviews held with students and teachers are included in an appendix (pp. 102-103).] Numerous informal conversations were held with children and teachers in which they were questioned about specific activities.

Bossert did not use more fixed data collection procedures, based upon diadic interaction, because they tend to omit many kinds of social behavior in the classroom context (p. 18). Ethnographic approaches can include more complex interactions within groups (p. 19). Bossert also mentions informal conversations held with students, teachers, and others (p. 14).

In her research, Best (1983, p. 2) attempted to use non-verbal measuring instruments. However she found that children would only give reactions they thought the adult wanted to hear, thus she made use of more qualitative methods.

Thompson (1989, p. 7, 14) describes her interviews as based upon the clinical interview developed by Piaget. She asked questions about recess [these were not listed], yet allowed the children to speak spontaneously and freely. Follow up questions were used to help children clarify statements. The entire interview was tape recorded and later transcribed. As will be noted in the next section, the children were later interviewed regarding drawings they made of recess (p. 16).

Non-interactive Methods

Nonparticipant observation is used by ethnographers on some occasions, in which the observer takes on a detached uninvolved role (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p. 205). While this is rarely used at the beginning of a study, it becomes appropriate as verification and refinement of findings take place later in the study, or if comprehensive descriptions of behavior are desired (p. 206). Artifacts such as books, games, written records, and objects can also be studied (p. 216).

School documents were examined by Herrera (1988, pp. 62-63) as a data source as well as for adding precision to other data. He specifically used records relating to parents and documents from the time the school was desegregated for his analysis.

Herrera (1988, p. 55) used "shadowing" as students moved through hallways from the bus. Similarly, Metz (1978, p. 11) spent a day each following four children and fifteen teachers.

Goetz (1975, p. 308) employed eavesdropping as a method of gaining information about the school's social system [and probably other topics as well]. She also made use of several kinds of artifacts (p. 16) to supplement interviews and participant observation. These included the school records of students, a log which the teacher kept, everything which came to the classroom from outside that room, and a number of student products, including essays requested by the researcher.

Jackson (1990, p. xii) initially observed a classroom by attempting to mentally strip the context of all human significance, ignoring the content and concentrating upon mere physical events such as number of contacts or time spent in areas of the room. This was an attempt to make the familiar context strange to him, by adopting the position as a foreign outsider that knew nothing about the behavior of people in this environment. This first posture was later abandoned when he immersed himself in the content of the classroom, but he continued to value that initial phase because he learned that the ordinary and familiar are barriers that must be overcome (p. xiv). Jackson also notes that his involvement in qualitative research did not require that tests and questionnaires be given up entirely, but he emphasizes that they be used sparingly, while concentrating upon hearing and observing. Jackson utilized interviews (pp. 119-143) as well as quantitative research (pp. 47-81) to help fill out his analysis.

In addition to observations and interviews, King (1978, p. 8) used document analysis as a variety of methods adds to validity, he suggested. The drawings and writings of children, textbooks, and school records were studied, the latter particularly to distinguish the typologies teachers used in describing children which were compared with teachers' public and private statements about individual students (p. 58).

Drawings by children were requested by Thompson (1989, p. 7, 16) because they tapped non-verbal expressions. Immediately following the drawing exercise children were asked by the teacher to explain the drawing. The researcher then interviewed the child some time later regarding the content of the drawing. In a pilot study she practiced asking the questions to children to reveal which were unclear. Videotapes of children's play on the playground were made both prior to the drawings and afterward, the latter to verify some of the content of the drawing-based interviews. During the videotaping she described herself as keeping a distance from the children, although they occasionally asked what she was doing [she told them she was making a movie] and they jumped in the air to try to be in the picture (p. 17).

Methods of Recording Data

Ethnographers traditionally make use of field notes in their studies (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, pp. 224-228). Sometimes examples of field notes are even included in the report (e.g. Cox, 1980, pp. 113-119). However, they are increasingly likely to supplement these notes with both sound and visual recording devices (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, pp. 228-231).

Field notes described the routines and roles of participants, methods of communication, organization of events, and the constructions of relationships by adults and students in Herrera's (1988, p. 52) work. He describes a typical entry as including the situation, actors, setting, and a diagram of the interaction and position of actors. He also made audiotapes of interviews (p. 61). Goetz (1975) openly displayed the booklet of field notes in the classroom studied (p. 306), but she did not carry it with her outside the room (p. 308). Observations being interrupted by students wanting to visit was a difficulty occasionally.

Notes were taken throughout the day in King's (1978, p. 5) study, but as he considered note-taking of casual conversation to be impolite he used the restroom to record notes. Supplementary field notes were written in the evening in which he made comments upon the events of the day reflected in his main field notes. Audio tape recordings were made, concealing the recorder from students but with the full knowledge of teachers.

Bossert (1979, p. 14) used field notes but did not code or categorize those notes during observations. He also recorded informal conversations immediately after the interaction.

Videotaping involved use of two overhead microphones in Mehan's work (1979, pp. vii-xiv, 27). The first week of tapes was used for initial exploratory data, with the audio portion being transcribed (p. 28) as is often done in this kind of research (p. 19). The transcript was compared with the original videotape for accuracy, adding the identity of speakers and some nonverbal behavior (p. 28).

Field notes, a personal journal, and audio tapes were sources of data for Baker (1985, p. 11). She avoided making any notations when with the children, but wrote down events as soon as convenient thereafter. Later in the day details were added (p. 121). In addition to this descriptive data, she also made reflective comments about the emerging behavior patterns (pp. 124- 125), student reactions to changes in her role, hunches, ideas, and concerns (p. 128). She did not use a tape recorder during early observations because there were many other aspects of research with which to first become accustomed. After 28 days of observation, she began using the recorder (p. 129). Attempts at videotaping were unsatisfactory (p. 132) because children reverted to attention-getting behavior.

Tape recordings of children's play activities were used as the data base for Borman and Lippincott's (1982, p. 129) study. These were made by the children wearing a backpack that held the tape recorder. Field notes were also taken by observers in which the play activities were recorded, as well as the identity of the child speaking. The tapes were later transcribed.

Summary and Applications

What amount of time is needed for an ethnographic study of children in school? As emphasized earlier, ethnography requires time in the field, often more time than other research approaches. The amount of time varies from two months [Thompson, and Borman & Lippincott] to the four year study by Best, from twenty hours of taping [Borman & Lippincott] to hundreds of hours of observing and interviewing in several studies. The three dissertations examined required two months [Thompson], one semester [Goetz] and one and a half years [Herrera].

In a specific study, the amount of time is likely to vary depending upon the purposes of the research and methods of observation -- for example, a one hour videotape that could be re-viewed time and again to examine different aspects of activities, might substitute for several hours of observation. Several of the sources consulted for this review commented on the problem of too much data (Lancy, 1993, p. 243;

LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p. 232). It might be possible to collect sufficient data for a hallway transitions study in eight to ten weeks, including a couple of weeks for "mapping," a month of videotaping, and two to four weeks of interviews. Analysis, while beginning during the initial time period, would probably extend into several additional months after data collection. The research plan might include the option of adding more research time, if the analysis seems to call for it, perhaps at the same school or at another school, or perhaps part time at both schools.

Herrera's comment about taking different positions in the hallway to obtain alternate perspectives of what was happening is instructive, although I question whether this automatically gives the researcher an emic or participant perspective as he suggests. But the alternate positions and perspectives would help in making comparisons and contrasts of student behavior by location in the hallway, as well as assure multiple perspectives of the same locations. Goetz also mentions taking different perspectives, but she accomplished this by concentrating upon individual students on different days [as well as teacher and staff], as well as observing a variety of activities, rather than physically changing her position.

Herrera also describes "shadowing" students. His description of this method is a bit unclear, but I assume it involved following students through the hallways inconspicuously. I am not sure this method would accomplish much more than a good videotape, but I am open to that possibility. It is possible that Herrera "shadowed" more by focusing on a student, rather than physically following her or him, which would be similar to Goetz' concentration upon a single student for a day.

Herrera also describes informal conversations with teachers and interviews with adult leaders of the school. Herrera does not report any direct interactions with students except for one brief interchange (p. 171). Interestingly, he is very critical of authorities and teachers and a strong advocate of greater freedom for students in hallways and other areas of the school. But would not his student advocacy be more effective by incorporating interviews with students, or at least some informal discussions? I may be misjudging his work; other interactions with students may have taken place that were not recorded, or perhaps I missed a detail somewhere. In my anticipated transitions research, I want to emphasize interactions with students, probably within interviews, both in forming as well as verifying and refining constructs.

Interestingly, in neither of the two key studies of transitions in middle schools (Herrera and Metz) did the researchers attempt to be participant observers in the standard anthropological sense of involvement in ongoing social context. This was probably to avoid influencing what happened. The presence of an additional adult interacting with children would seem to be even more likely to influence children's behavior during transitions at the elementary level, similar to what Baker notes in her playground experience. In contrast, the presence of a hidden videocamera would probably cause little or no disruption [as long as it was not discovered!]. I must admit that I'm not completely comfortable with this conclusion, as I prefer the ethnographic ideal of interaction.

Metz' suggestions for not influencing the environment studied seem to me very helpful. The ignoring of attention getting behavior and avoiding school-related questions by teachers by an appeal to the learner role seem imperative to a study of hallway transitions.

Informants were mentioned by Goetz and Herrera. This would not seem necessary in transitions research that focused upon student behavior [Herrera's informants were administrators]. On the other hand, if a transitions study included the bathroom context, selected student informants would probably be the only viable manner of study [I do not currently envision the study of restrooms].

Unstructured interviews, as suggested by King, might be useful in a transitions study. If students are asked to explain what happens in a videotape of transitions activities, perhaps for the purpose of developing a taxonomy or simply to provide explanations, open-ended questions and encouragement of spontaneous comments could elicit an emic perspective.

Thompson's comment that Piagetian clinical interviews worked well for obtaining opinions and perspectives of younger children [kindergarteners in her case] merits some consideration. Another possibility, mentioned earlier in this report, is carefully monitoring the emotional and facial expressions of young children to determine their emic reactions. Might it be better for an initial study of transitions to confine itself to older elementary children [perhaps third, fourth, and fifth graders] who could verbally reflect to a greater extent? Or is there another alternative?

Informal conversations were mentioned by Bossert, King, Herrera, Goetz, and other researchers as a source of data. Similarly, eavesdropping was a source of information for Goetz. King and Bossert recorded notes on informal conversations after they occurred, and King's idea of writing them in the privacy of a bathroom is instructive and reflects his sensitivity to rapport with teachers. Transitions research might make use of this kind of data recording as well.

Non-participant methods fell into two categories: artifacts and non-participant observation. A variety of artifacts were mentioned by researchers, including school documents [Herrera, Goetz, King], a teacher log [Goetz], textbooks [King], and student products such as essays [Goetz, King] and drawings [King, Thompson]. Thompson, Mehan, and King all describe non-participant observation, although I am sure that some non-participant observation also occurs from time to time in what is ostensibly participant observation [the two kinds of observation do not seem discrete, and even those using non-participant observation might slip occasionally and at least smile at a student!]. Although Herrera remarks that his observations were participant in nature, his description suggests they were non-participant most of the time. I suspect non-participant observation in the hallways is probably the best way to avoid significantly changing the social context, but perhaps polite responses will not change it a great deal. Again, I'm open to alternate suggestions.

The mechanics of recording data are important for accuracy and completeness. Field notes, the staple of ethnography, were probably used by every researcher, but specifically mentioned by Herrera, Goetz, Baker, King, and Bossert. Baker's comment that she did not use field notes while with children, probably to encourage spontaneity, is in stark contrast with Goetz' comment that children looked at her notes and even imitated carrying similar booklets. Supplementary notes of comments on field notes are mentioned by King and Baker, and the latter also mentions a personal journal. I think my note taking would be somewhat discrete, somewhere between the openness of Goetz and hiddenness of Baker and others.

Videotaping and audiotaping are common in ethnographies. Herrera, King, Baker, and Borman/Lippincott all used audiotapes, although the taperecorder backpacks used by the last researchers would seem to me rather intrusive and increase self-consciousness [or at least decrease some kinds of rough play]. Baker emphasized her use of audio recordings after the initial phases of research had been completed, because of the need to become familiar with the research environment. Audiotaping of interviews might be helpful in a transitions study.

Videotaping was used by Thompson and Mehan. Mehan's ideas about setup might prove useful, but I suspect a more detailed source will be needed that specifically addresses videotaping. [LeCompte and Preissle (1993, p. 231) mention a work in this area by Albrecht, although some of the sources they cite on film may also be useful]. The attention-getting behavior elicited by the presence of the camera, described by Baker, might be avoided by somehow hiding the camera in a transitions study. Might multiple cameras also be needed in recording transitions? Perhaps multiple placements of one camera would accomplish much the same thing. Recording the audio portion of videotaping during transitions is likely to be difficult, since multiple conversations and hallway noise is a difficulty. Multiple microphones might alleviate this to some extent, but numerous microphones would need to be recorded simultaneously on several separate tape tracks for it to be effective. Highly directional microphones would also be needed. I suspect this would become financially prohibitive and be too invasive of the environment for school officials. Perhaps field notes taken by the researcher of conversations will be an adequate supplement to a basically visually oriented videotape record. A cordless microphone could be worn by the researcher, or he could simply carry a recorder.

Several researchers comment about the interruption of taking field notes. Goetz and Bossert both seem to take this in stride, with Bossert explicitly stating that the loss of data is justified by the development of rapport developed or sustained with students in the process. In contrast, King used non-participant observation specifically to avoid interruptions. Again, this seems to be a trade-off, and I suspect different kinds of studies [as well as different kinds of researchers] will form different priorities, either accentuating comprehensiveness and accuracy or conversely underscoring rapport. In a transitions study, rapport seems more important for interviews than for videotaping hallway behavior -- in fact, rapport in the hallway might completely change the entire activity of that context.

Data Analysis Methods

Scanning of data from field notes and supplementary sources results in the emergence of patterns and category formation (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p. 237). Distinctive to ethnographic study is the ongoing analysis of data while it is being collected, so that feedback from the study can inform decisions about what should be studied (p. 238). This process involves comparing, contrasting, the development of linkages and relationships in the categories and constructs, and making speculative inferences which are tested as the research continues (pp. 242-249). LeCompte and Preissle list five basic analytic strategies (pp. 254-263), and computer programs are available which aid in coding and making analytic linkages in data (pp. 292-309).

Two principal methods listed by LeCompte and Preissle were used by Herrera (1988, pp. 63-64): constant comparison and analytic induction. The first facilitated the coding of tentative categories at the beginning of the study, while the latter helped produce recursive rules [although Herrera departed from Mehan's assumption that all of the data must be included in those rules].

Herrera's analysis involved observing, examining notes from the observation, and returning for more observation to provide verification and detail (p. 71). He classified behavior in types instead of categories of a discrete nature, reducing the total stream of behavior to a "micro unit" (p. 74) in which both emic and etic perspectives were combined. Herrera traces his identification of patterns as sequentially observing characteristics of an event, identifying the type of event, coming to understand relations between various types of events, determining the types of those relations, which are understood sequentially and as forming a pattern (p. 78). These phases can be considered different levels of abstraction, which constantly receive feedback from additional data so that errors can be corrected (p. 80). The pattern is eventually crystallized into a researchable question (p. 83), from which data sets eventually can be grouped and common relationships determined (p. 85). Different patterns emerged at the same time, but at varying rates (pp. 83- 84). Herrera is careful to state that this was the procedure he used, but that the process itself was emergent and diagramed in retrospect; it is not intended to be used as a model (p. 83)

Part of Herrera's analysis included sharing transcripts of interviews and chapters of his book with participants [he mentions administrators but not teachers or students] so they could correct inaccuracies (p. 61). He stated that "gaps in the data" were included in an appendix, but this was missing in the final draft of his report. The themes of interviews were categorized according to the research questions. In addition, regularities that emerged from observations were "followed" until the "elements" were determined (p. 57).

Central to Goetz' (1975, p. 16-17) analysis was the analytic induction method, based upon the writings of Becker, Glaser and Strauss, and Lofland. Initial categorization included participants, setting, time, type of event, and reactions. Further grouping followed Lofland's six category typology [settings, relationships, participation, meanings, activities, and acts] to group the behaviors and environment studied (pp. 309- 310), as well as typologies used by students and teacher (p. 17). These were considered "first order constructs" verified and refined by open-ended interviews with students and the teacher (pp. 17, 309- 310).

From these first order constructs, similarities and differences were found which helped form second order constructs, indicating the interaction of the social network from the outside observer's [etic]

perspective. These were refined through the process of theoretical sampling, in which examples and exceptions were found through repeated examination of the data. Analytic categories emerged from second order constructs, in the form of propositional statements regarding the relationships between constructs at the second order (p. 17).

Consistent with qualitative methodology, the process of data collection and analysis were described in detail by Goetz so that others could examine the methods and help determine the validity and reliability of the results. Cusick's six criteria of adequacy were used for this purpose: spending considerable time, staying in close range with those studied, observing numerous times in a variety of situations, using the language of those studied, developing some level of intimacy, and seeking confirmation of the meanings from those studied (p. 9). How these were followed in her specific study is detailed in a substantial appendix (pp. 291- 315). Cusick is quoted (p. 18) to the effect that the results of analytic induction are not intended to provide final answers, but rather more exploratory results in contexts that have not been studied a great deal previously. The results of analysis are hypotheses which may be tested further for verification using other methods [Goetz (p. 19) mentions using quantitative measures for such verification, but perhaps other qualitative measures could also be used]. Goetz notes, however, that exact replication is impossible not only because of the difficulty of matching the ethnographer as the research instrument, but also because social reality is constantly changing (p. 291). Yet approximating the possibility of reproducing the research is possible if procedures are described in considerable detail, which also allows others to examine and evaluate the research (pp. 291-292).

Event analysis was used by Cox (1980, p. 7), which she defined as "related activities with a beginning and an end" (p. 7). These were initiated and concluded by "microevents" which consisted of signals that a change had occurred or would occur in the children's behavior (pp. 7-8). A Descriptive Question Matrix aided event analysis, which involved coding where events took place, objects used, microevents that framed the event, timing and sequence of microevents, how children and adults were involved, relation to teacher goals, and how the event related to the student role (pp. 8-9). [Herrera (1988, p. 10) differentiates between "events" and "interludes," but is unclear whether his "events" are to be equated with Cox's precise usage of the term.]

Time and again Jackson (1990) reflected upon events at the end of a day of observation, and what initially appeared to be insignificant became more significant upon reflection (p. xvii). He felt puzzled by what was observed, but simultaneously questioned what others had concluded about the phenomenon. Learning to look at events differently and making new connections between events altered his vision of the classroom (p. xviii). He concludes that merely "looking around" and attempting to make sense of what is observed is as legitimate as other kinds of research.

King (1978, 5) analyzed notes over a period of one year. Initially he made use of Glaser and Strauss' grounded theory, and implemented comparative analysis as advocated by this theory. For example he compared typical teachers with a deviant teacher and compared various typologies of children developed by teachers in various schools. However, King came to have reservations about the approach because he felt it ignored the fact that research creates data (p. 132). The theory resulting from his research was not merely the product of data, he concluded.

At the end of each school study, King presented and discussed his findings with teachers in a formal meeting, asking them to respond. In general they confirmed his views, but sometimes thought they were a bit strange (p. 7). Not only did this presentation serve to verify findings, but was thought to repay teachers somewhat for the time and effort involved in interviews (p. 8).

In Bossert's (1979, pp. 14-15) research, a preliminary category system was developed during the initial phase of the study, as well as a description of general differences in interaction patterns between students and between students and teacher. For example, friendship patterns were quite stable while associations between peers changed a great deal. Later, the constant comparison method described by Glaser and Strauss was used as additional data accumulated. Emerging patterns within the data were investigated, and different plans were followed to develop those patterns or discover new ones (pp. 17-18).

Becker's three stages of analysis involved utilization of indices to test relationships. Frequencies and distributions were developed to confirm or refute hypothetical relationships, and a partial model was developed of the social organization observed. Aspects of the emerging model were added as additional observations took place.

In Mehan's (1979, p. vii-xiv) research, numerous people contributed to the analysis, reflecting upon one another's ideas. The teacher, co-teacher, two graduate assistants, and researcher met each week to discuss the classroom activities and view videotapes of those lessons. The researcher then presented some analysis and apparently the group would reflect upon it. The researcher comments that everyone, including the graduate assistants, generated ideas and the researcher attempted to document their contributions throughout his report. At some point copies of the videotapes were also shared with the teacher. The teacher, a university professor on leave from that position, believed the analysis was incomplete and attempted to chart broader patterns in the lessons taught, which apparently helped prompt a more comprehensive analysis by the researcher, although the teacher suggested that the researcher would probably have eventually found those broader patterns regardless. After the general sequences were outlined [and later given a chapter in the book], divergent cases -- anomalies -- were also described and categorized [given another chapter in the book].

The specific approach used by Mehan was termed "constitutive ethnography" (pp. 16-24). This approach assumes that interaction is central to social structure. The researcher analyzes data that is retrievable, in the form of videotape or film, which allows repeated observation even frame by frame if necessary. Audio portions may be transcribed, and even nonverbal activity is amenable to analysis from video portions (p. 19). Data recorded in this way is also comprehensive, thus it helps avoid the tendency of researchers to look only for evidence confirming prior hypotheses or assumptions. Constitutive ethnography requires that all cases observed fit into the analysis; anomalies are not neglected as they usually are in correlational research (pp. 20- 21).

Analysis in constitutive ethnography is somewhat like analytic induction (p. 21). An analytic scheme is developed from a small amount of data, which is then compared with subsequent data. Changes to the scheme are made as necessary when discrepant or negative cases are found. In the process "recursive rules" are developed which are able to include all the data accumulated, producing a comprehensive explanation for the phenomenon. Instead of adding more variables to explain deviant cases, the analytic scheme itself is modified to account for all the data (pp. 21-22).

Constitutive ethnography attempts to find convergence between the views of participants and researchers. While those studied could be asked questions that might produce responses to validate what the researcher observed, Mehan notes that those questions may structure the answers, providing less than independent verification of ideas. Instead he examined the consequences of behaviors as an indication of verification -- if others react in a manner consistent with the analytic scheme, especially if this deviates from normal interaction patterns, this verifies the analysis (pp. 22-23). He also suggests, and used, the procedure of viewing videotapes with participants so that they in a sense become ethnographers as well (p. 206). In this way their perspectives are obtained, which can be compared with those of the researcher, and in turn result in verification or even collaboration. Merely providing participants with "prearranged packages of information is oppressive, for it fails to treat people as responsible for their own lives" (p. 206).

The analysis done by Mehan involved dividing the unitary form of classroom interaction into discrete portions. This was accomplished through coding behavior, even though this disturbs the integrity of the flow of activity. The researchers note that event boundaries are not discrete, but the coding that marks those boundaries helps the research avoid being overwhelmed by the complexity of the interaction (p. 29).

The results of Mehan's (1979) research were also compared with a much broader study, involving eight classrooms instead of one, which took place soon afterward -- the broader study made use of Mehan's constructs (pp. xi-xii). Since the larger study involved a very different population [a private upper class school in Washington D.C. in contrast with the public school in a very impoverished area of San Diego,

California in Mehan's study], generalizability of common results was more likely. However, even broader generalizability was suggested through accumulating additional case studies of classrooms.

In Baker's (1985d) playground study, analysis was concurrent with data collection. She read over her notes each day to find research questions that were surfacing, and reread the notes once a week at a minimum (p. 136), looking for additional categories and patterns. Categories came to focus upon the rules children maintained for folklore and other playground events.

After thirteen days in the field, Baker (p. 11) began to focus her analysis upon specific questions. Sometimes questions surfaced and receded. Other questions emerged, became prominent, and eventually gave general direction to the ongoing data collection (pp. 11-12). Analysis eventually produced a nearly 300 page taxonomy and description of folklore and non-folklore events and rules (pp. 144-427). Both emic and etic perspectives were attempted by Baker (1985, p. 9). She comments that what children believed happened was often at variance with what adults perceived as happening (p. 9). She emphasized that her more etic view at the beginning of the research was largely because she had been absent from the childhood culture of the playground for many years [i.e. since her own childhood] (p. 9).

Very little comment is made by Thompson (1989) regarding her data analysis, except that she attempted to relate children's comments on drawings with what she observed on the playground, and that many of their activities could be placed in multiple categories (p. 49). She makes extensive quotations of their comments, centering on the three themes with which she apparently began the research: the structure of the playground, concerns they had about the playground, and things they would change about the playground.

The transcriptions of audio tapes used in Borman and Lippincott's (1982, p. 131) study were analyzed to determine the identity of the child playing or speaking as well as movements and gestures made within the game. The central analytic unit was turn-taking by children, with the first analysis being a description of the turn-taking patterns, competition for taking a turn, and whether the children accepted the requirement of waiting for a turn. The second analysis considered the relationship between the engagement or distraction of children and the length of the turn taken (pp. 132-134).

Summary and Applications

The predominant form of data analysis in these studies is analytic induction. This is the primary method used by Herrera for the purpose of developing recursive rules and researchable questions, although he briefly used constant comparison at the beginning of his study to form tentative categories. Goetz also used analytic induction, theoretically sampling for examples and exceptions to form analytic categories and propositional statements. The criteria described by Cusick appear to be important guidelines in this method. Goetz emphasized that analytic induction does not provide final answers, but exploratory hypotheses that can be verified by other analyses and/or methodologies. Baker's study apparently made use of a version of analytic induction, although she does not label it as such.

Mehan's "constitutive ethnography" is described as being much like analytic induction in that all cases must fit the analytic scheme, the use of recursive rules, and the modification of constructs to account for deviant cases. He states the distinctive in his approach is the emphasis upon retrievable data [videotape], although others who use analytic induction make use of the medium as well.

Some of the studies do not appear to use formal analytic procedures, such as Jackson's undifferentiated "looking around" and reflecting. The specific analytic process in Thompson's research is unclear, and it seems likely that she simply attempted to organize the children's opinions without much detailed analysis.

Other researchers use a combination of approaches. Earlier Herrera was described as beginning with constant comparison then moving to analytic induction. Bossert used an initial category system similar

to typological analysis, then moved to constant comparison. King's attempt to use grounded theory and constant comparison becomes muddled by the admission that he doubted the viability of that framework -- does this mean he abandoned the constant comparison approach, used a variation of it, or that he merely abandoned the grounded theory idea but kept the constant comparison analytic procedure? I suspect the last option is most likely, but the answer is not clear from his writing.

A study in elementary school transitions would probably make use of a combination of approaches. I must admit admiration for Jackson's undifferentiated "looking around," but I suspect that is at best a preliminary approach to a more formal analysis. Analytic induction would probably be a viable approach, and it was used in Herrera's transitions study. However, perhaps the initial coding of analytic induction could include the use of the first seven of Lofland and Lofland's (1984) ten "thinking units" -- meanings, practices, episodes, encounters, roles, relationships, and groups/organizations [settlements, social worlds, and lifestyles appear to be inappropriate]. Or perhaps their earlier classification scheme, mentioned by Goetz, might be useful. I also wonder if other taxonomies of children's behavior from classrooms and playgrounds might be utilized, at least in a comparative form [e.g. those by Pellegrini (1990), Lancy (1993, p. 62), and LeCompte (1975)]. This initial categorizing of behavior via analytic induction could involve comparing, contrasting, aggregating and ordering (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, pp. 242-246), and would constitute a descriptive component in the analysis. Initial categorization would eventually lead to the development of hypotheses and speculations about linkages and relationships between categories (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, pp. 246-249), making up a generative component of the analysis. These, in turn, could eventually be developed into enumerative categories and questions (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, pp. 258-261), making up a verificative component of analysis. Actually this last component would be beyond the scope of the intended dissertation study but could be subsequent and emergent from it. Perhaps the framework for a sample verificative study could be developed

Several researchers described verification of their data and constructs from participants. Goetz and King mention verification provided by teachers, Goetz also notes student verification, and Herrera obtained some verification from school administrators. It is interesting, however, that Mehan specifically disclaimed such verification, suggesting that the act of presenting the concepts and even the form of questions asked influences the responses they provide. This seems a bit exaggerated to me, yet his idea that participants become involved in the ethnographic process by viewing videotapes and making comments would provide another source of data for triangulation. Perhaps involvement in this manner would be desirable, followed by encouraging participants to critique the researcher's constructs and conclusions at the conclusion of the interview or at the conclusion of the study. Tentativeness in presenting conclusions and categories would probably encourage participants to present alternatives, corrections, and/or clarifications.

Event analysis is mentioned by Cox [and somewhat implied by Herrera], in which events are framed by microevents at the beginning and end. Her description of events is somewhat like the "boundaries" Mehan imposed upon his data in the process of coding. Mehan emphasized that making these designations disturbs the integrity of the flow of behavior [in the analysis, not in the actual situation I'm sure he means], and yet they reflect the markers present in the activity. Event analysis and boundaries fit well with transitions research, as a transitions can be conceptualized as an event with a beginning and end. The Descriptive Question Matrix mentioned by Cox might prove useful during the descriptive component of such a research study, especially for initial analysis. However, it may also be that transitions are a series of events, each with initiation and terminal boundaries. Conclusions in this area await grounding in research data.

Theories and Interpretations

Two kinds of interpretation can be suggested from ethnographic research. These are theoretical applications and metaphorical or analogical interpretations. Theory is informed by research results, however research is also influenced by antecedent theories. This reciprocal and dialectic process is beyond the scope of this present review. Instead I will summarize some of the theoretical frameworks that informed the ethnographic studies selected for this review, and describe several metaphorical and analogical interpretations suggested by researchers.

Theoretical Frameworks

Ethnographic findings may be applied to theoretical frameworks that already exist. When data fits that framework, it is confirmatory and thus more general applications are indicated by the research findings. Conversely if the data does not fit existing theory, either the methodology was faulty or a new theoretical formulation is required (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p. 272).

What theories informed the studies cited in this review? Herrera's (1988) work emphasized adult control of student behavior, which is powerfully represented in the oppressive atmosphere of the school he studied. Anthropological theories of social structure and organization guided his orientation to the setting (p. 9), social structure being represented by pervasiveness, continuity, persistence, and form or logic (pp. 18- 19). His careful description of behavior patterns of teachers, administrators, and students clearly confirms the overwhelming presence of excessive control, patterns he thinks developed during the era of school desegregation several years before his study. This excessive amount of control was believed to no longer be needed, indeed to have even become dysfunctional to the purposes of the school, as significant education requires cooperation between and contributions by both teachers and students [Herrera cites Mehan as evidence] (p.22). Control and authority are also dominant theoretically in the study that significantly informed Herrera's, that of Metz (1978, p. 12).

In addition to control theory, Herrera also make use of body language theory as described by Edward T. Hall (p. 16), which emphasizes that people move in synchronization with one another in interactions, or become disruptive when they fail to do so (p. 17). The presence or absence of synchronization is in itself a communication. But, consistent with social structure theory, sequences of behavior are interrelated and direct interactions more toward some specific end, even though there is constant adjustment and lack of closure (p. 19). Interaction is both a form [structure] and process [organization] (p. 20).

Developmental theory [including the work of Bronfenbrenner, Luria, and others] is also cited as an influence for Herrera's study (pp. 14-16, 26-35), emphasizing that involvement of students is needed if development is to take place. The emphasis throughout his description of this theory is the need for dynamic participation, such as making choices by students and concern for individual needs of students by those in authority, in contrast to the static forms of control he found.

Herrera (pp. 11-12) states that he employs grounded theory [theory developed from research] as developed by Glaser and Strauss. However, he also grounds his research in theory [previous research supports his findings].

Several theories are used by Goetz (1975) in her ethnography of classrooms and school environments. She specifically describes symbolic interactionism theory (pp. 11-14) as an important basis for her work, with its emphasis upon emic meanings of events, consistent with an ethnographic/anthropological methodology. She also cites an important component which builds upon symbolic interactionism -- the notion of a "hidden curriculum" that is latent within the educational process (p. 4). Functionalist theory also informs Goetz' work (pp. 14-15), which represents a more etic perspective in research, concentrating upon the inter- connectedness of systems and specific functions of the social context.

Cox (1980, p. 3) cites traditional anthropology theory as informing her study of kindergarteners, in this case a portion of American culture. Status and role theory as formulated by Ralph Linton was a central reference point (p. 9). Specifically she was concerned with the ascribed status of student (p. 12) and the acquisition of that role (p. 14), the latter described in the theories of Ward Goodenough and Roger Keesing (pp. 14-16). As in Goetz' research, the socialization theory commonly described as a "hidden curriculum" (p. 51) informs the research.

Phenomenology is considered basic to qualitative research in general (Lancy, 1993, pp. 9-10) and is specifically mentioned as the theoretical orientation used by "new sociologists" (King, 1978, p. 3). However King did not follow this approach because he felt phenomenology ignores the constraining influence of social contexts and structures (pp. 129-131). Instead, King made use of Max Weber's theory because it emphasizes the importance of ideas and ideology in understanding social life, including the shared social perspectives people maintain (p. 131). He also applies Weber's theory to social control in the classroom (pp. 48-57). No evidence was discovered for another theory considered in examining the data, self-fulfilling prophecy (p. 133).

In the schools within lower class areas King initially studied, teachers generally advanced the theory that poor achievement was the result of a poor home environment. He noted that this theory was also held by some experts, and he commented that this theory was probably advanced by teachers so they would not be blamed for poor student performance (pp. 94-95). However, when he studied another school, with children representing middle class students that were higher achievers, he found these teachers denied the value of home environment theory -- they believed student performance was due to their high quality teaching (p. 133)! He concludes that family socialization theory was consistent with his findings, but the context of the study was not families or homes so he had little evidence with which to evaluate the theory (p. 135).

Best (1983, p. 5) developed a gender socialization theory as a result of her research, which states that young boys are given excessive demands to become instantly masculine, thus they seek peer support to accomplish this goal. In contrast, girls do not have such stresses imposed upon them; they are not pressured to adopt a distinctive female role as quickly, thus peer support is not as needed. She also found a latent curriculum that children attempted to work out for themselves in school, that of learning how to relate to the opposite sex. Best remarked that she suspected parents and schools would not be eager to hear about this latent curriculum (p. 6). She recommended that adults help children learn they could be friends with the opposite sex rather than merely have a hate or love relationship.

Mehan (1979, p. 33) relates his research to the development of interaction theory, as well as a more general understanding of learning and teaching. The naturalistic context of the research, the classroom, helps explain what occurs during classroom lessons and how learning takes place in that naturalistic setting. He also links his conclusions to competence theory which articulates abilities considered to indicate success by students -- both social competence and academic ability are required for participating in lessons in the classroom (p. 34).

Borman and Lippincott (1982) use theories of play and games to interface with sociogenic theory of cultural learning (pp. 124- 129). Rules and competition, as well as parental child-rearing practices, are important components of this sociological approach (pp. 127-128).

Metaphors and Analogies

Sometimes ethnographers use the findings of their research to develop powerful metaphors or analogies. These verbal tools draw powerful comparisons between what was found and constructs in completely different areas of life (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p. 274).

For example, Sutton-Smith (1990) compared the school playground with a festival. Similarities include the free expression of joy, the participation of the entire social community [i.e. the childhood culture of the classroom], ritualistic components, and the fact that it is a recurring activity.

Kindergarten is described as a rite of passage by Cox (1980), within the status change theoretical framework of Van Gennep (pp. 17-20). The rite of passage involves ceremonies that initiate a person into a new status in society [e.g. from childhood to adulthood in certain societies]. Kindergarten, similarly, functions to bridge the gap between living at home and developing the student role. A specific ceremony, eating lunch in the cafeteria for the first time, took place near the end of the kindergarten year, and served

as the specific incorporation phase of the rite of passage (pp. 72-74), but the entire year of school functioned as a means of teaching the status of student and the accompanying role.

In a somewhat similar manner, Gracey (1993) describes kindergarten as "boot camp" for entering the academic world. As those who enter the armed services must go through a period of training for the role of soldier, likewise kindergartners learn their role through the kindergarten experience. Summary and Applications

The studies considered in this survey include a wide variety of theoretical perspectives. The anthropological framework of ethnography is the most generally mentioned [Herrera, Goetz, Cox] and theory related to cultural learning [Cox, Borman/Lippincott]. Symbolic interaction interfaces well with the anthropological roots of ethnography, as does functionalism's emphasis upon structure and purpose of social activity [both used by Goetz]. Max Weber's theory of shared social perspectives provides King's framework for study, although he also mentions family socialization theory [for which he finds evidence] and self-fulfilling prophecy [for which he finds none]. Cox uses status and role theory, Best uses gender socialization theory, Mehan and finds interaction/competence theory useful. Herrera also makes use of kinesics and proxemics interaction theories and developmental theories. Most, if not all the cited theories fall within the framework of what can be termed middle-range theory or formal theory (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, pp. 134-135).

While various theories have informed the above studies, these studies have also informed and even created theories. Generally the theories formed have been at the substantive rather than middle-range/formal theoretical level -- see LeCompte and Preissle (1993, p. 134).

Metaphors and analogies are rare in the literature reviewed -- indeed only one of the three mentioned was from the studies used elsewhere in this review [the other two were not included earlier because they lack significant methodological descriptions]. Elementary school transitions probably lie somewhere between Sutton-Smith's "festival" and Gracey's "boot camp," consistent with the earlier comment that there tends to be greater control of student behavior in hallways but less control of behavior than on playgrounds. Cox's notion of a school-based "rite of passage" might come even closer to having some parallels to transitions, though understood quite differently [i.e. instead of a developmental rite of passage, it might parallel the ceremonies related to passage from one region to another]. Whether or not this metaphor works for transitional contexts remains to be examined, possibly in the proposed transitional research.

The diversity of theory and metaphors might suggest that any single theoretical framework for a study of elementary school transitions would potentially truncate the possible directions for data collection and analysis. Perhaps a more suitable theoretical basis for such a study would be eclecticism, in which multiple theoretical approaches are affirmed. Some theories apply better to some situations than others, and multiple theories can provide different levels of understanding for the same phenomenon. Since transitional activities have received so little focused attention in the research, such an open perspective seems more warranted.

Assuming an eclectic theoretical perspective, what specific theories can be included as possible sources of direction? As the potential researcher of a transitions study, I have been significantly influenced by both psychological and sociological theories. Perhaps such a study can creatively interface these two disciplines and the theories dominant within them.

An ethnographic study of transitions certainly needs to build upon the anthropological origins of this research tradition, with its emphasis upon culture. The concepts of childhood culture versus school culture (articulated by several researchers, including Baker) seem relevant, transitions falling somewhere between the two or combining the two. Two sociological theories that easily relate to anthropology and culture, symbolic interactionism and functionalism, appear crucial for inclusion. Patterns in hallway behavior will probably reveal structure, functions, and shared meanings. In addition to cultural theory and

sociological theories, psychological perspectives could inform the research, such as developmental theories [e.g. Piaget, Vygotsky], behavioral approaches, humanistic theory, cognitive/information processing theories, and so on. Theories from other disciplines might also inform the study theoretically [e.g. ethology from biology or nonverbal communication and exchange theory from interpersonal communication]. These theories are unlikely to drive the research, but rather provide potential "windows" that may or may not fit the data.

An eclectic theoretical orientation also allows for the integrating of disciplinary interests. Indeed, research can be interdisciplinary and even transdisciplinary in its orientation, blending these frameworks to a more holistic and exhaustive explanatory orientation. People are individuals and they exist within, because of, and sometimes in spite of the groups they are in. Thus personal and interpersonal levels of understanding, both at micro and macro levels of analysis, provide multiple perspectives that can provide a more complete analysis of social events such as transitions.

Conclusion

The qualitative approach termed "ethnography" has been used by researchers to understand various aspects of schooling in the United States. As has been seen, these include classrooms, playgrounds, and [least commonly] transitional contexts. The methods utilized in previous studies can meaningfully inform a potential study of transitional activities in elementary schools. I trust that goal has been at least partially accomplished through this report.

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