

**Ethnography as a Practice of Peace and Justice:
Research Methodologies that Mean Something!
An Annotated Bibliography**

By Helen Blier, Michelle Holley,
Sue Singer, Mai-Anh L. Tran, and Margaret Ann Crain

Ethnography: Principles in Practice. 2nd ed.

Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson. New York: Routledge, 1995.

Living up to its reputation as a “popular” textbook on principles of ethnography, this second edition provides a cogent analysis of the intricate balance between intellectual rigor and intuitive sensibilities involved in the “art” and “craft” of observing human lives. Beginning with the question, *what is ethnography?* the authors capture the complexity of ethnographic research as they systematically discuss the central elements of the research process: design, access, field relations, methods of data collection and analysis, writing and reporting, and ethical issues. [Tran]

Handbook of Qualitative Research, Second Edition

Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, editors. Sage Publications, 2000.

If there is any single text that is absolutely indispensable to the qualitative researcher (and, I would argue, practical theologian), it's this Handbook. Published by Sage – a goldmine of other QR texts – the Handbook provides a readable, jargon-free collection of essays that deal with nearly every aspect of qualitative research imaginable. The second edition includes treatment of autoethnography and applied ethnography, as well as significant attention to feminist theory. In addition to providing a collection of essays relevant to both the beginner and the veteran, Lincoln and Denzin also manage to provide commentary that helps the reader understand the full landscape of qualitative research and where one's own approach to research fits. [Blier]

Note: Lincoln and Denzin's other collaborative efforts are worth investigating as well.

The Art and Science of Portraiture

Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot and Jessica Hoffman Davis. San Francisco: John Wiley and Sons, Inc. 1997.

This volume offers a rich and multilayered introduction to *portraiture* – a wholistic approach to ethnographic inquiry and documentation that combines “systematic, empirical description with aesthetic expression.” (p.3) The text is constructed as a “pas de deux” between an educational researcher (Lightfoot) and an arts educator (Davis), modeling the multidimensional character of effective social inquiry. Portraiture begins from an appreciative perspective and resists agendas that attempt to diagnose failure, instead “searching for what is good and healthy and [assuming] that the expression of goodness will always be laced with imperfections.” (p.9) As such, it offers a promising avenue into social inquiry for practical theologians concerned with issues of peace and justice. [Blier]

Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research

D. Jean Clandinin and F. Michael Connelly. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000.

As D. Jean Clandinin and F. Michael Connelly write, “people by nature lead storied lives and tell stories of those lives.” As “storytelling organisms,” human beings create narratives that not only constitute historical accounts – they also structure the way the storytellers encounter and make meaning out of experience. In their volume *Narrative Inquiry*, the authors – both writing from the discipline of education – introduce readers to an ethnographic approach they developed as a means for doing research specifically in educational settings. As a methodology, narrative inquiry intends not only to gather data about teachers’ experiences – it is also activist in orientation, intending the empowerment of participants through their participation in the research process. As such, this readable and provocative text introduces readers to a way of doing research easily adaptable to other circumstances in which issues of empowerment and justice are at stake. [Blier]

The Narrative Study of Lives, The Narrative Study of Lives Series

Ruthellen Josselson and Amia Lieblich, eds., Newbury Park, London, Greater Kailash: Sage Publications, 1993.

Co-founded by two psychologists, Josselson and Lieblich, this journal series “focus[es] on phenomenological studies using narrative methods” (vol. 1, x). The themes selected for the (first) six volumes illustrate theoretical and methodological considerations pertinent to narrative inquiries on “development and transition in people’s lives”—namely, “Interpreting Experience,” “Exploring Identity and Gender,” “Ethics and Process,” “Making Meaning of Narratives.” Articles reflect various traditions of qualitative research and their cross-fertilization and the ways in which narrative inquiry methods are employed to advance research on “hot potato” issues such as race, sexual orientation, gender, power relations, exoticizing of the “other,” or marginalization and oppression. [Tran]

Women Struggling for a New Life: The Role of Religion in the Cultural Passage from Korea to America

Ai Ra Kim, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996).

AND

Bridge-Makers and Cross-Bearers: Korean-American Women and the Church.

Kim, Jung Ha. Edited by Barbara A. Holdrege. Vol. 92, *American Academy of Religion Academy Series*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997.

These two ethnographic studies exemplify earlier waves of research on religion, culture, and Asian America. The researchers do not merely assume perspectives of sociology and cultural anthropology, but also make transparent dimensions of gender, race/ethnicity, and theological/religious assumptions influencing their positions and motivations as researchers. Jung Ha Kim notes how while the Korean church in her study offers “temporary and much needed psychological and spiritual solace,” it also reflects the “patriarchal status, and privilege” prevalent in society and in the home. Ai Ra Kim conducts semi-open interviews with 24 *ilse* (first-generation) Korean churchwomen of various socio-economic backgrounds to analyze the function of religion in the cultural

passage of immigrant women from Korea to America, noting particularly the identity-shaping impact of organized religious settings upon women transitioning from one patriarchal cultural tradition to another.

Women Writing Culture

Ruth Behar and Deborah A. Gordon, eds. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.

This collection of essays offers a revision of the history of anthropology from a feminist perspective. It includes writings that are on the border between literature and academics. These essays are thought provoking and challenge us to consider the politics of our ethnographic research. Any course that considers the importance of context and culture could make good use of these essays. [Crain]

Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America

Barbara Ehrenreich. New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2001.

The idea for this book was birthed in a fancy Florida restaurant where Ehrenreich, a journalist, is brainstorming ideas for stories with her editor. She clearly would rather someone else take on the task of exploring poverty in the United States. However, her editor thinks she is just the person for this ethnographic research: an immersion into poverty. In her introduction, Ehrenreich lays out her parameters: she explains what she is and is not willing to subject herself to, as well as what she is questioning. Ehrenreich struggles with her own insecurities, how she will present herself to her new employers and fellow workers, and how her research is affected by her method. The gripping chapters that follow explore in a journal type fashion her experiences as well as the statistics and further information she documented after her immersion experiences. This is a fine example of a journalist using ethnographic tools to explore the injustices of the working poor in the United States. [Holley]

Women's Ways of Knowing

Mary Field Belenky, Blythe McVicker Clinchy, Nancy Rule Goldberger, Jill Mattuck Tarule. New York, NY: Basic Books, 1997.

A readable, classic text which re-shapes the standard developmental questions in relation to women's voices and experiences. Grounded in solid interview data, this account provides a model of the ways women answer core questions about authority, evidence, truth, and (ultimately) selfhood that overcomes the common hierarchical dualism between reason and emotion. The authors' qualitative methods of inquiry, and their narrative and inductive presentation of their findings, elegantly mirror the ways of knowing they are investigating. [Singer]

Feminist Methodology: Challenges and Choices

Caroline Ramazanoglu with Janet Holland. London/Thousand Oaks/New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2002.

A systematic and complete survey of the key epistemological and practical issues surrounding feminist methodology. This is an academic text, but it provides clear, balanced summaries of often-conflicting approaches, and the authors use concrete research examples to illustrate their points. The chapter on researching "others" and the

politics of difference is a particularly strong account of the justice issues implicit in the very act of ethnographic research. [Singer]

Especially for congregational educators----

Authority of Generations: A Liturgical Resource for Use with Children and Adults

Bailey, Julia R. Huttar and Ernesto Medina, co-editors. The Office for Children's Ministries, Episcopal Church Center, New York, NY.

This unusual and effective "process" resource combines prayer, music and storytelling for intergenerational groups engaging in the work of discernment together. It enables the voices and stories of people of all ages to be heard clearly and on an equal footing, and helps children and adults assume shared authority for personal and congregational change. The resource can be downloaded free of charge from the Episcopal Church website, together with other information about its use in diverse contexts: http://www.episcopalchurch.org/49485_49745_ENG_HTM.htm. [Singer]

Religious Education: Meeting God in the Peoples of God

96:3, Summer 2001

This issue is devoted to ethnographic research of various sorts. For use in a congregation, see especially "Looking at People and Asking 'why?': An Ethnographic Approach to Religious Education" by Margaret Ann Crain (pp. 386-394). This article focuses on the practical uses of ethnography or how a religious educator can use ethnography to enhance ministry in a congregation. [Crain]

The Power of Appreciative Inquiry: A Practical Guide to Positive Change

Diana Whitney and Amanda Trosten-Bloom. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers Inc., 2003.

Ethnographic research methodologies such as interviews, observation and focus groups are the basis for this method of organizational change. The process invites participants in an organization to name their present reality and what is working well (they appreciate). Then it develops a description of these strengths that lead to an agenda for change. Because it focuses on what is working, the process is positive and uplifting. When we turn people's attention from what is wrong to what is right, conflict often turns to cooperation. [Crain]

The Thin Book of Appreciative Inquiry

Sue Annis Hammond, Bend, OR: Thin Book Publishing Co., 1998.

This thin book is the "Cliff Notes" version of appreciative inquiry. It tells what it is and how it works as well as how to do it, albeit very briefly. Hammond does emphasize that a key assumption of appreciative inquiry is to learn to value differences. However, I fear that careless use of the method could easily fail to create a just space for the inquiry, listening only to those whose contributions seem to fit with the status quo. Nevertheless, this little book is easy to read and will encourage use of appreciative inquiry. [Crain]