

INTRODUCTION

This introduction contains an account of the research methods used in social anthropology and sociology. The readings included in the volume are divided into four sections: the first is on the nature of social research; the second deals with fieldwork, and the third with survey methods; the last section takes up the issues of ethics in research, besides the problems of studying one's own society and undertaking field studies across class and gender.

The Idea of Social Research

Social research may be defined as a methodical and systematic study of a subject with the aim to generate new information, verify the existing knowledge in that subject, and reach a new understanding.¹ Sociology and social anthropology are empirical disciplines, and in them, like in other social sciences, facts are of crucial importance. Researchers know that for pursuing research they require specialized procedures that they learn before and during the process of conducting research. Given the optimum conditions, researchers believe that all areas and subjects can be researched. They are also aware that their findings are dependent upon, among other things, the methods they choose for study and their individual skills in manoeuvring them. Although commonality exists between research procedures investigating different areas of knowledge, each discipline has its distinct methodological apparatus to approach its specialized interest.² In today's world of inter-disciplinary research, some elements of research methodology in a subject may be borrowed from another, but they will not make sense unless they are adapted to the study of one's own subject matter.³

The process of planning a systematic study to seek probable answers to questions about social and cultural life is designated as social research. It begins with a set of questions about an event or a phenomenon in which the researcher is interested.⁴ The

¹ Here, I am not including the history of social research and fieldwork, for which see, Evans-Pritchard (1951), Kuper (1973), Payne et al (1981), Stocking, Jr., ed. (1983), Goody (1995). For a review of methodological works in India, see Madan (1972a: 282-315), Mukherjee (1979a), Bose (1995); and for a detailed treatment of methodologies of social research, see Mukherji (2000).

² Generally, the meaning attributed to methodology is a combination of the following aspects, viz. the techniques of data collection; the tools of analysis, such as statistical methods; and the theoretical perspectives that guide research and the logic of enquiry. See Mukherji (2000: 13-4). Also see Madan (1972: 283).

³ See Jain et al., eds. (1983) for a volume on legal research methodology. Today, sociological techniques and methods are used in other social sciences as well – such as history, economics, psychology, geography, law, political science, linguistics, and several area study programmes – and each adapts them to its own specialized area (see Srivastava 2003). Bailey (1962: 262) writes: ‘...it is our technique of gathering information which commands respect from other disciplines.’

⁴ Singleton, Jr. and Straits (1999: 1-2) begin their work on research methods with certain observations and common questions that inspired the researchers to investigate the phenomena. The observations pertained to homelessness, witchcraft, evaluation in examination, domestic violence, or a brutal attack of a woman that was watched by thirty-eight people and none came forward to save her life.

questions are not just confined to researchers, for lay people also ask them. Not only that, both researchers and non-researchers formulate answers to the questions they have raised on the basis of their experience and understanding. But the researcher considers his answers tentative, howsoever convincing they may appear at face value. He subscribes to the idea that he does not know a social fact unless he has conducted its systematic study.⁵ He knows that all hypotheses, even the favoured ones, have to be tested. The literature he reads may tell him that the cause of crime lies in society or the number of latchkey children in the upper middle class is fast increasing. But he demonstrates the relationship between crime and society by collecting and analyzing the life history accounts of criminals and the cases of crime in a society. Similarly, he conducts a household survey in an urban middle class neighbourhood to arrive at the percentage of children who are alone at home after their school has finished for the day because their parents are out at work. The researcher will base his conclusions on an analysis of empirical data that he himself collects or is collected under his close supervision. The laypersons may sometimes have brilliant and convincing explanations of phenomena, but these may at best help in formulating the hypotheses, which are empirically tested to determine their veracity.

A research of any type commences with a problem, the answers to which the investigator seeks to find out with an array of techniques, methods, and theoretical perspectives. In other words, the research process begins with the selection of the research question, followed by the selection of an appropriate methodology (Sarantakos 1998: 119). Following this are the steps pertaining to data collection, whether the data will come from libraries, archives, and museums, or from respondents belonging to a social group by adopting the methods of fieldwork or survey, or both, and whether the data will be quantitative or qualitative in character or a mix of both.

The sources an investigator taps will vary according to his interests, their accessibility, and the type of study (Whyte 1955: 356). Though there is a rough sketch in the investigator's mind of what he would look for, these sources (and/or informants) are not really decided in advance. The manner in which the investigation will be steered depends entirely on the actual unfolding of the research situation. What the research methodology literature contains is an account of the 'most frequently encountered techniques' of investigation (Pelto and Pelto 1978: 67). There are books and articles delineating the questions and topics that the researcher should keep in mind while investigating the institutionalized modes of social behaviour.⁶ But, in sociology and social anthropology, there is no specific tool kit that can be uniformly given to a researcher, rather he chooses the appropriate tools from the available repertoire of methods and techniques and modifies them or supplements the standard procedures in light of the situation he encounters. In essence, he 'learns from the field' (Whyte 1984).

⁵ See Durkheim (1966) on this point.

⁶ For instance, *Notes and Queries in Anthropology* (1874/1964). Those working on social mobility may see Saberwal's interview schedule (1976: 249-50); for economy, see Gregory and Altman (1989). Recently, some writers have compiled the questionnaires and interview guides they and other researchers have used. For one such dealing with social ecology and demography, see Bhasin and Bhasin (1997).

Each piece of finished research work, therefore, has its own story to tell; it is perhaps unique. This explains why accounts of how investigation was actually undertaken in a given context are enormously instructive to the neophytes embarking on social research. Earlier when, apart from a few pieces, the practice of writing up the experiences of one's research had not come into vogue, we had literature on how research should be carried out and on the finished products of research.⁷ Almost nothing was available on the intervening stage of the struggle of choosing the right methodology, adapting the gamut of methods and techniques to real life situations, and learning newer modes of investigation from the frustrations encountered with the text book descriptions of the tools of research. Now we know the immense usefulness of the accounts of the real research process, the way in which a piece of research was accomplished.⁸

Choice of the Research Problem

Many factors influence the choice of a research problem. A topic may be selected because it is assumed to be significant for scientific knowledge, ideas, and hypotheses. Or, it may be seen as important for ameliorating the living condition of human beings. Many researchers today work on health and hygiene, ecological and demographic issues, empowerment, and development in the hope of rendering a 'meaningful' and 'operational' solution to human problems. Contemporary fashions, fads, and foibles in research – the fields generally clinched for study at a particular time – also condition the choice (Sjoberg and Nett 1992). So do the research guides and funding agencies. A topic is pursued because one is attached to a particular guide (or 'laboratory') that furthers a particular line and topic of research, or where grants are easily available. Also, the social background of an investigator has implications for moulding one's interest. And, serendipity plays a definite role in taking up and navigating the research project. The researcher fortuitously 'stumbles upon' the area of investigation or a chance finding makes him change his original topic of enquiry.⁹

Whatever may be the reason(s) behind the formulation of a research problem, the researcher should ask the following five questions, originally asked by Bernard (1994: 103), before commencing his study:

1. Does the topic (the subject of study, the physical area where the enquiry will be carried out) really interest him?

⁷ Some researchers did write on how they carried out their fieldwork and collected data. See Malinowski (1922; 1967), Evans-Pritchard (1940: 7-15), Whyte (1943: 279-358), Myrdal (1944: 1129-43).

⁸ For some detailed accounts of fieldwork, see B eteille and Madan, eds. (1975), Rabinow (1977), Srinivas et al., eds. (1979); for some recent works, Srivastava (1991), Kumar (1992), Kulick and Wilson (1995), Caplan (1997), Thapan, ed. (1998), Hendry (1999).

⁹ See Whyte (1955). In other words, the progress of research methodology is directly related to the progress in investigation. What is not thought to be a tool of data collection, or the model of analysis, in the beginning, may become central as the study develops over time. In many cases, the community determines the researcher's problem of study where he goes for fieldwork. Evans-Pritchard (1973: 2) writes: 'I had no interest in witchcraft when I went to Zandeland, but the Azande had; so I had to let myself be guided by them.' Similarly, he did not go to Nuerland to study pastoralism, but because the cattle complex was at the core of the Nuer society, he had to study it (Evans-Pritchard, 1940).

2. Is this problem amenable to scientific investigation?
3. Does he have adequate resources to investigate this topic? (Here the questions of funding and time figure.)
4. Will the research questions or the methods and techniques that are being used, lead to unreasonable ethical problems?
5. Does the topic have any theoretical interests?

It is likely that the researcher's interest may lie elsewhere, but the project he takes up is because of convenience or other attractions. In anthropology departments of Indian universities, it is common to find women doctoral students who are enthusiastic about conducting a study among distant, isolated, pre-industrial communities, such as foragers and shifting cultivators. But as they fail to obtain permission from their families to go to remote areas for fieldwork, they compromise with a study of townspeople, or return to their own community for fieldwork.¹⁰ Because of one or the other reason, the researcher may not pursue the topic that fascinates him the most.

The researcher should think of more than one research topic, which may be closely related, and the area of fieldwork. If the chances of furthering one are bleak, the possibility of the others should be explored. The following example may be considered. A researcher is interested in studying the social organization of the Sufi tradition of Qalandars in South Asia.¹¹ For this, he should ideally carry out his fieldwork in the shrine of the most popular Qalandar saint, namely Lal Shahbaz of Sehwan (in Sind, Pakistan), but in case he is denied permission to do fieldwork in Pakistan, he can always approach the other Qalandar shrines, such as of Bu Ali Shah in Panipat (Haryana, India), for permission, or may decide to do his fieldwork in the shrine of Abu Bakar Tusi in New Delhi. For Lal Shahbaz, he may depend upon secondary sources – the already published materials – and interview people who had visited the saint's shrine in the past. When fieldwork was not possible in Japan during the period of the Pacific War, Benedict (1946) interviewed Japanese settled in America and those taken as the prisoners of war, and analyzed the printed materials (newspapers, broadcasts, and folklore) from Japan, to formulate certain observations about the Japanese personality and what inspired them to commit suicide (*harakiri*). Similarly, when the Peoples' Republic of China did not permit a first-hand study of its communities, anthropologists conducted fieldwork with Chinese settled in Malaysia, Singapore, or Thailand. This research strategy is known as the 'study of a culture at distance'.¹²

The prospective researchers in social anthropology and sociology think in terms of the 'problem' they intend to investigate (for instance, whether it will be a study of the entire community, or one of its institutions, groups, or typical persons) and the 'physical

¹⁰ I know of female students whose parents (in many cases, the father) accompanied them for fieldwork and stayed for the entire duration. These parents also collected information on their own that was used by their wards in their dissertations.

¹¹ The Qalandars constitute a sect of Muslim mendicants who do not subscribe to the normative religious tenets (Shariat), because of which they are termed *be-shar* ('without the law'). See de Tassy (1997: 176).

¹² See Freedman (1979: 398-406). Freedman (ibid.: 378) cites the example of a French Sinologue, Jean Chesneaux, whose account of social change in China was based largely on the Chinese press and foreigners' reports.

area' from where they would gather their data. In some cases, a research problem can only be pursued in a specific community; for example, one of the interesting subjects of study in an Angami Naga village can be its gates and the gate-pulling ceremony. Or, for studying the highly elaborate procession of the deities from their widely separated abodes in hills to the town during a festival (such as Shivratri, Navaratri, and Dushera), one shall have to work in places like Mandi, Sundernagar, and Kullu, all located in Himachal Pradesh. Or, for the study of the revival of witchcraft, or the coming of the satanic church, in the modern world, one shall have to carry out one's fieldwork in London or Chicago. By comparison, there are research problems that can be followed up in any of the diverse research sites. For studying peoples' displacement due to development programmes, a researcher may choose to work in any of the states of India having a significant figure of the project-affected people and displaced persons. Or, for local practices of eco-regeneration or water conservation, he may select a village or community anywhere in traditional India. For sociology of relations between friends, he may plan his work in any part of the world.

Thus, a researcher may remain committed to the problem of study, although he exercises a limited choice with respect to the locale of data collection, which depends upon a number of factors, some beyond his control. The researcher should choose a field site after duly considering his other personal commitments. Sheer enthusiasm sometimes drives a researcher to opt for a geographical area where owing to one or the other personal factor he is unable to go or sustain a long fieldwork.

It has been observed that often researchers delay the process of finalizing their research topic, or collecting data, or writing up, because they think they have not read enough and are not aware of the adequate number of references on the topic under study.¹³ One book or article leads to another; it is a snowball process, almost unending. No researcher (or author) can ever hope to have read all that has been written on a topic. One may be aware of the material available in a field of study in English, but there may be a parallel scholarship in that field in other languages, including the local. If a researcher wishes to read up all that before beginning with research, then perhaps his project will be inordinately delayed or may never take off. Therefore, while framing and finalizing a research topic, one should read closely the salient works available in that field, identify the ideas that interest him and need investigation. Each piece of research is built upon, and adds to, the works available in that domain and no research work answers all questions. The final stage in the research process is of interpreting the results after coding and analysis of data. These interpretations raise many questions that guide further research.¹⁴

¹³ See Wolcott (1990, 1995).

¹⁴ Bailey (1978: 4-5) views the research process as a circle. One begins with the problem, states hypotheses, formulates the research design, collects and analyzes the data, and interprets the results, which lead to further research questions. An investigator may stop after interpreting his results, but the research process does not end as other researchers may take up for enquiry questions that emerge from the study.

The Research Design

The research design is a systematic outline of the way in which a particular research will be carried out. In a research design, the investigator makes a distinction between the empirical phase and the interpretive phase. The former deals with the collection of data and the latter, with the significance of the findings, which is conditioned by the nature of data, the theoretical approaches and the conceptual models of the researcher. He decides 'how he will select certain facts (his data), how he will classify the facts, and how he will seek to uncover the order or pattern in which they actually occur' (Riley 1963: 5). As a part of his design, he decides whether he would gather new data rather than use available materials; take a larger rather than a smaller sample of cases; the way in which the techniques and methods will be administered, and which of them will be combined.

As said previously, the task of preparing the research design, which may also be submitted for funding or admission to a research degree, follows the selection of a topic. The topics for research differ widely. A researcher may seek preliminary or detailed information about a group of people, an institution, or an event. He may probe into probable answers to certain questions, such as a high rate of homicide among the Bhils of Rajasthan. He may examine the proposed relationship between two variables (for instance, high density increases the tendency of people to dislike one another, or communal riots do not take place in those states where the left parties are in power), or the conclusion of another research finding (like males welcome success and failure arouses tension in them whilst females fear not only failure but also success).

An important step in the research process is the formulation of the hypothesis, which may be defined as a testable proposition showing a tentative relationship between two or more variables, each having an empirical referent, meaning that each one is amenable to empirical investigation. A hypothesis should be conceptually clear, specific, operational, and related to the available techniques and methods of investigation.¹⁵ A research project begins with an identification of various concepts that pertain to the problem under study. Concepts such as income, rainfall, age, temperature, height, etc., 'that take on more than one value along a continuum are called variables' (Bailey 1978: 33). A concept having a single or fixed value is called a constant. Usually, the values or categories of a variable are signified by number (for instance, as in the case of income or rainfall), but there are variables that are designated qualitatively, by 'word labels rather than by numbers'; for instance, gender is a variable (a 'qualitative variable') and its categories are designated by 'word labels' – male, female, and neuter (Bailey 1978: 34). Similarly, solidarity is a variable.

It was said previously that after the research problem has been selected, the researcher formulates its basic concepts that require to be studied independently or in a system of relationship. The concept could be a variable or constant, however social researchers are mostly concerned with phenomena that vary; that is why, they are

¹⁵ For Goode and Hatt (1981: 57), a hypothesis should be 'good, definite, testable'. Also see Cohen and Nagel (1944) for a discussion of hypothesis.

concerned with variables. Then, the researcher constructs propositions (i.e., statements) about the variables (Bailey 1978: 34). A proposition that discusses one variable is known as univariate; one showing relationship between two variables is a bivariate proposition. When in a proposition more than two variables are related it is called multivariate. These propositions may be illustrated with the aid of an example.

The following statement is an example of the univariate proposition: 'The practice of untouchability in Indian villages has declined in the second half of the twentieth century.' A bivariate relationship could be: 'The practice of untouchability in Indian villages has declined because of the legal prohibitions.' This relationship can be empirically investigated; it can be categorized as a hypothesis. A multivariate proposition could be: 'The practice of untouchability in Indian villages has declined because of the legal prohibitions against it, an improvement in the economic status of the ex-untouchable communities, and an increase in the level of education in villages.' This hypothesis will be termed multivariate. In this hypothesis, a decline in the practice of untouchability (the effect) is believed to be caused by legal prohibitions, an improvement in economic and educational levels of the people (the causes). The variable in which change occurs is known as 'dependent' (here, the practice of untouchability), whereas the variables that cause it (namely, law, economy, and education) are independent.¹⁶ The relationship between these variables can be expressed in terms of the cause-and-effect relationship. For the purpose of testing, a multivariate relationship can be written down into several bivariate propositions, because, to follow the example given above, it is likely that legal prohibitions may cause a decline in the practice of untouchability but not economy or education. When the multivariate relationship is broken down, three hypotheses result, viz. the decline in untouchability practices is because of the legal prohibitions against it; the decline in untouchability practices is because of an improvement in the economic condition of ex-untouchable castes; and the decline in untouchability practices is because of an increase in the educational levels of people. And, then each one of them can be empirically tested. With the help of multivariate analysis, the simultaneous relationship among three or more variables can be studied.

Furthermore, a hypothesis is not an opinion, a value judgement, or a normative statement. It may follow from a theory, or may ensue from experience, or may be inspired by reading or past research. But, even when it does not explicitly follow from a theory, it can always be related back to a theoretical orientation. A theory is viewed as a logical relationship between facts.¹⁷ From this, relationships other than those stated in it can be deduced. These deduced propositions, which are hypotheses, are empirically tested. If substantiated, they become a part of the theory. The theoretical propositions the researcher carries in his mind guide the collection of data. When the data are collected without any biases, and the emerging relationship between facts, which may go contrary

¹⁶ Sociologists also speak of the intervening variables. See Glossary for its meaning.

¹⁷ One may follow here Nadel's definition of theory (1957: 1): for him, a theory is 'a body of interconnected propositions (hypotheses, generalizations) concerned with a particular problem area and meant to account for the empirical facts in it.' In another, less ambitious sense, he says that a theory is a body of interconnected propositions that 'serve to *map out* the problem area and thus prepare the ground for its empirical investigation by appropriate methods.'

to the existing theory, is not suppressed, the theory and its propositions undergo change. In many cases, the link between the theory and the mode of investigation (data collection) is provided by the hypothesis.

For some sociologists, research without hypothesis may become unfocused and a random empirical wandering.¹⁸ But, not all research is about establishing causality or other kinds of relations between variables. It may also be remembered that a hypothesis can be a liability.¹⁹ The researcher must always guard him against the Procrustean approach, in which the hypothesis is laid in advance and the empirical facts are tailored to prove it. Fashionable theories and enchanting hypotheses may inveigle us into looking for facts that lend them credence. The ‘classical theory’ of research methodology, as it is called, submits that a hypothesis is formulated in advance and then, is empirically tested (Bailey 1978: 44-6). By contrast, the ‘grounded theory’ suggests that one should begin with one’s fieldwork without a hypothesis, describe what goes in the field, and offer explanations of the same. Instead of testing the existing theories, for the grounded theory, the best way to generate a theory is from the data itself (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Rather than embarking on the field with hypotheses, or with an aim to verify a theory, we should begin our study without them and let them emerge, if they do, as we proceed with our fieldwork.²⁰

There are advantages in beginning with the broad areas we wish to investigate without any hypotheses, but certain research topics may require clearly formulated hypotheses. The aim of a research design may be hypothesis-testing. One cannot, therefore, argue in favour of the grounded theory (hypothesis-yielding approach) over the classical approach (hypothesis-testing or hypothesis-verification approach), or the other way round, because each one of them has its own merits. A preference of one over the other is determined by the aim of research.

Types of Social Research

Some authors prepare a long list of the types of social research, but in a given piece of research, many of these types can be profitably combined.²¹ Quantitative and

¹⁸ In this connection, see Fortes (1949), who regarded that one of the significant contributions of A.R. Radcliffe-Brown was to suggest researchers to begin their work from a hypothesis.

¹⁹ B eteille (1965: 10-1) notes that he did enter the village he studied with a set of hypotheses, because he had a broad objective – i.e. to know the village and its social life – and an ‘equipment’ of hypotheses would have ‘done more harm than good’. Madan (1989: 7-8) writes that he did not begin his study of Kashmiri Pandits with a hypothesis. His aim was to render ‘intelligible in *sociological terms* the working of the Hindu kinship system in Kashmir.’

²⁰ During my fieldwork with the Raikas of Rajasthan, it occurred to me that there existed a relationship between their modes of livelihood and their proclivity to ascetic and renunciatory ideology. I related this hypothesis to the ‘elective affinity’ that Max Weber saw between the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism (see Gerth and Mills, 1970: 302-22). See Srivastava (1997).

²¹ For instance, Sarantakos (1998: 6-8) offers a list of fifteen types of social research, which I have arranged in the following way: quantitative, qualitative, basic, applied, action, participatory action, exploratory, descriptive, classification, comparative, explanatory, causal, theory-testing, theory-building, and longitudinal. Rather than considering them as ‘types’, I shall view them as aspects of research activity that can be gainfully combined.

qualitative researches are not opposed. There has been an almost inexhaustible debate about the scientific status of quantitative research in opposition to the so-called 'soft' (non-scientific and subjective) qualitative research. Today, it is well known that we use quantitative techniques if our subject matter and the materials we have collected demand that treatment. We switch on to qualitative research if we intend to describe the reality as our respondents experience it and when we are dealing with 'immeasurable' aspects of social and cultural life. In fact, quantitative and qualitative aspects of phenomena can be integrated in a research.²² It is relevant here to remember Myrdal's (1944: 1130) advice:

The ideal community study should start out from a careful *statistical analysis* of vital, social, and economic data concerning the individuals and families making up the community being studied. The less measurable data on attitudes, cultural traits, behaviour patterns in which social stratification is expressed, and the "feeling" of social status or toward social status on the part of members of the various groups, should then be observed and the results *integrated into the framework* of statistical knowledge.

A research design is prepared according to the purpose of research. The research purposes may be categorized in the following terms:

1. The purpose may be to gain familiarity with a phenomenon or to obtain new insights into it. The phenomenon might hitherto be unexplored, or whichever material is available on it might be unauthentic, heavily journalistic, or trying to capture its oddness.
2. The purpose may be to portray as accurately as possible the characteristics of a phenomenon about which some preliminary information is available. Or, one may be interested in testing a hypothesis in the field situation.
3. The purpose may be to test a hypothesis of a causal relationship between variables in a controlled situation.

These three are ideal types of research purpose, respectively known as exploratory (or formulative), descriptive, and experimental. The research design is also named after the specific purpose that it endeavours to accomplish; thus the design for exploratory work is termed exploratory research design, and so on.

Exploratory design intends to formulate a more precise research problem or to develop hypotheses. By comparison to the other research designs, it is flexible, allows the researcher to navigate the area where he would later like to conduct a lengthy, more structured, study. It acquaints him with the possibilities and problems of studying real life situations and clarifying various concepts (Selltiz et al. 1959: 52-3). Insights gained from an exploratory study may provide a solid base for planning a descriptive study. As a matter of fact, most studies in sociology and social anthropology are descriptive in nature, offering detailed accounts of communities, their groups and institutions, events and material culture, and life histories of persons. Descriptive studies not only tell one what happens but also why and how it happens; the latter questions are sometimes subsumed under the head of explanatory studies. Events are also predicted in descriptive works. In comparison to exploratory studies, which are hypothesis-generating, descriptive studies are both hypothesis-testing and hypothesis-generating.

²² Refer to Durkheim's classic work on suicide (1951), where he shows that suicide rate – a social fact designated in numerical terms, for it is a cardinal number – is inversely related to another social fact, the degree of social integration – which is expressed qualitatively, in terms of the ordinal number.

The experimental research design tests hypotheses in ‘laboratory’ conditions, i.e. the investigator systematically controls the independent variables as well as the external factors that may confound the result. Crucial to this design, in the words of J.S. Mill, is the method of difference.²³ The independent variable is introduced in one group and withheld from the other, where the two groups are identical in all respects. The recipient of the independent variable is called the experimental group whereas the one denied of it is the control group.²⁴ These two groups are compared after a lapse of time. The difference in their respective conditions supports or rejects the hypothesis.²⁵ If the state of both the groups remains the same, even after the experimental group has received the benefit of the independent variable, it is obvious that the independent variable does not exercise any impact on the condition of the group.

This design of experimentation, known as the ‘classical’ design, which is principally followed in natural and biological sciences, is however not amenable to social research. It is because of the problems of creating experimental and control groups, and of keeping the external variables controlled for the entire duration of the experiment. Many aspects of social life cannot be brought into the laboratory. The experimental situation can also affect the responses of those studied.²⁶ And, the ethical problems of conducting experiments on human beings are equally important.

One may refer here to Richard Cabot’s famous ‘experiment’ of 1935 on the prevention of delinquency.²⁷ Popularly known as the Cambridge-Somerville Youth Study, it was here that for the first time in the history of social research, a carefully constructed control group was utilized. Cabot’s hypothesis was that delinquency would come under control when trained social workers, using the case work techniques of their discipline, rendered regular friendly counseling to delinquents. The experimental group of delinquents received the benefits of counseling (the independent variable) that was denied to the control group. Upon a comparison of the two groups, it was found that besides a few success stories, counseling was not able to deflect the boys from committing to a delinquent career. The treatment programme seemed to be broadly ineffectual because besides spending some hours every week with the counselor, the delinquent boys spent their entire time with their community where were concentrated the social forces that lured these boys to anti-social acts. The external variables seated in the community nullified the positive outcomes of the counseling.

²³ In this context, see Durkheim (1966: Chapter VI) for his views on the relevance of ‘experimental’ and ‘comparative methods’ in sociology.

²⁴ The experimental group is also known as the treatment group, the intervention group, or stimulus group.

²⁵ The state (or measurement) of the dependent variable (the group) before receiving the benefit of the independent variable is called ‘pre-test’, and after it has received, ‘post-test’. We calculate the difference between the ‘pre-test’ and the ‘post-test’.

²⁶ Changes might be caused by the fact that the subjects of experiments know that they are being studied. After the famous experiment known as the Hawthorne Experiment, this is known as the ‘Hawthorne effect’. It is also known as the ‘reactivity syndrome’ or ‘reactivity effect’ (see Singleton, Jr. and Straits, 1999: 29, 195).

²⁷ For details of this ‘experiment’, see Powers (1963).

However, in certain works on small group dynamism, the group members could be temporarily insulated from the outside world, yet these ‘experiments’ did not have a control group.²⁸ They deviated considerably from the classical experimental design. The positivists – like Auguste Comte – had realized in the early nineteenth century that the faculty of experimentation in its true form was ruled out in sociology and they looked for its functional equivalent.²⁹ For some positivists, controlled comparison was an alternative to experimentation (Timasheff 1955). Moreover, experimentation is not central to the definition of science, for there are subjects (such as astronomy, geology, population genetics) that do not experiment but their scientific status is beyond doubt (Nadel 1951: 1).

The so-called ‘before-and-after’ studies are regarded as an alternative to the classical experimental design. In them, a phenomenon is studied before the introduction of the independent variable and then, afterwards. A comparison of the two states will tell us about the change. F. Stuart Chapin’s study (1963) of public housing in Minneapolis coined the term the ex-post facto research for such studies. Chapin studied the social life of the families, which had been re-housed and compared it with those of the families that were still living in slums, waiting to be moved out. In Chapin’s study, it is not the same group which is studied ‘before’ and then, ‘after’ the change, but there are two groups from the same stock, one portraying the ‘before’ and the other, ‘after’. In the Indian context, many researchers working on communities that have been displaced because of development projects (such as the construction of a dam, mining, or industry) have adopted this approach.³⁰ To know about the community before it was displaced, they have studied those families of the community that have yet to be displaced and compared them with those that have been displaced to a new setting. As said earlier, it is not the same people who are studied ‘before’ and ‘after’, but it is assumed that by studying those who have yet not been shifted one may have an idea of the social life of the people before they were shifted to a different locale.

The hypotheses emerging from an exploratory or a descriptive study can be empirically tested using an experimental design. The latter is primarily for hypothesis-verification, but we may come across serendipitous findings while conducting an experiment (or controlled comparison), whether it is in natural and biological sciences or social sciences.

Methods of Data Collection

Besides experimentation and ‘before-and-after’ research, sociologists use three other methods of data collection, viz. fieldwork, survey, and documentary research. The term ‘field’ refers to the place where the members of the community the investigator plans to study reside. It can also refer to the relatively enduring ‘context’ of modern institutions – such as the school, hospital, office, prison, hostel – which the researcher

²⁸ See Bales (1950) for experimental work on small groups.

²⁹ See Durkheim (1966: Chapter VI).

³⁰ See articles in the special issues of the *Economic and Political Weekly* (15 June 1996), *The Eastern Anthropologist*, 53 (1-2), 2000.

studies by staying there, if possible, or by spending a long time with the people. The process of collecting data by living with people, having a first hand experience of their lifestyle, is termed fieldwork.³¹ Luhrmann (1989: 15) writes: 'Anthropology is the naturalist's trade: you sit and watch and learn from the species in its natural environment.' Compared to the other methods, fieldwork yields a lot of data about the lifestyles of people and the meanings they attribute to their actions. Fieldwork also teaches the distinction between 'what people think', 'what people say', 'what people do', and 'what people say they ought to have done.' The fieldworker can alter strategies and techniques of data collection, improvise newer methods, and follow up new leads that arise. It is because the fieldwork provides immense flexibility to the investigator. He can devise 'on-the-spot strategies to come to grips with unforeseen challenges of fieldwork' (Madan 1995: 112).

Survey research focuses on a large number of respondents, chosen through sampling procedures, who are systematically interviewed by the investigators or are requested to write down their answers on a questionnaire delivered to them. The answers thus received are numerically coded and analyzed using statistical methods. Survey research allows for precise comparisons between the answers of respondents. Further, survey research may be cross-sectional, i.e. the respondents are studied at one point of time, or longitudinal, where the same set of respondents or different respondents are studied at different time frames. When the same individuals are studied at different times with respect to the same topic, the survey is called the panel study, and when each time there are different individuals for the same field of interest, it is the trend study. Beginning in the mid-1930s, survey research has expanded considerably in the second half of the twentieth century, constituting today one of the major industries in the developed world helping various organizations in obtaining feed-back to their products and works.

Generally, research methodology books in sociology and social anthropology lay emphasis on fieldwork and survey methods, with the result that documentary research is pushed to the backbench.³² This is inevitable because documentary research is the special feature of history and not sociology and social anthropology, which have remained largely preoccupied with the observed present. The researcher has preferred to 'observe the behaviour' rather than relying solely on people's description of their behaviour. Moreover, social anthropologists (and also, many sociologists in India) worked with pre-literate societies where the possibility of finding documentary evidence in many of them was rather bleak. They relied on people's account of their actions when it was not possible, or permissible, for them to observe. A male anthropologist might be prohibited from gaining access to female gatherings during marriage when they dress up differently and sing risqué songs. For what goes on in such clubs, he would depend upon the

³¹ In common parlance, the term fieldwork, in contrast to laboratory work, is used for an outdoor activity of data collection. In this sense, biology students call their activities of plant and insect collection fieldwork.

³² In Indian universities, the oft-consulted books in research methods are by Madge (1953), Piddington (1957: 525-96), Moser (1958), Young (1966), Bailey (1978), Goode and Hatt (1981), Blalock and Blalock (1982), Ellen, ed. (1984), Bernard (1994). Two Indian authors (Wilkinson and Bhandarkar, 1984; Kothari, 1985) are also consulted.

description of his female respondents or employ a female investigator to collect data on women's activities which male researchers are not permitted to observe.

Some authors include both written and oral sources in documentary evidence (Burgess 1982: 131). However, a distinction should be made between the 'texts' that ethnographers prepare after several sessions of interviewing their respondents, and the written materials that are already in existence about people, such as personal documents, biographies, autobiographies, letters, diaries, sermons, poems, plays, novels, newspapers, etc. There is another category of documents that the local people prepare under the guidance of anthropologists. For instance, field workers have often requested the literate people of the society, which they have been studying, to write up accounts of their lives and their cultural practices. This was the approach that Franz Boas adopted in his fieldwork; he engaged literate respondents to gather information from elders about tribal lore and also write up their own recollections (Lowie 1937). In his stay with the Nyoro, Beattie (1965: 27) employed ex-schoolboys as assistants to record the long statements of the illiterate people. These assistants, whom Beattie regarded as 'apprentice social anthropologists', also wrote detailed accounts of certain incidents in their own lives. As Nyoro found it 'easier to write than to talk', Beattie organized for them two essay competitions on subjects of local interest (p. 31). Even after Beattie had left the field, he could always write to his literate assistants for information or clarification to be sought by mail. Boas believed that the native's *ipsissima verba* (the actual/identical words) represent an 'ultimate datum of reality', and there can be no substitute to the data that he writes in his own words (Lowie 1937). The point to be stressed is that sociologists and social anthropologists do not privilege written records over oral, or vice versa. They not only collect oral episodes, but if conditions permit, they also make their respondents write up their memories, experiences, and views. This shows that with anthropological intervention the respondent transforms his oral sources into written records.

Calling written texts and artifacts 'mute evidence', Hodder (1998: 110-1), following Lincoln and Guba (1985), distinguishes records from documents. When a text is prepared to attest to some formal transaction, it is called record. Marriage certificates, driving licenses, building contracts, banking statements, examination transcripts, property papers, etc., are the examples of records. Documents are prepared for 'personal rather than official reasons'; they include diaries, memos, letters, field notes, etc. Although the two terms – records and documents – may be used interchangeably, the difference between them is important. For Hodder, the distinction between them is like the distinction between writing and speech. He (1998: 110-1) writes:

Documents, closer to speech, require more contextualized interpretation. Records...may have local uses that become very distant from officially sanctioned meanings. Documents involve a personal technology, and records a full state technology of power...[The] researcher may often be able to get access to documents, whereas access to records may be restricted by laws regarding privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity.

Both records and documents are used for different purposes; records are for the verification of facts and for understanding the system of administration, whereas documents give insight into the personalized experiences. Newspapers also constitute an important source in documentary research.

In sociological and anthropological works, documentary evidence is used for strengthening our observations, or for attempting a brief historical sketch of the people. Many fieldworkers spend time in archives looking for relevant materials to illuminate the local history.³³ Srinivas (1996: 94-101, 112) shows the importance of documents (like, partition deeds) in his study of disputes. He says that in those cases where documents exist, one may question the respondents on that basis, reconstruct the disputes and the dynamics of their settlement. However, there are situations of dispute about which documents do not exist, but the fieldworker comes to know that a number of people were involved in the dispute. In these cases, he can interview them individually to obtain an account that may be broadly true. In other words, documents may guide an empirical study of disputes, and the investigator may combine the documentary evidence with the empirical.

Besides these works, there have also been full-fledged studies of documents, especially diaries. One may refer here to Alan Macfarlane's work (1970) on the family life of a seventeenth century clergyman, Ralph Josselin. Subtitled his work as 'essay in historical anthropology', Macfarlane submits Josselin's diaries to anthropological examination, patiently analyzing the entries, and supplementing their evidence from other sources. One learns a lot about the society of Josselin's times from his diaries. Another work of profit is an analysis of the diaries of Subbalakshmi, written in the years 1924-6, by Visweswaran (1996: 143-65). Well known in diary research is the Rudolphs' work on Amar Singh's diaries, a Rajput prince from Rajasthan.³⁴

Anthropologists are particularly interested in material culture. Even while pursuing the study of the non-material culture, they find their study incomplete unless material culture is integrated with it. A study of the local patterns of music, for example, would require a study of the local musical instruments, the technology that creates them, the materials used in them and the ways in which they are acquired, and the people who make and use them. Anthropologists learn to draw material cultural objects to size. They also acquire them for their museums. In fact, the museum is one of the funding agencies of anthropological fieldwork in many universities. Besides integrating material culture with the study of non-material culture, it is also possible to focus on an aspect of material culture and through its study try to illuminate certain social and symbolic dimensions of people whose material culture is studied. One may begin with the study of jewellery, house types, clothes, or any other object. Using the methods of interpretation, one may work out the principles of social structure that material culture illuminates.³⁵ The *vade mecum* of anthropological fieldwork, *Notes and Queries in Anthropology* (1874/1964), gives an inventory of questions one may keep in mind while collecting information on material culture.

³³ For anthropological works that make use of archival materials, see Visvanathan (1993:xi), Cohn (1996), Smith (1996), Sundar (1997), Shah (2002). Some novelists also weave documentary evidence with fiction in their works; see, for instance, Ghosh (1992).

³⁴ One of their papers is contained in this reader. Also see Rudolph and Rudolph with Kanota (2000).

³⁵ See Marwah and Srivastava (1987).

Contesting Perspectives

An important aspect that research investigators should bear in mind is that there may be contesting, and conflicting, views that the members of a society may hold about the social reality, and each one of them is affected by the social position that the respondents occupy. Let me illustrate this with the help of an example from my own fieldwork.

In June 1985, a group of development workers, both men and women, arrived in a hamlet of western Rajasthan, where I was conducting fieldwork with a community of camel-herders and shepherds, to assess and prioritize the local needs for developmental work. As the elaborate techniques of Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) and Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) were not fully known at that time, the development workers administered a group and focused interview to pastoralists from several adjacent hamlets, who were requested to assemble at a public place, the platform dedicated to a folk deity.³⁶

More women than men came to the 'meeting', as the development workers defined the congregation. The able-bodied men and boys had gone on the daily routine of grazing their animals. As per the norm of sexual segregation, the womenfolk congregated in and around the house of the priest, near the deity's platform. Men squatted in the open. Although the meeting was scheduled for pastoralists, some men from non-herding castes had also walked in just to see what went on and often they spoke more than those for whom the meeting was planned.

The group interview began with a development worker introducing his team members, their aim of a face-to-face meeting with the graziers, the type of development action they hoped for, and on behalf of his colleagues, he sought the assembly's active cooperation. Then followed a torrent of questions that the development workers asked, whilst a couple of them took the notes on congregants' replies, from which would evolve a guideline for appropriate action in future.

One of the questions that evoked good response concerned the causes of local poverty. The men drew attention to a gradual disappearance of pastures, the depletion of their herds, the emerging hostility between agriculturists and pastoralists after the double and triple cropping patterns had come into vogue, no development work being undertaken for animal-keepers in contrast to peasants and farmers, and ecological changes especially desertification of areas hitherto fertile. They were sharply critical of the stratagems and lip service of politicians, government officials, and even development workers. Unequivocally, the local men, more non-pastoral than pastoral, warned the interviewers to stay away from their hamlets and villages if no development work followed the meeting.

Whatever was being committed to writing was the male view on their poverty. Being sensitive to gender distinction, I suggested to the group interviewers to hold a separate meeting with women in which no men participated, for they tended to silence

³⁶ See Chambers (1981, 1992), Mukherjee (1993). For focus group interview, see Greenbaum (1998).

women. I also told them that in the meeting for herders, many uninvited males from other dominant non-pastoral castes had joined in and they often silenced the graziers or the latter simply could not express themselves before the powerful others. However, in meetings for pastoral women, women from other castes did not walk in because of normative restrictions on female mobility in the village. Pastoral men had non-pastoral friends and acquaintances, but not pastoral women whose relatives and friends were mostly from their own caste. On being convinced, the female interviewers organized the same day a meeting with pastoral women in which males, including young boys who wanted to gatecrash, were requested not to walk by. I later learnt that the group interview with women was hugely successful and some of the findings were in sharp contrast to what the males had earlier said.

To the question on their poverty, the women did not discount the male answers. Some of them had heard of the replies that their men had earlier given. Some of them knew of the causes that their men thought were behind their poverty. But they emphasized that they were poor because, among other causes, their men were addicted to opium, tobacco, and tea. Of these addictions, the principal one was opium. Men spent a major portion of their meager income on buying it, thus contributing virtually nothing to the running of the household. Women had to work as farm labourers to eke out their and their children's livelihood. Men acquired opium-addiction in prime of their life. By the time they grizzled, they were habituated to opium to such an extent that they would not be able to do any work unless they consumed a 'tablet' of opium or its solution. The men did not think that their spending on opium (and on the other 'vices' such as tobacco and tea) did in any way contribute to their poverty and their leading an opium-dependent, vegetating existence, the life of a consumer rather than producer.

An understanding of the gendered prioritization of needs and causes of poverty was insightful for my own fieldwork. While the men located the causes of their penury in external states – in the realm of politics and exploitation – the women thought that they were in the internal states, in the reckless spending of their opium-habituated men, who because of their addiction had become 'physically hollow', thus could not sustain arduous work or work for long hours. Opium addiction was a characteristic of being 'male', but women marked it as a curse to their households and children. Household and its welfare were central to the female discourse, which was not the case with men. Women tirelessly pleaded with the outsiders visiting or serving in their hamlets and villages (such as teachers, doctors, veterinarians, pharmacists, social workers, anthropologists) to help their men give up the nefarious practice, notwithstanding its centrality in the male ritual of greeting their male guests.³⁷

Beginning with the sociology of opium in Rajasthan, I was able to delineate different, sometimes contrasting, viewpoints on virtually every aspect of social and cultural life within the same community. These perspectives were mediated by the social categories of gender, age, hierarchy, and power. Indubitably different perspectives did overlap and consensus prevailed on several issues, but on many others, sharp variations and contrasts were unmistakable. Each of them had its genesis in a social category –

³⁷ The male guests are always welcomed (*manhvār karnā*) by offering them 'opium solution' (*amal*).

gender or stratum, for example – rather than in the idiosyncrasies of the respondents. The problem in fieldwork was to collate different, yet interrelated, perspectives that constituted the way of life of the animal breeders.

The methodological lesson is that the fieldworker should carefully separate the different points of view. He should not assume that one view would encompass the other. Thus, the male point of view, howsoever dominant, is not the society's point of view. A society may be conceptualized as a conglomeration of different, maybe contrasting, perspectives, some overwhelmingly dominating the others. The fieldworker's job is to document each of these perspectives, showing where the people draw boundaries, separating one from the others, and then to show the negotiations between these perspectives, stating the reasons that make a particular perspective dominate the others. This may be called the method of disaggregation, where the viewpoints of constituting social categories are separated out and then linked by focusing on the dynamic interaction between them.

The first principle of a social study is that each society is horizontally as well as vertically divided with several criss-cross patterns. When the observer takes an insider's position, what appears as homogeneous from an external vantage point is in fact multi-layered with contrasting and conflicting views and opinions. To describe and understand the multiplex reality as constructed by its different components is a daunting task. The vast literature concerned with social research and methodology endeavours to grapple with the issue of the amorphous human behaviour and institutions that are perpetually changing.

Fieldwork

Fieldwork is central to anthropological work.³⁸ Library research, which is looked down upon by field anthropologists, is for 'lame ducks and rainy days' (Lewis 1986: 1). In Read's words (1986: 2), fieldwork is the 'crowning jewel' of anthropology. Seligman is reputed to have said that 'fieldwork was to anthropologists what the blood of the martyr was to church.'³⁹ Margaret Mead (1964: 5) writes: 'We still have no way to make an anthropologist except by sending him into the field: this contact with living material is our distinguishing mark.'

Reminiscing about his days as a graduate student in anthropology in Chicago, Rabinow (1977: 3) says that the world in the anthropology department was divided in two sets of people: those who had done fieldwork and those who had not. The latter were not 'anthropologists' in true sense notwithstanding their erudition of anthropological theory and other topics. The department of social anthropology at Cambridge, where I was a student in the late 1980s, had a pre-fieldwork class in which the techniques and methods of ethnographic investigation were taught and discussed, and another post-fieldwork (or

³⁸ This, however, does not imply that the source of all data, information, and ideas is fieldwork. It should not be regarded as the end but a beginning in the vocation of anthropology. See Fox (1973: Introduction).

³⁹ Quoted by B eteille and Madan (1975: 2).

‘writing up’) seminar wherein the doctoral candidates who had returned from their fieldwork presented their experiences as well as important chapters of their dissertation. Sometimes the post-fieldworkers spoke to the pre-fieldwork class about their experiences of handling the anthropological tool kit, the ethical problems they confronted, and the solutions they improvised. The relation between the pre- and the post-fieldworkers was like the one between the ‘uninitiated’ and the ‘initiated’. The symbolism of the rites of passage was apparent. The uninitiated ones were performing the rites of separation from their earlier status to plunge into the field. Fieldwork was structurally equivalent to the rites of transition. And, the initiated ones had survived the fieldwork and had performed the rites of incorporation to seek membership in the tribe of anthropologists.

Lewis (1986: 6) compares the fieldworker with the shaman. The fieldwork expedition is like the shamanic visit to unknown lands. While parachuting through the world of spirits and fairies, the shaman renders his description – often inchoative, sometimes gibberish – of all that he sees and endures, thus bringing home the ‘rich stores of exotic wisdom’. The fieldworker is the medium for the alien cultures (and cultures treated as ‘unfamiliar’), in the same way as the shaman acts as the medium of divine entities. People the anthropologist studies ‘possess’ him, with the result that he calls them ‘his people’ and is ardently possessive of them. But as the shaman does not remain in his journey forever and returns to his social world to attend to his everyday chores, similarly the fieldwork, howsoever extensive and longitudinal, is time-bound. The anthropologist returns to his social milieu to write up his account of the people among an array of other roles he performs as a private and public individual.

The fieldworker distinguishes himself from the survey researcher. Sometimes using the term fieldwork interchangeably with anthropology, the anthropologist considers his approach as most suitable for an insider’s (i.e. emic) understanding of their social and cultural life. For gaining such knowledge, the fieldworker is generally advised to spend not less than one year with a community of people, in their natural habitat, collecting information about all social and cultural aspects, so that in the end he has a fair idea of the typical annual activities.⁴⁰ Evans-Pritchard’s (1951) ideal anthropologist conducts his fieldwork with not less than two different societies, for this will make him comparative and he will not think in terms of just one society. His first fieldwork is for at least two years, separated by a break of few months in an anthropology department for collating the data collected on the first visit. His second fieldwork with a different society is usually of shorter duration because he can draw upon the trove of his first fieldwork’s experience to provide solutions to various problems. He also has an experience of recording field notes and writing up his work.

This suggestion of one year’s or a couple of years’ fieldwork needs to be examined critically. Evans-Pritchard’s ‘total residence’ among the Nuer was about a year, although he thought that a year was not really adequate for a ‘sociological study of a people in adverse circumstances’ (1940: 14). Yet, the amount and the quality of data that he had collected working with a ‘hostile people’ was indeed praiseworthy, for it yielded

⁴⁰ Bailey (1962: 262) writes: ‘...our technique...rests on patience, on a willingness to wait and watch and allow the material to soak into us rather than to make quick samples out of the pool.’

his three books on the Nuer, besides a number of other articles.⁴¹ Likewise, Dumont (1986: XVII) spent two years in Tamilnadu, but his contact with Pramalai Kallar, the community he studied, was for eight months, but the depth and quality of his ethnography was superb, 'comparable to Evans-Pritchard's Nuer.'⁴² We may think of a number of similar examples, which help us conclude that the quality of data is not always a function of a long stay with the people. The time spent in carrying out fieldwork is in fact dependent upon the sociological problem the researcher has chosen for investigation. For a study of the ritual calendar or agricultural cycle, he will be required to stay in the community for one year or more.

Further, the fieldwork tradition shows a great deal of variability. The French and German anthropologists are well known for several successions of short fieldwork, sometimes visiting the same location every year for decades. Also included in the anthropology syllabi of many universities is short fieldwork to be conducted by students, under the supervision of their teachers, on the basis of which they write their respective dissertations.⁴³ When the field happens to be easily accessible, as is the case when the researcher studies his own society, he can always go back to his field for a couple of weeks in the midst of writing up his work. A short spell of fieldwork follows a short spell of 'deskwork', and this may continue almost alternatively. This type of fieldwork has come to be known as 'extensive', in contrast to 'intensive' fieldwork. B eteille (1975: 12) has used this term – extensive fieldwork – for N.K.Bose's variety of fieldwork.

But the image that British social anthropology has popularized is of a solitary fieldworker, who, after having decided to study a particular community, goes to live with it for a lengthy period of time, the length of which he decides on the basis of the research problem under study. Because the field is located in a far-flung geographical area and short field visits are not easily possible, the researcher would like to spend as much time as possible with the people so that he has not to return to them with more queries. Throughout this period of intensive study, he immerses in the lifestyle of his hosts. Preferably, the fieldworker chooses a hitherto unstudied community.⁴⁴ The research design he prepares is exploratory that evolves into descriptive as the field probe continues. Earlier the teachers of anthropology thought that the student would learn the art of fieldwork by practicing it, by taking plunge in the community selected for study.⁴⁵ Today, the beginners undergo training programmes in field methodology (in pre-fieldwork classes) and also self-learn from a host of books in research methods.

⁴¹ Evans-Pritchard (1940: 13) writes about the difficult circumstances in which he worked with the Nuer, who were so hostile that one developed, "if the pun be allowed, the most evident symptoms of 'Nuerosis'." See his other books on religion and kinship of the Nuer (1956, 1960).

⁴² See Moffat in his Foreword to Dumont (1986).

⁴³ It has also happened that these short spells of fieldwork, carried out each year over a period of many years, have resulted in monographs. See Vidyarthi's (1963) book on the Malers of Rajmahal Hills (Jharkhand).

⁴⁴ The desire to study a traditional community is also strong among anthropologists. Yalman (1967: 10) writes that he looked for a village 'which would be traditional, isolated and fairly large.'

⁴⁵ Before starting for his fieldwork, Evans-Pritchard (1973: 1) went to his teacher, C.G. Seligman, for his advice, and this was what he learnt: 'Seligman told me to take 10 grains of quinine every night and to keep off women.'

As one of the requirements of fieldwork is that it should be conducted in the vernacular, in many British and American universities, the student acquires the preliminary linguistic ability in the language laboratory of social anthropology departments before embarking upon the field.⁴⁶ If the facility for a particular language is not available, the fieldworker is advised to learn it by living with people, engaging an interpreter in the beginning, and then gradually using it himself.⁴⁷ Leach (1954: 311) wrote that he dispensed with the services of his interpreter very early in his fieldwork. This had its disadvantages, but it meant that he ‘learnt to understand the Jinghpaw language very quickly.’ Obeyesekere (1981: 11) observes that the field researchers should specify whether or not they engaged the interpreters, and if they did, they should give the full details of the social background of their interpreters. Against this background, the reader would be able ‘to gauge the “interpreter effect” on the work as a whole’ (p. 11).

The fieldworker is a ‘humble learner’ of the cultures of other people (Evans-Pritchard 1951: 79); he is ‘like a child and learns about the culture of the people in very much the same way as does a growing child in that culture’ (Middleton 1970: 6). About the Indian anthropologist, A. Aiyappan, Kathleen Gough (1974: 54) wrote that he consciously took his respondent, the villager, ‘as his *guru* (teacher).’ The fieldworker commits errors in learning the dialect, pronounces the local words awkwardly, has difficulty in comprehending intricate details of social structure, and is admonished for transgressing boundaries or breaking rules. Finding him struggle, people laugh at him while he stands grinning oafishly; the local men and women become his tutors, rectify his errors, and teach him not only about themselves but aid his ‘nativization’.⁴⁸ While teaching the anthropologist – both formally and informally – people also learn about their culture through their reflections and attempting to answer anthropological questions systematically. Fieldwork, therefore, is a didactic experience for the investigator as well as his respondents.⁴⁹

It may not be possible for the solitary anthropologist to observe everything that goes in the community. Certain events may take place in a household when the ethnographer is busy interviewing someone else in the agricultural field. It is also possible that certain events may not take place during the time of fieldwork, or they may

⁴⁶ Obeyesekere (1981: 10-1) has emphasized the importance of having a complete mastery over the native language for the study of symbolic systems. For his work, he had interviewed Tamil-Hindus with the help of interpreters but since he did not know Tamil, he excluded all this information from his study of personal symbols.

⁴⁷ See the section on field assistants in Pelto and Pelto (1978: 219-21).

⁴⁸ During their training, the fieldworkers are taught not to expect to find an idyllic society. Freed and Freed (1993: 18) write: ‘When we sat in on [Margaret] Mead’s fieldwork seminar..., she told about a student who went into the field with this idyllic concept. When he began his fieldwork, he suffered extreme culture shock and had to be hospitalized.’ The contributors to Thapan’s volume amply show that fieldwork is an ‘arduous task’ (1998:6).

⁴⁹ Societies that have had a larger exposure to anthropological investigation have respondents who not only possess an idea of the mechanics of fieldwork but can also steer it, often suggesting relevant questions to the fieldworker. See Srivastava (1991).

not form part of the annual ritual cycle.⁵⁰ When an event is taking place, the anthropologist cannot be present at all places of action: for instance, in a Raika wedding, the time when the auspicious wooden pole (*madā*) is erected to mark the beginning of marriage rituals is also the time when the earthen oven (*bhattī*) where cooking will take place is also set up, and around this time many activities take place in women's quarter. He may still manage to observe some rituals, but his presence in many others may be embarrassing to the hosts or he may be strictly advised to keep himself away from certain events and also, people. It was observed earlier that male anthropologists working in sexually segregated societies have often been shut out from participating or observing female activities.⁵¹ Therefore, what they have reported is chiefly from the perspective of males. Boas knew of this problem full well and thus encouraged women to take up a career in anthropology, carrying out fieldwork on those aspects that mainly concerned women.⁵²

The male bias (or female bias) in reporting can be corrected if instead of a single anthropologist, two anthropologists, one male and the other female, can team up, the female anthropologist studying all those sectors of the community which are virtually closed to her male counterpart and vice versa. From that point of view, husband-wife teams of anthropologists (like that of Ruth and Stanley Freed) will fair better than solitary anthropologists.⁵³ But many anthropologists -- such as Malinowski (1922), Evans-Pritchard (1951), Srinivas (1996) -- think that loneliness in the field is a virtue, for it will drive the fieldworker to seek companionship among the people. It will also make him creative because he will write down in his diary these experiences of loneliness and the ways in which he mitigated it.⁵⁴ Apart from loneliness, fieldworkers pass through moments of frustrations when informants are not available. This is compounded by

⁵⁰ I know of an anthropologist who had to wait in her field village for more than one year to actually observe the death rituals. Herskovits (1954: 7) writes: '...in many societies there are certain rites that are performed only once every several years, and that even in a period which permits the observation of the ordinary annual round, especially in a small community, there may be no marriage or no death.'

⁵¹ Srinivas writes (1979: 26): '...I did not have a single conversation with any young women during my stay in the village.' Another male anthropologist, Hans Buechler (1969: 13), who went to Bolivia for fieldwork, writes: '...the female view of society was practically closed to me.' Female fieldworkers are generally able to speak to male respondents of all age groups as compared to their male counterparts whose interaction is mostly confined to old women or those with whom they forge fictive kin ties. Not only gender, but also age differences are important. In her work with the Bakkarwals of Jammu and Kashmir, Rao (1998: 303) writes that probably because of her young age, she had 'relatively little intimate access to the elderly.'

⁵² Lowie (1937); also see Visweswaran (1996: Chapter 1) for female fieldworkers.

⁵³ It is also possible that a male anthropologist, who was not able to interview women because of severe restrictions on the interaction between local women and male strangers, encourages his female students to study the same community that he had studied and focus on women's world (T.N. Madan, personal communication, August 2002).

⁵⁴ A husband-wife team, or any team for that matter, will form some kind of a closed group -- an 'emotionally self-sufficient island' (Evans-Pritchard, quoted by Srinivas 1996: 217) -- affecting the process of rapport establishment and reducing greatly the time one spends with one's respondents, who in fact become 'friends' when one is alone. An important observation in this context is from Crapanzano (1980: 141), who says that although his wife did not come to any of the interview sessions he conducted with an illiterate Moroccan Arab tilemaker named Tuhami, 'but the fact of her existence must have influenced Tuhami's relationship to me.' When the fieldworker is part of a team, his relations with his respondents are of a different quality.

sickness and exhaustion. One of the experiences of fieldworkers consists of wading through these hours of inaction and ennui and keeping oneself optimistic and cheerful.⁵⁵

A single researcher, maybe without an interpreter, can easily conduct a research investigation in a small society with a few hundred respondents. But, for certain research problems, large research teams of fieldworkers, working under the guidance of a few experts, are required (Dube 1962: 250). Whether it is the first or the second type of study, there is, however, no compromise on the intensity of fieldwork and the quality of data. Furthermore, the type of group research (or 'field teams'), which is being discussed here, should be distinguished from survey, because the members of the team primarily conduct fieldwork and not survey. Also, it should be distinguished from fieldwork that students conduct together as a part of their curriculum. First, the students' fieldwork is quite short, rarely for more than a month; and second, each student collects data for his individual topic, and generally, there is no research problem that the entire team investigates. The group research, by comparison, is long and intensive, and focuses on a research problem. All members of the group collect data pertaining to that, rather than getting engaged with their individual research projects.⁵⁶

The people of an ethnographic investigation are treated as the other. When their moorings are different from that of the fieldworker, they constitute the other both in an empirical and a methodological sense. But when the subjects of study are one's own people, the investigator does not assume that he knows them fully, rather he considers them as the other, about whom he will only come to know during the course of his study. The other-ness, therefore, is not an empirical quality but a methodological vantage point. There is a difference between the knowledge the investigator acquires by being a natural member of his society and the one he acquires by consciously undertaking its study. In the latter case, his society is the object of study, the other. Like the study of any other culture, he shall excitedly discover many aspects of his society that he did not know beforehand.

The other-ness can be considered a frame of mind. One may extend here Levi-Strauss' idea of 'distantiation' to the study of one's own society.⁵⁷ Each anthropological study requires an observance of distance from the object of study, even when one may be a natural member of the society (by birth and socialization) which one selects for intensive work. Madan (1994: 136) expresses this idea eloquently:

One has to learn not only to *live intimately with strangers* but also to *live (behave) strangely with intimates*. One has to cultivate empathy for other cultures; contrariwise

⁵⁵ See Malinowski (1967), Levi-Strauss (1976).

⁵⁶ Some well known studies were the result of group research; for instance, see Dube (1955), Lewis (1958). Dube's study of a village in Hyderabad was an outcome of the Osmania University Social service Extension Project which he directed in 1951-2.

⁵⁷ Levi-Strauss (1963: 378) himself suggested that the anthropologist can be called to analyze phenomena which exist in his society but are characterized by 'distantiation', either because they concern a section of the society (like prostitution) or because they are rooted in the unconscious (like resistance to food or health changes). But, here the argument is that 'distantiation' can be observed when a prostitute (trained in anthropology) studies other prostitutes, or when an anthropologist hailing from a conservative society studies resistance to change in his own society.

one has to create distance between oneself and one's culture and society in order to be able to see oneself in the round, as it were.

When one adopts this frame of mind, one's own society appears to be as distant and mysterious as are the other societies. Familiar is made unfamiliar (Madan 1994: 114); then with the help of the baggage of anthropological methodology, one makes the unfamiliar familiar.

The Fieldworker and the Field: Their Respective Impacts

The impact of the fieldworker may be tremendous in the society he studies. He may become the talk of the village. The people might like to identify with him, for it raises their status. They may give him a preferential treatment or may volunteer him help.⁵⁸ The fieldworker is not, to recapitulate Powdermaker's words (1966: 19), a 'faceless robot or a machinelike recorder of human activities,' and therefore, is likely to be involved with people. He may be approached to arbitrate a domestic dispute, intervene between external institutions (such as the police or revenue department) and the people, or may become the spokesperson of the community's interests.⁵⁹ The fieldworker may have around him his own group of friends, admirers, and helpers, for which Madan (1989: XXI-II) has aptly used the term 'convoy', which helps him in a variety of ways and also expects several favours in return. This may happen even when he lives in a neutral ground as Mayer (1975) did: he stayed outside his field village, but was often asked for his opinion on village matters and some of his remarks had value implications. The anthropologist may experience a sense of one-ness with his people; for instance, Alan Macfarlane, well known for his fieldwork in Nepal, told his interviewer from a Cambridge magazine (Carter 2000: 7):

We [he and his wife] are regarded as wage earners temporarily over here [England], with our heart in Nepal, where it is really. When my (adopted) sister died, I had to return and perform the rituals for her death. I was one of the four who lit the funeral pyre. I felt more devastated than I have ever felt about anyone in my life...more so than my father.

A good example of the impact of the field on the fieldworker may be chosen from Crapanzano's portrait (1980) of Tuhami, who was a fatalist, believed in submitting himself to Allah's will, and had visions of supernatural entities. Of all the Moroccans Crapanzano met during his fieldwork, he found a few 'who were both interesting and likable' and Tuhami was one of them. As a consequence of the long interviews he carried out with Tuhami, Crapanzano often felt that he was not able to keep the 'ethnographic distance' that is required to be observed between the ethnographer and his respondent for

⁵⁸ Nakane (1975: 19). Kantowsky (1995: 9-10) writes that almost all in his field village in Banaras tried to impress upon him and his wife – the 'white persons'. The temple priest offered them a good quantity of the 'blessed food' (*prasād*); the renouncer (*sādhu*) demonstrated yogic exercises without throwing a tantrum. The Kantowskys were the 'main attraction' in the village. Mayer (1975: 29) talks of the 'self-appointed young guides' who volunteered him help. Seymore (1999: 34) writes: '...my light skin and education gave me status'.

⁵⁹ Some fieldworkers are reported to have married their respondents. Take the case of Kenneth Good (1991) who married a Yanomami woman; or, of Verrier Elwin (see Guha 1999). Not much is available about sex in fieldwork. Rabinow (1977: 68-9) wrote that he spent a night with a prostitute to prove his affiliation with his male Moroccan friend.

the development of objective knowledge. Often, Crapanzano reacted against the repository of beliefs that Tuhami held.

In the process, Crapanzano adopted the role of a 'curer', endeavouring to explain to Tuhami the pitfalls created by his beliefs, and the interview with him developed into a 'therapeutic one'. The impact of the field (in this case, Tuhami) on the ethnographer was tremendous, as may be inferred from the following (p. 141):

We [Crapanzano and his wife] were coming to know Tuhami as a person and beginning not only to sympathize with his condition but to empathize with him. Care had entered our relationship.

One of the lessons that Crapanzano learnt through his fieldwork, and so do other anthropologists, was that fieldwork teaches not only about the people (the other) under study, which in any case is its explicit aim. It is through fieldwork that the ethnographer 'discovers' himself, and is able to interpret his own culture and social milieu. Knowledge is created out of the constant struggle to come to terms with the self and the other. Crapanzano (1980: 138-9) writes:

Fieldwork must be understood within its temporal dimension as a process of continual discovery and self-discovery...I learnt much about myself and my world through the detour of my comprehension of Tuhami.

But, in spite of the empathic involvement, the fieldworker does not become one with people. Evans-Pritchard (1973: 3) writes:

One cannot really become a Zande or a Nuer or a Bedouin Arab, and the best compliment one can pay them is to remain apart from them in essentials. In any case one always remains oneself, inwardly a member of one's own society and a sojourner in strange land.

Nadel (1939) described the fieldworker as a 'freak member of the group'; and Middleton (1970: 14) wrote that since he was neither a missionary nor an official among the Lugbara, he was 'clearly an odd person.' In a perceptive ethnographic account, Briggs (1970) describes the roles that the Inuit Eskimos allocated to her chronologically. First, she was a stranger and guest, a white person, who was addressed by her personal name. Second, the family with which she stayed, treated her as a 'daughter', but the role of an adult woman was not given to her because neither did she excel in skin sewing nor had children. She was, therefore, a 'child' – i.e. educable. When the Inuit found her an 'incorrigible offender' (losing temper which was unacceptable to people or her clumsy gestures), they termed her 'uneducable' and those who could not be educated were 'simple-minded'. Briggs alternated between the role of a 'child' and a 'simpleton'. She could never become a 'full' Inuit.

Not only does the anthropologist find a gulf between the people and himself, but also the former do not want the fieldworker to 'merge' with them. The Lugbara, who called Middleton (1970: 71-2) 'our European', insisted that he behaved as a European. They did not approve of him if he was not dressed formally and cleanly. When invited to Middleton's hut for drink, they expected some European beer to be served in glasses and some food laid out on a plate to be eaten with fork and spoon. In Middleton's words, the Lugbara 'did not like a slummer' (p. 71). Although the fieldworker tries his best to 'interiorize' the local lifestyles, people do not really regard him as 'one of them' in all respects. As the fieldwork progresses, they become convinced that the fieldworker is

different from them and will remain so in future. They tolerate the violations of norms that the fieldworker commits, for he is 'different'. Many ethnographers working in multi-caste villages of India have told me that when they ate (or drank water) at the houses of lower castes, they did receive from upper castes comments strongly disapproving their behaviour, but were never excommunicated. In fact, the upper castes never denied them food and hospitality albeit their close contacts with lower castes. Emphasizing their differentness, the Raika respondents of mine often said: 'You might have been a Raika in your last birth but in this, you are not and you will never become one. It will be our great luck if you are able to understand our problems.'

Not much has been written on what anthropologists do when leaving the field. Do they promise future visits to the community? However, a piece of advice to prospective fieldworkers is that they should refrain from promising to people what they would not be able to honour. They should also communicate as clearly as possible that their work is time-bound. One should take the role of the researcher immediately on reaching the field, so that people come to know from the first day of the arrival of the anthropologist among them that he is there to study their lifestyles and institutions. And, that the study will culminate one day after which the researcher will return to the place from where he came. Because of the empathy he develops for people, the ethnographer may overstay in the field, but he knows he will 'never become a native.' However, he may continue to nurture relations with some respondents through mail or telephone, or may periodically visit the field site, but it all varies with the researchers and the nature of their respective studies.⁶⁰ The letters one receives from the field also constitute an important source of data. Clarifications to information one has already collected may also be sought through letters.

A conclusion at this point is that the fieldworker occupies a marginal place in the society he visits in search of knowledge.⁶¹ He may be treated honorifically because of his resources and power, yet it does not entitle him to become a part of the mainstream of society. Certain rituals and meetings may taboo the presence of outsiders. The native fieldworker may transcend these restrictions, but the fact that he treats the self as the other creates in him a kind of marginality. I may here refer to Edward Said's view that migration and marginality may cause creativity and intellectual ideas. The intellectual in Said's writings is an outsider, has multiple identities, and is not settled in any one place. He is involved in as well as detached from the affairs of the society in which he participates.⁶² A close parallel exists between Said's intellectual and the anthropologist.⁶³ The latter migrates temporarily to a society – his own or the other – for the purpose of acquiring local knowledge. During the process of learning, he may be impressed by it,

⁶⁰ One may have a look at the longitudinal research carried out in some communities. See Seymore (1999). Bennett (1983: XI) kept a steady contact of ten years with the families she initially studied. Wadley (1994: XIX) has been in constant touch with Karimpur for the last twenty-five years. Bernard (1994: 164) writes: '...no anthropologist really leaves the field.'

⁶¹ See Freilich, ed. (1970).

⁶² Said has developed this argument in many of his writings. See, one of his recent publications, *Out of Place, A Memoir* (1999).

⁶³ This point has been fully developed by Grimshaw and Hart (1993).

but at the same time he may be critical of certain local practices, such as female infanticide or human sacrifice, especially those that contravene universal human values.

The nature of fieldwork differs from one context to another. Fieldwork in a society where most of the social life is conducted outside the house – like in a typical Indian village – will be different from where people draw firm boundaries between the outside and the inside, and most of the social life is conducted inside the house, like in upper middle class neighbourhoods in a metropolises.⁶⁴ Fieldwork in modern institutions – hospitals, banks, schools, and laboratories – poses its own problems, beginning with the finding of a ‘community’, and then, selecting an appropriate tool kit for its study.⁶⁵ What distinguishes fieldwork from survey research is that it is flexible, spread out, and lengthy. Thus, the data collected in the first few weeks may turn out to be erroneous later (Béteille and Madan 1975: 9). It is after several months of interacting with one’s respondents, and learning the local idioms and patois, that one starts collecting genuine information; therefore, it is unsurprising that most of the data are gathered during the final months of fieldwork (Middleton 1970: 6). As the time spent in the field site increases, the fieldwork ‘funnel’ narrows (Agar 1980). In the beginning, the enquiry has a wide focus, the questions are not clearly formulated, and the key respondents have yet not been chanced upon. As the work proceeds, the direction becomes clear, well defined, goals of study sharpen, questions emerge when one expands the field jottings and reads the field notes, and the enquiry is well steered. The fieldworker now knows the respondents who should be approached and the records on which he should lay his hands. In the early period of fieldwork, the people control the topics about which the fieldworker can ask questions, but as fieldwork continues, the researcher starts controlling the topics – he asks questions that interest him. Towards the close of his field stay, he may introduce schedules, and if people are literate, questionnaires. He may also conduct, if the research design requires, projective tests or transcribe oral texts (such as folk epics). Fieldwork is a sensitive process. The relations the investigator establishes with his respondents and the way in which they mature overtime govern its success.⁶⁶

Observation and Interview

For data collection, firstly, the researcher observes the behaviour of people in their natural habitat and the place of work; secondly, he converses with them wherever

⁶⁴ Luhrmann (1996) writes that her fieldwork with the Parsis in Bombay was a kind of ‘appointment’ anthropology. She sought appointment with individuals and interviewed them. There was no small group that she could have joined.

⁶⁵ In these institutions, one has to find a ‘community’. Minocha (1979: 203-4), in her work in a Delhi hospital, describes the problem of looking within the hospital for a relatively large and stable community. She found such a ‘community’, with which she carried out extended contacts, in the medical ward of the hospital where the patients spent much more time than was the case in other wards. In his work on death and death rituals, Parry (1994) says that he could not find a stable community to work with in Banaras. He writes: ‘For obvious reasons, intensive anthropological fieldwork amongst the huge number of transient and socially heterogeneous pilgrims who visit the city is not possible’ (p. 1). Similarly, Morinis (1992) writes that sociologists ignored the study of pilgrimage because of the ‘sheer difficulty of defining and carrying out conventional fieldwork on sacred travel’ (p. 358).

⁶⁶ Regarding anthropological fieldwork as a ‘form of conduct’, Geertz (2000: 30) writes that here ‘One must find one’s friends among one’s informants and one’s informants among one’s friends.’

they are accessible (in tea-stalls, agricultural fields, offices, in their houses) about why they do what they do, what they did which he would never be able to observe, and their opinions on various social issues; and thirdly, he requests them to write up their answers to an inventory of questions that he hands over to, or mails, them. These techniques can be conveniently combined to yield life history accounts of respondents, detailed descriptions of events and institutions, or kinship and affinal ties between people. The first technique is called observation, the second, interview, and for a set of questions prepared to be filled in by respondents, the term questionnaire is used.

Observation should be distinguished from mere seeing and looking. Observation may be defined as a systematic viewing, which is deliberate, intentional, and planned. The observer is aware of the fact that he is systematically viewing the unit under study. He records his observations, and also, if conditions permit, films and photographs the events that are later analyzed. He prepares an observation schedule that guides the data collection. Considered as a supreme technique for studying non-verbal behaviour, observation can be conducted in a 'laboratory' (as in psychology) or natural setting.⁶⁷ It can be structured or unstructured: in the former, we count the frequency of the occurrence of peculiar features of a particular thing, whereas in the latter, we merely record what occurs.

One of the main techniques – in some cases, the only technique – social anthropologists and sociologists use is participant observation, which is sustained, intensive, extended, day-after-day, and of broad range. The observer lives with people, eats the food they eat, gets closer to them, and takes active part in their activities; in other words, he participates in the life of the people by adopting a role.⁶⁸ He has a first hand experience of sharing a people's culture in its natural habitat for a lengthy period of time. The people's 'reactivity syndrome' is transcended as the investigator's presence among them does not arouse suspicion or makes them conscious of his presence.⁶⁹

The term participant observation is attributed to Edward Lindeman's publication, *Social Discovery* (1924).⁷⁰ Frederic LePlay studied family budgets of people by living with them; Charles Booth wrote on labourers' lives and their problems by staying in their neighbourhood in London. But the clearest statement on participant observation was Malinowski's in his *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922). In the context of observing and recording the 'imponderabilia of actual life and of typical behaviour', Malinowski (1922: 21-2) wrote, '...it is good for the Ethnographer sometimes to put aside camera, note book and pencil, and to join in himself in what is going on.' From such plunges in

⁶⁷ Pelto and Spindler (1965: 41) write: 'A Pueblo rainmaking ceremony...cannot be fully described by an informant, however eloquent he may be. It has to be seen by the anthropologist for himself.'

⁶⁸ The role may also be imposed on the fieldworker. In my fieldwork with the Raikas, a woman, who did not have a brother of her own, 'adopted' me as her brother by tying a 'sacred thread' (*rākhī*) on my wrist in the presence of her affines. See Srivastava (1997: 231-2).

⁶⁹ One of the best descriptions of participant observation is from John Madge (1953: 131). He writes: '...when the heart of the observer is made to beat as the heart of any other member of the group under observation, rather than as that of a detached emissary from some distant laboratory, then he has earned the title of participant observer.'

⁷⁰ Cited from Madge (1953: 131).

the life of the Trobrianders, Malinowski found that their behaviour and their manner of being became more transparent and understandable.

Observation can be conducted without participation (non-participant observation) and it is possible to participate in the life of people without undertaking any 'intentional observations.' For the latter, sometimes the term 'complete participation' is used. These two may be regarded as the two ends of a continuum, and in between are placed different variants of observation. Participant observation creates role clashes: between the insider and the outsider, the stranger and the friend, and the pupil and the teacher. Earlier, it was pointed out that howsoever hard he may attempt, the fieldworker will never become an 'insider'. He may view himself as a 'humble learner' of other cultures, but in fact he has a lot to teach the others. There are cases of anthropologists who imparted tuition to school-going children, apart from drafting several petitions and interceding with the authorities on behalf of people. The fieldworker may become a 'good friend' but will still remain a 'stranger'. And, it is true even when the anthropologists may claim to have gone 'completely native'. Some anthropologists suggest that the fieldworker, therefore, should strike a balance between the two roles, mentioned earlier; with respect to those whom one is studying, one should choose the role of the stranger (Jarvie 1969: 505). Adoption of this role is also imperative for a scientific understanding of the community. When one 'goes native', there is a probability that one might withhold the publication of certain details about people or may lose objectivity in his analysis. He may think his publications might embarrass people or betray the trust they have reposed in him.

Non-participant observation is a successful technique in many situations, but its usefulness is questioned in simple societies where it may not be possible to keep distance from people or to explain to them the real purpose of one's visit. Hence, the adoption of this technique may retard the process of rapport establishment in such societies, which may not be the case in complex societies. Some anthropologists favour selective participation in the community and where to and where not to participate is conditioned by the context. This type of observation is also known as the quasi-participant observation. One of the suggestions is that the fieldworker should not compromise with his likes and dislikes, without losing humility and respect for people. For instance, he may politely refuse the gift of an opium tablet or liquor on the plea that he does not take it or it does not agree with his stomach. People also understand the cultural differences, and in all probability, they will not insist after a couple of persuasions.

Observation yields a treasure of data on non-verbal behaviour and what people say when they act. But there is also a need to know what people do and why, what they did in past when the observer was not there, what they do in situations that are not accessible to the observer, and what their views are about various social issues. Therefore, the researcher has to talk to – interview – people. Participant observation in fact includes conversing with people. In many cases, 'participant observation is fieldwork', however not all fieldwork is participant observation (Bernard 1994: 137). In many cases, data come principally from interviews conducted with respondents, as Adrian Mayer's paper included in this volume shows.

Steiner Kvale (1996: 6) makes a distinction between ‘everyday conversation’ and ‘interview’. The latter is not a ‘conversation between equal partners’. Here, the ‘researcher defines and controls the situation’. The characteristics of the interviewer – such as race and ethnicity, sex, social status, age, physical appearance, clothing and grooming, and demeanour – have an impact on the process of interviewing. For example, studies have found that white interviewers elicited responses significantly different from those obtained by black interviewers (Bailey 1978: 164-5).

Interviews may be broadly divided into two types. In the first, the interviewer has a basic idea of the areas about which he would be interviewing the respondent. He carries with him a list of the topics – what may be technically called the ‘interview guide’ -- that would guide him during the interview, but he does not structure the specific questions in advance. In such situations, an interview is more or less a ‘free-floating’ conversation. Often, the interviewer begins with what seems interesting to him or what he thinks would be interesting to the respondent. The interview may cover a number of areas. Called unstructured, it is time consuming, but yields a lot of information apart from the topics in which the interviewer is particularly interested. Therefore, the fieldworker has to sluce away the grit to index what is especially relevant to him.

By comparison, the other kind of interview is structured in which the investigator prepares a set of questions in advance and is specifically committed to seeking their answers. If the respondent deviates from the topic, the interviewer requests him to return to the point. Such an intervention might annoy the respondent, making him lose interest in the interview, but much depends on how the interviewer handles such situations. Both unstructured and structured interviews may be combined. The interviewer prepares an inventory of the topics of his interest in advance and then, starts the interview in a conversational manner. Once rapport has been established, he may gradually funnel down his enquiry, making it structured. The way in which the interview develops depends greatly on the perception of the interviewer’s role by the respondent.

More elaborately, interviews have been classified into focused interview, depth interview, clinical interview, repeated interview, and group interview (Young 1968: 219-222). The focused interview takes place with the individual known to have been involved in a particular concrete situation. In depth interview, the interviewee is encouraged free expression for an understanding about his subjective dimension. Clinical interviews are conducted for gauging the health and psychological status of the person. Social workers, counselors, and prison workers carry out personal history interviews of the subjects with whom they deal. In depth interview, the investigator may use projective techniques, such as picture interpretation and sentence and story completion. When the same respondent is interviewed again, it is known as repeated interview, and when it is an interview with the group, rather than an individual, as was the case in the village in Rajasthan the episode from which was described earlier in the section Contesting Perspectives, it is termed the group interview.

In her work on narrative analysis, Das (1999: 48-50) makes a distinction between three different techniques used for collecting verbal data. The first is the narrative

technique in which the emphasis is on the sequence of events or a particular event that happened in the life of a person. In this case, the narrative is 'linear and oriented'. The narrative technique allows one to examine the variations in the life histories of similarly placed persons in a society. The second is called the amplificatory technique, where the narrator is given the liberty to organize his life's story around the events which for him are the most significant. In the third type, which is called the elicitory interview, the emphasis is upon eliciting information rather than experience. It is used for testing a hypothesis.

Both observation and interview are techniques used for preparing the case study and genealogy. Aply described as the 'social microscope' by E.W. Burgess, the case study is a detailed account of the generic development of an individual, a group, an institution, an association, a community, or the total society.⁷¹ When it is an account of the life of a person, it is usually called life history.⁷² An anthropologist may present an analysis of the total case in his monograph. In that sense, Malinowski's study of Trobrianders or Whyte's of the Italian slum are examples of the case study. The other possibility is that the researcher compares a number of cases pertaining to the same phenomenon aiming to arrive at certain propositions.⁷³ A case study can be made at a point of time and over time. After Gluckman (1961), the latter is known as the 'extended case study', which has proved to be valuable in the study of unwritten laws of simple societies, where the investigator follows a dispute between persons right from the time it takes place till it is laid to rest.⁷⁴ The study of the process of dispute settlement guides one to the anatomy of the legal system – the laws, their execution, and the legal roles. Today, the extended case study method is also used in medical sociology and anthropology to study how people combine different, sometimes contradictory, medical practices. As in legal anthropology, where the dispute is followed to its settlement, in medical studies, the researcher follows the sick right from the time he announces the onset of his illness, collecting information on the specialists he consults, or is made to consult, the choice of medicines, the nursing care provided to him, and the case is followed till the time the sick is cured, or his illness becomes chronic, or the sick dies. The extended case study requires a long stay in the community, and therefore, in some cases, it may almost merge with the participant observation.⁷⁵

A method to study kinship, family, and marriage is by use of genealogies, which are prepared, as said earlier, using the techniques of observation and interview. W.H.R. Rivers (1910) showed the importance of genealogy in social and cultural studies and delineated the procedure of drawing up genealogical data. Malinowski (1922: 14-5) defined genealogy as a 'synoptic chart of a number of connected relations of kinship'.

⁷¹ Burgess quoted by Young (1968: 247).

⁷² For life history method, see Langness (1965), Mandelbaum (1973), Watson (1976), Frank (1979), Shaw (1980), Ellen, ed. (1984: 247-57), Jean-Paul Dumont (1986), Srivastava (1990).

⁷³ See, for example, Chakravarti's (1975) study of the impact of land reforms in an Indian village, in which he used the case study method.

⁷⁴ Some scholars use the term 'extended case-history', which, to use Turner's words (1974: 43-4), is 'the history of a single group or community over a considerable length of time, collected as a sequence of processual units of different types.'

⁷⁵ Refer to Srinivas' use (1996: 73-137; 2002) of case studies for studying disputes.

The investigator traces the genealogical chart of the respondent – the ego – by asking him questions, but it is likely that he may not know all the relatives in the ascending order or his memory of them may be faulty; thus, the fieldworker comes to complete the genealogy seeking information from the other egos. In this way the genealogical charts are also verified. But, one should not forget that in spite of the best efforts of the investigator, the genealogical charts might not be complete, because people may not remember, even in societies where kinship may be the principle of social organization, their ancestors – their names and other details about them – beyond a certain number of generations. The problem of remembering is bound to multiply in societies where descent is traced both from the sides of the father and the mother. Srinivas writes (1996: 78): ‘Generally speaking, the remoter the past, the less reliable are the memories of informants.’

Not only do the fieldworkers prepare genealogies, but the people whose charts they prepare may also keep an account of their kin and affines. The kinship chart, therefore, is an analytical tool as well as an ensemble of rules according to which the actors are expected to behave (Barnes 1967). As said earlier, people remember their relatives up to some ascending generations. Societies where writing technology has made inroads, the kinship charts that hitherto existed as part of the oral tradition, are now being written down. Some societies have the specialized groups of genealogists, who derive their livelihood by charging their clients for keeping their kinship and marriage records. For instance, western Rajasthan has the caste of Ravs, the genealogists, and each one of their groups serves a particular caste in the typical patron-client relations, what are called *jajmānī* ties, a characteristic of Indian villages. Once in two years or so, the Ravs visit their patrons (*jajmān*), note down in their books (*bahīs*) marriages, births, and deaths that have taken place since the time they last came. They may also record the cases of excommunication from the caste, but essentially they will note down only those details that their patrons wish to be recorded for their posterity. As the castes these genealogists serve are patrilineal, their books may have virtually no details about women. Also, the important demographic facts – such as infant mortality, reproductive history of women (details of still births, miscarriage, and abortion), age at marriage or delivery, serial monogamy – do not find a place in these books. In other words, these records may be partial and lack accuracy, for whichever information is recorded in them, as noted earlier, is at the behest of the patrons of the genealogists.⁷⁶ In fact, the money and other gifts the genealogists receive from their patrons are also entered in the books.

In other words, the facts of kinship and marriage of relevance to the researcher may not hold the same importance for people, thus the charts that people prepare for their purpose are different from those that fieldworkers prepare after sustained interviewing and observation, although some overlapping will definitely exist between the two charts. Following Fortes, the kinship chart that the actors prepare (diagrammatically, orally, or in writing) may be called pedigree, whilst the one the fieldworker prepares as part of his data, depending upon his research interests, may be known as genealogy.⁷⁷ This distinction is different from the one that physical anthropologists and human geneticists

⁷⁶ On the accuracy of genealogical records, see Shah and Shroff (1958: 40-70).

⁷⁷ Fortes quoted by Barnes (1967); for genealogical method, also see Conklin (1964), Hackenberg (1997).

make between genealogy and pedigree – for them, pedigree includes only those relatives who have bio-genetic connections among them, thus the facts of adoption are not included here, which are taken care of in genealogy.

Genealogical data are used for a variety of purposes apart from that of the studies of kinship. Demographers use genealogical statements. Migratory histories of people can also be studied through this method. Genealogy helps us in knowing about the social structure of a community. Preparation of genealogies also facilitates the process of rapport establishment with people. Malinowski (1922: 15) writes that a genealogy ‘allows the investigator to put questions which he formulates to himself *in abstracto*, but can put concretely to the native informant.’

Notes Taking

An extremely important aspect of fieldwork is ‘notes taking’, i.e. writing down the details of observation, producing transcripts of conversational and interview sessions, describing the experiences of living in a different culture, and commenting on the usefulness of the techniques and methods in field situation and any improvisations made on them. Writing begins with the planning of research and should not be seen as the last phase (usually called of ‘writing up’ or ‘deskwork’) that succeeds fieldwork.⁷⁸ In fact, many things written during the fieldwork are used verbatim in texts that are finally produced. Monographs often carry chunks of field notes (as they were originally written) and leaves from the diary of the ethnographer.⁷⁹ A researcher produces a lot of written work during a lengthy field probe, besides the published and unpublished materials he collects from libraries, museums, archives, and from the personal collection of informants.⁸⁰ A suggestion given to the fieldworker is that he should begin with writing in the field in the presence of his respondents as soon as possible, so that they come to know that their ‘guest’ (or the ‘intruder’) has come to live with them with a particular mission: of understanding their society and later writing about it. It may be argued here that being cut off from the wider world, the hosts may not conceptualize the researcher’s role, as perhaps was the case with ‘primitive’ societies at the beginning of the last century. But surely, if the fieldworker is noting down points from interview sessions or is seen later writing up his notes, people would know that his work is different from theirs and he has come to live with them with a specific aim.

Through the day’s work, the fieldworker takes down jottings – certain crucial words and sentences from conversations or which describe a particular observation, or some ideas and comments – what Simon Ottenberg (quoted by Sanjek 1996: 197) terms ‘scratch notes’. They constitute the basis for the preparation of fuller written notes. The fieldworker is advised to schedule some time each day for writing down a detailed

⁷⁸ See Wolcott (1995: 198-221).

⁷⁹ See, for instance, Parry (1994: 144-6).

⁸⁰ Not many fieldworkers share with the readers of their works about the number of pages they wrote during their fieldwork, however, Boissevain (1972: 31) writes that his notes ran into 1,500 pages, some 360,000 words. Fieldworkers collecting information on ethnomedicine and ecosystem also collect plants and write about them (see Martin 1995).

account of his notes lest they become ‘cold’ and he may find it onerous to remember the details and nuances (Mead, quoted by Sanjek 1996: 197). Goody (1995: 150) writes that Malinowski was ‘insistent on writing up fieldwork each evening, recommending various ways of categorizing and recording information. He also wanted his students to send him back regular monthly reports.’

As these notes are written down, the investigator thinks about the relationship between different facts. Many aspects of the society become clearer, for ‘writing is a form of thinking’ (Becker 1986: IX). The scratch notes make sense to the fieldworker because he carries with him the stored memories that aid their understanding and interpretation. For these stored memories, Ottenberg (*ibid.*) uses the term ‘head notes’. When an anthropologist reads other ethnographers’ notes he finds it difficult to understand them because he lacks the head notes that facilitate understanding. Sometimes, while writing up a monograph, the ethnographer is reminded of certain facts – head notes – that might have escaped being penned in the field notes and diaries. In a lengthy fieldwork, the anthropologist learns so much about the people that he is able to write about them without even consulting his notes or when he has lost his field notes and diaries.⁸¹ The major task after returning from the field is of indexing, classifying, and coding of notes. In many cases, the systematization of notes begins right during the course of fieldwork. Anthropologists continue to stay with people for some more time even after their stipulated period of fieldwork is over, as they want to have a closer look at their notes so that the missing links can be filled in, certain dubious facts are verified, and the half understood aspects are fully understood. This is particularly important when the field site happens to be far away, in a different continent.

Many factors affect the use of gadgets in fieldwork. Firstly, the beliefs people have with respect to these gadgets are important.⁸² Secondly, people may also know the probable use to which the output of these gadgets will be put. They may refuse to be photographed, for they do not want to be exhibited or printed in magazines and books. They may protest against the use of tape recorders because they know their words may always be used as evidence. Not only that, they may warn the interviewer not to note down anything in his books while the conversation takes place. Or, they might like to read field notes or listen to audiotapes. They might dictate information about their institutions and cultural practices expecting the fieldworker not to deviate a bit from the text of their notes.⁸³ In contemporary age, the respondents will not only read what

⁸¹ Srinivas (2000) used the term ‘memory ethnography’ for an account written with memory. See also Leach (1954: 312) on this point. He had also lost his field notes and photographs as a result of enemy action.

⁸² For instance, the Raikas made sure that the fieldworker had in his camera a colour film before he took the photographs of their married women. Photographing these colourfully dressed women black-and-white was considered as highly inauspicious because of the association of white and black colours with death and mourning. The Angami Naga girls believed that the camera was a ‘diabolical contrivance for revealing their pudenda’ (Hutton 1921: 251-2). The Bondo (of Orissa) also believed, Elwin told us, that the ‘camera would extract a vital essence from their bodies’ (Guha 1999: 172).

⁸³ Sarah Harrison, with assistance from Penny Lang, translated Bernard Pignède’s classic work on the Gurungs, a community of Nepal, among whom the movement to assert their identity has gained impetus. The leading Gurungs, including Pignède’s own interpreter, C.B. Ghotane, wanted to scrutinize the text and, if necessary, modify the interpretation (Macfarlane 1997: 191).

ethnographers write about them but will also answer back. They may question the laziness of the fieldworker if he does not write up the accounts of their life after the fieldwork in which they had participated with concern and interest. The researcher has to be absolutely certain about the evidence; the quotes have to be right; so should be the references. Today, the researcher has to defend his thesis, the photographs and other materials used in his work, against the comments and criticisms of the fraternity of anthropologists and sociologists and general public, as well as the people of the study.

Survey Research

The first step in large-scale survey studies is to draw a sample.⁸⁴ Though traditionally associated with survey research, sampling is also used in field investigations.⁸⁵ The sum total of all the units of analysis is called the universe or population. Ideally one would like to study the entire universe, and such a study is called the census study, but when it is not possible to do so, the researcher draws a part of the universe that is viewed as an approximation of the whole. A good sample is adequate and representative of the universe.

In the words of Howard Wineberg (1995: 144), a census may be defined as ‘an enumeration of population in a territory and the compilation of demographic, social, and economic information pertaining to that population at a given time.’ The type of information, which the government authorities intend to collect, may remain the same with each census, conducted in a country after a certain number of years, maybe ten as is the case in India or the United States of America. However, each census may have its own highlights: for instance, among other things, Census of India-2001 collected information about the types of ailment regarding the physically challenged people and the age at which the males got married. Earlier, the Census counted the number of the physically challenged persons; and the data about the age at marriage pertained to women only. The inclusion of these items also shows, since the census, like any other social fact, is a reflection of society, the emerging social concerns of the government. For example, information about the age at which males got married was considered important for family planning programmes. Each census, therefore, is a ‘snapshot of society at a single point of time’ (Wineberg 1995: 145); it provides a ‘national inventory, a picture of the situation existing at the time of the census’ (Casley and Lury 1981: 30).

It is popularly believed that census and census data are associated with survey research, the research carried out in large societies by sociologists, economists, and demographers. But this is not really true as anthropologists and sociologists working in small-scale societies have devoted a lot of attention to census taking and then treating the data thus generated statistically.

⁸⁴ The basic distinction in sampling is made between probability and non-probability sampling. In the first, the researcher can specify for each element of the universe the probability that it will be included in the sample. For the second, there is no assurance that each element has the same chance of being included. For details, see Moser and Kalton (1972), Pelto and Pelto (1978), Sarantakos (1998).

⁸⁵ Anthropologists say that field researchers usually employ non-probability sampling. Mead (1953) points out the vital importance of identifying informants by the salient characteristics they possess that affect the validity of information they give. Also see Honigmann (1973).

Audrey Richards (1938) recommends that the anthropologist should take the village census, for this would check his impressions which are likely to be created from few observations and interviews. Furthering this idea, Colson (1954) observes that since the anthropologist works within a restricted geographical area with a population numbering only few hundreds, he can afford to collect a census of his universe of study. As he stays in the community for a long time, as a result of which there is good rapport between him and the people, it will be easier for him to ask pointed, factual questions, and seek people's cooperation. He will have less chances of rejection, by comparison to a situation where an enumerator comes to the house with a long schedule and starts asking questions, a situation for which many respondents may be unprepared. Moreover, census work can be fruitfully combined with a close observation of the members of the society under study.

But not all societies that anthropologists study are small in scale. The individual population of certain tribal societies in India (such as the Gonds, Santals, Bhils, Oraons) runs into millions, and each one of them is distributed in more than one state, because of which there is a lot of variation in its styles of living and linguistic patterns. It will be difficult, almost impossible, for an individual researcher working with a large society (like any of the big tribes in India) to conduct its census-based study. However, what he can do is to artificially delimit a unit of the large society for study – a village or a couple of settlements of the people – that can be done by using the techniques of sampling. Then, he can carry out a census study within it; in other words, there can be a census study of a sample. As a census of this kind is taken by the researcher, in collaboration with his assistants, if any, the chances of error are substantially minimal than what they are in the national census in which thousands of enumerators are involved.

Census data may challenge the ethnographer's impressions and the statements of respondents. Citing an example from her fieldwork with the Tonga, Colson (1954: 58) says that she was given to understand that the period of seclusion for pubertal girls had progressively diminished because of the impact of the school and the mission. When the census information on the length of seclusion was classified according to the decade in which a woman was born, it was found that instead of shortening, the period of seclusion had increased. When I started my work with the Raikas in Bikaner, in 1989, in a hamlet of the village known as Gadwala, which then had thirty-four households, I was given the impression that every Raika household kept camels, because the Raikas are traditional camel-breeders, and my respondents wanted to subscribe to the traditional image of their community. Later, the census conducted in their hamlet showed that there were only four camel-herds, and many camels in them, which the Raikas grazed and looked after, belonged to the other castes, particularly the peasants. Similarly, Beattie (1965: 36-7) observed that many propositions and correlations need substantiation; for instance, statements like 'most Nyoro marry their neighbours' or 'there is a correlation between bride wealth and marriage stability', need census data and quantification for their rejection or support.

Beattie (1965: 36) introduced what he called the methods of enumeration, i.e. collection of the data that could be quantified, after having been in Bunyoro for more than a year, when he knew the language of the people well. For filling the household survey form, he needed to spend nearly an hour with each house, a labour which he compensated by paying an honorarium of one shilling to the head of each household surveyed (p. 40). Köbben (1967: 49) spent one full year for conducting a census of 176 persons of the community of Djuka. During this time, he, however, carried out his other activities in the field. The long time spent on census taking was partly because people became suspicious of why that information was being collected and to which use would it be put. Although, with the passage of time, people's skepticism diminished, certain questions, especially those concerned with infant mortality, did not evoke reliable answers, because high mortality was an indication of the existence of witchcraft in their community. Census taking requires exemplary patience, and should be supplemented with data collected through other techniques.

In survey research, the principal tool of data collection is questionnaire, which may be defined as a set of questions (printed or typed) pertaining to a problem of study. It is usually mailed out to the probable respondents or may be given to them personally. The respondents are expected to write (or type) answers to the questions. The questionnaire is self-administered by the respondent. Ideally, a questionnaire begins with a cover (or, covering) letter. The investigator knows in advance that the response to the questionnaire may be partial, incomplete, or false. The respondent may assume that the information he provides might be used against him. He may find the filling of questionnaire a futile exercise, a waste of time, or an invasion into his privacy. To set things right, the investigator explains the nature of his research in the covering letter. He is candid about giving details of the funding agency, the probable hypotheses, and any other research work he has previously undertaken. That complete anonymity would be maintained is explicitly worded. The investigator may also advise the respondent to contact him for more details in case he wishes. Some researchers also promise to send the respondents the findings of the study they are undertaking. The contents of the covering letter show that research is carried out not only in a literate context but also where people are sensitive to the meaning and implications of research activities, and are eager to know what researchers find out about them.

The second part of the questionnaire, after the covering letter, consists of questions. Only relevant questions are asked since a long questionnaire may evoke negative response; therefore, the key word in the construction of a questionnaire is 'relevance' (Bailey 1978: 94). A distinction is made between close-ended and open-ended questions. The former are multiple-choice questions, whereas in the latter, the respondent is free to express himself. Unless conditioned by the specific aims of research, a questionnaire should have a fair mix of close-ended and open-ended questions. In order to measure the qualitative attitudes of people towards certain things, for example, the normative statements, the questionnaire also consists of scales, in accordance with which the respondents classify their opinions. Scaling techniques are concerned with the methods of turning a 'series of *qualitative* facts (referred to as attributes) into a *quantitative* series (referred to as a variable)' (Goode and Hatt 1981: 232). Survey

researchers are expected to know the methods of presenting the relations between people (i.e., sociometry, sociogram) and the statistical techniques. Before administering a questionnaire on a sample of populations, it is pre-tested to eliminate any ambiguous questions. The final part of the questionnaire is a 'thank you note'. Here, the investigator profusely thanks the respondent for his cooperation, reiterating that the replies given in the questionnaire will only be used for research purposes and their content will not be disclosed to anyone.

Mailed questionnaires (in which the return postage is also provided) have many advantages. There is a considerable saving of time and money. It can include in its sample widely separated individuals, those who live in different cities or even different continents. It thus saves travel costs. In questionnaire research, the maximum effort of the investigator is directed towards formulating relevant questions and pre-testing and revising them. In so far as data collection is concerned, the surveyor does not run from one respondent to another, striking rapport with each one of them, requesting them for time to interview, and bearing their whims. He dispatches (now, sometimes through e-mails) the questionnaires, sends some follow up mails and gentle reminders; and in case, the filled up questionnaires are not returned, he draws another sample for his study, i.e., for mailing questionnaires. Another advantage of this tool is its greater assurance of anonymity, thus it can be used for highly personal topics of research (such as sexual behaviour, drug abuse, HIV/AIDS, domestic violence, embezzlement of public money). The questionnaire may be completed at the respondent's convenience. He may consult his records, confer with colleagues, or conduct minor research before handing in his replies. As the questionnaire is a standard tool, it is free from the biases that tend to plague interviews.

Although the questionnaire may be useful, one of its main drawbacks is the low response rate. The respondent may not return the questionnaire, and if he does, he may leave many questions unanswered, especially the open-ended. The investigator has no control over the respondent's environment. The respondent might ask some one else – say, his secretary or a family member – to fill up the questionnaire and send it back. Furthermore, the questionnaire lacks flexibility and records verbal behaviour only. It also cannot record spontaneous responses. The respondent may erase a hasty answer and write a contrived one. Survey researchers list several measures to combat the low response rate from increasing the sample size, to making the format of the questionnaire more attractive, to giving material incentives to respondents.

When an investigator in an interview situation administers the questionnaire, it is called schedule (or 'interview schedule'). The difference between interview and interview schedule is that the former is a 'specific conversational technique' with a lot of improvisations (Kvale 1996: 297). In the latter, the investigator simply reads out the questions as they have already been framed and records the responses *ad verbum*. The interview schedule does not have any scope for improvisation, but it assures a high response rate and answers to all questions. The respondent's environment is also controlled. It has been observed in many cultures that people find it onerous to write, however they feel extremely comfortable in giving oral replies to the questions. This is

particularly true of cultures where oral tradition is valued. One of the greatest advantages of the interview schedule is that it can be used in non-literate societies, which is not the case with questionnaire. But it may be noted that the interview schedule is an expensive technique, both in time and money, and does not ensure anonymity, therefore its use for the study of highly personal topics is limited.

Initially, fieldwork dominated social research, but later, especially after the Second World War, survey methods became quite popular in social sciences, mainly because of their success in market studies and public opinion polls. Since then, the fieldworkers have led a debate of one-upmanship, professing the superiority of their deep and rich observational data as compared to the shallow nature of the survey, which is quite distanced from the complexities of the flesh-and-blood individuals.⁸⁶ Survey research finds out what people say about them whereas fieldwork's aim is to know not only what people say but also what they think and do. What they do might conform to the normative expectations, i.e., what they would like the others to think about them, however their actions may deviate significantly from their claims.

Survey methodology has many advantages because it can cover a large number of people, quantify their responses, and aim towards generalizations.⁸⁷ The nature of the problem dictates the choice of methodology. Certain problems require survey methods for their investigation, certain others intensive fieldwork. The other point is that different techniques and methods can be easily combined.⁸⁸ One may apply the interview schedule in an intensive fieldwork and if it is being carried out in a literate society, one may use the questionnaire. We may use multi-techniques to yield rich data. Rather than subscribing to any one technique, for each has its inherent biases, we may draw upon plural research methods from our storehouse of methodology, depending upon the conditions in the research situation.

Writing Up Monographs

The main outcome of fieldwork and survey research is printed material – reports, articles and books – the quality and content of which varies in terms of the targeted readers. Fieldwork yields ethnographic accounts. Ethnography is a written account – it focuses on a particular community and describes analytically its way of life and institutions.⁸⁹ Its expected readers in the first half of the twentieth century and even later

⁸⁶ Leach (1967) has been one of the ardent supporters of this position. In his recent biography, Tambiah (2002: x) writes: ‘...he [Leach] characterized the survey as an example of quantitative method, a statistical investigation predicated in taking individuals as units of population which misses out a wide range of sociological phenomena which are intrinsically inaccessible to statistical investigation of any kind, especially systems of relationship between persons. A social field does not consist of units of population but of persons in relation to one another.’

⁸⁷ See Burton and White (1987).

⁸⁸ The term ethnosurvey is used for a situation where ethnographic fieldwork is combined with survey techniques.

⁸⁹ One of the satisfactory definitions of ethnography is from Marcus and Fischer (1986: 18): Ethnography is a ‘research process in which the anthropologist closely observes, records, and engages in the daily life of another culture – an experience labeled as the fieldwork method – and then writes accounts of their culture, employing descriptive detail.’ Also see Pelto and Pelto (1997).

for some decades were the literate populations in various parts of the world, particularly the West. The anthropologist could be distinguished from the field as he belonged to a distinct ethnic category and culture. As the erstwhile pre-literate populations are now fast getting educated and modernized, they are gradually beginning to appreciate the meaning of sociological research. Also, some of these communities have produced their own anthropologists who study their own people. For these anthropologists and the type of ethnography they produce, sometimes the terms 'native anthropologists' and 'auto-ethnography' are respectively used, although some authors are skeptical of the claims of 'native anthropology' (Narayan 1993).

Writing is 'central to what anthropologists do both in the field and thereafter' (Clifford 1986: 2). As was noted earlier, it begins with the very act of planning research: the research proposal is written; the questions one would ask one's respondents and the observations one would make, are written down; the field jottings, scratched initially, are later fully developed into field notes and diaries; letters, and now e-mails, both written documents, are sent out to supervisors, project directors, friends, relatives, and they constitute an important part of one's data and may be quoted later in the text; and the analysis of data and its presentation in the form of a text, a monograph, is also an activity of writing. A fieldwork may not rise beyond the level of jottings or notes, because the fieldworker, after his return from the field, gets engaged in teaching and other activities, and, thus, cannot schedule some of his time for writing up.⁹⁰

The text that results from fieldwork is much more than a plain account of the facts observed. The facts that the fieldworker observes and the sense he makes out of them is conditioned by the theoretical perspectives he carries in his mind. The anthropologist, as the fieldworker, is at the center of data collection – in the words of Geertz (1988: 130), 'I was there' – but he 'disappears from the text' (Rabinow 1986: 244), in which he seeks the authority of an impersonal scholarship. But the ethnographer needs to note that the text he produces blends his imagination, his literary consciousness, with facts that have become meaningful against the light of theoretical perspectives.

At one time, it was believed that the outsiders, trained in methodology, could understand, write about, and represent the other, and to do so was his professional calling. But, in the last quarter of the last century, this view has been reversed. The monopoly claim of the anthropologist to represent the other has come to be challenged, not by other anthropologists, but by the very people whom they study, the actors, the subjects, of their texts. Today, people in many communities believe that they alone can understand – and represent in a proper perspective – their own society. Some of the 'natives' make this claim after having read the writings of colonial anthropologists and others on them, which they find condescending, biased, incorrect, shallow, unsatisfactory, annoying, partial, unsympathetic, where several aspects of their culture have been distorted, some 'oddities' magnified out of proportion. They strongly feel the need to replace this genre of writings with that of the others, the reflexive accounts, which they would produce,

⁹⁰ Srinivas (1996: 194) notes: 'Anthropologists who, for one reason or another, do not publish at least some of the results of their fieldwork soon after leaving the field, live to rue their failure.'

sometimes after having done their higher studies in anthropology and sociology.⁹¹ Against this background of the ‘crisis of representation’, to borrow an apt phrase from Marcus and Fischer (1986: 166), writing on and about cultures acquires a special meaning, and has become an act of great responsibility, because today, what ethnographers write is read, as was noted earlier, by other ethnographers, the general public, as well as the people of the text. The language and vocabulary that was used earlier to convey the exoticism of the other may no longer be the correct textual strategy, because the other is no more distanced, as it used to be when communication between different social worlds was far less than what it is now, as an outcome of the processes of modernization, development, and globalization.⁹²

The ethnographic text, therefore, is an account of the anthropologist’s understanding of the people, a blend of facts, imagination, and creativity. The Trobrianders we know are ‘Malinowski’s Trobrianders’; the Balinese we know are ‘Geertz’s Balinese’; in other words, there cannot be an author-nascent ethnography. The anthropologist, to begin with, looks for facts, and then, he creates a text from them, by reconstructing and interpreting them, by delineating the meanings that the anthropologist thinks the people attribute to their life and their patterns of survival. In both cases, as Geertz says (1995: 167-8), the anthropologist is ‘after the fact’ – he looks for the fact, and then, he interprets it.

Ethnography is one of the most discussed topics in contemporary anthropology.⁹³ There are anthropologists who believe that each people comprehend and experience things, events, and behaviour according to their distinctive scheme. The ethnographer’s task is to discover these schemes. Those who follow this approach of ‘getting inside the head of the respondent’ call themselves ‘new ethnographers.’⁹⁴ Clifford Geertz (1973, 1983) disagrees with this approach, arguing that new ethnography does not pay attention to the central dimension of culture, i.e. meaning. Culture is a system of meanings.⁹⁵ For Geertz, the ethnographic work is an exercise in ‘thick description’, trying to interpret the meaning in terms of what people understand, think about, talk about, and describe their behaviour.⁹⁶ Cultures are like languages, which are translated into terms intelligible to

⁹¹ Macfarlane (1997: 185) notes that the context in which anthropology is now produced has changed dramatically, because of which the gap between the anthropologist (the observer) and the people he studies (the observed) has broken down.

⁹² See Geertz (1988) on this point.

⁹³ Auger (1995) discusses the issue of ethnography as ‘storytelling’ and ‘science’. Sanjek (1996) makes a distinction between ethnography as *process* and ethnography as *product*. Shweder (1996) places ‘true ethnography’ between solipsism and superficiality. Terms like analytical ethnography and critical ethnography are also popular in literature. Jacobson (1991) discusses different styles of ethnographic writing.

⁹⁴ This approach is called by different names, viz. new ethnography, cognitive anthropology, ethnoscience, and ethnosemantics. See Barnard (2000) for a succinct summary of cognitive and interpretive approaches.

⁹⁵ Culture, for Geertz (1973: 144), is an ‘ordered system of meanings and symbols, in terms of which social interaction takes place.’ Also see Inglis (2000).

⁹⁶ ‘Thin description depicts behaviour in the sense of physical motions, as seen, for example, by the eyes of the camera; in contrast, thick description reveals its significance’ (Jacobson 1991: 4). Geertz, in his famous article, ‘Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture’ (1973), uses the example of ‘twitches’ and ‘winks’ to illustrate this point. Both entail the contraction of muscles of the eyelid, but a

members of other cultures. Therefore, interpreting a culture is like interpreting a 'text'; that is why, Geertz uses the term hermeneutics to describe the approach of ethnographers.⁹⁷

Some anthropologists are roundly critical of these ideas. For them the aim of anthropology and sociology is to test ideas against empirical data, therefore one should follow the scientific approach. Such an understanding of the phenomena is especially important for initiating developmental work. Ethnography is one of the ways of learning about a community, but there are many cultural phenomena (such as financial institutions, bio-medical systems) that are not localized and for their study, one will have to move out of the confines of a microcosm. Certain studies, like of the tribal problems in India, require one to know about the impact of the national and global factors on tribal communities and their resources. Therefore, the investigators should expand their methods to include history and all those disciplines that help them in exploring the wider world. Nevertheless, the ethnographic approach remains crucial for an intensive understanding of the local situation, and from this, one spreads out to look at the relations the local communities have with the outside world.⁹⁸ The need to understand the local – the specific communities – because herein one can see the impact of the global has also gained importance in other social science disciplines, with the result that the fieldwork methodology and ethnographic approach have become quite popular in them.

Against the background of these aspects of social research, one may now move to the sectional introductions and the readings classified in each one.

twitch is a physical movement whereas a wink conveys 'meaning', a message, within the framework of a 'socially established code'.

⁹⁷ For Geertz (1973: 10), 'Doing ethnography is like trying to read (in the sense of "construct a reading of") a manuscript – foreign, faded, full of ellipses, incoherencies, suspicious emendations, and tendentious commentaries, but written not in conventionalized graphs of sound but in transient examples of shaped behaviour.' Appadurai (1981: 4) thinks that this view has a strong synchronic bias and may not be applicable to the historical material.

⁹⁸ See Mintz (2000) on this point.