

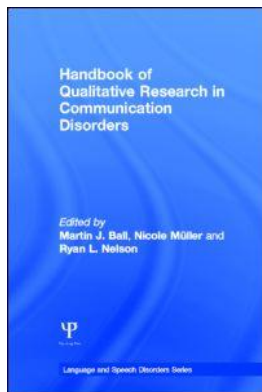
This article was downloaded by: 10.3.98.104

On: 18 Oct 2021

Access details: *subscription number*

Publisher: *Routledge*

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: 5 Howick Place, London SW1P 1WG, UK



Handbook of Qualitative Research in Communication Disorders

Martin J. Ball, Nicole Müller, Ryan L. Nelson

Ethnography

Publication details

<https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780203798874.ch3>

Ryan L. Nelson, Kathleen Abendroth, Karen Lynch

Published online on: 15 Nov 2013

How to cite :- Ryan L. Nelson, Kathleen Abendroth, Karen Lynch. 15 Nov 2013, *Ethnography from:* Handbook of Qualitative Research in Communication Disorders Routledge

Accessed on: 18 Oct 2021

<https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780203798874.ch3>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR DOCUMENT

Full terms and conditions of use: <https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/legal-notices/terms>

This Document PDF may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproductions, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The publisher shall not be liable for an loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

3

Ethnography

RYAN L. NELSON, KATHLEEN ABENDROTH, AND KAREN LYNCH

In an open letter to the *Journal of Interactional Research in Communication Disorders*, published in the inaugural issue, Duchan (2010) describes some of the advancements regarding communicative disorders as a complex social action over the last 30 years. Duchan lauds these advancements but states more is needed. Similarly, a recent letter from the editor of the *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology* (Hammer, 2011) lamented speech-language pathologists' misunderstanding and misrepresentation of qualitative research along with clinical implications these traditions hold. Hammer acknowledged the value of qualitative investigation and welcomed submission to the journal of studies employing such methods. Both of these advocacy pleas referenced the work of Jack S. Damico and his scholarly insistence for nearly three decades on moving inquiry in the discipline towards methods that would embrace the complexity of human interaction (see, for example, Damico, 1985, 1988; Damico & Hamayan, 1992; Damico & Simmons-Mackie, 2003; Damico, Simmons-Mackie, Oelschlaeger, Elman, & Armstrong, 1999).

As the chapters in this handbook describe, there is great clinical potential for systematic observation, rich description, and thick interpretation of the lived world from the perspective of those who live it. Damico in our discipline and others in the social sciences (e.g., Geertz, 1973) have made this abundantly clear. However, recognition of this potential has been slow. Perhaps integration of qualitative methods in our clinical discipline has only been reluctantly accepted because the field of communication disorders often too closely resembled the "other social and cultural specialists ... with far too much fashionable theory and intellectual faddism and insufficient attention to the realities of everyday life" described by Atkinson, Coffey, Delamont, Lofland, and Lofland (2001, p. 5). This chapter aims to assist in providing more explicit application by briefly describing ethnography and how specific principles associated with this tradition can be used to embrace the complexities of human interaction. This will be accomplished by discussing how ethnography may be utilized when investigators are interested in revealing cultural and

social aspects of human life. The chapter unfolds by first presenting a cursory account of the history of ethnography, describing the elements of data collection and analysis we believe are most relevant to communicative sciences and disorders, and concludes with some limitations and caveats. Along the way, illustrations of how principles of ethnography have been applied in clinical settings will be presented with discussion of where we believe opportunity for further inquiry resides.

Origins of Ethnography

Stated concisely, “[e]thnography is the work of describing a culture” and life from the “the native point of view” (Spradley, 1979, p. 3). Ethnography has grown out of the fields of anthropology and sociology; these disciplines are oriented to a belief that social and cultural phenomena are different from those typically investigated in the physical sciences. Consequently, researchers in these areas needed methods well suited for empirical investigation of the variables that made up these differences (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994). While no clear, distinct boundaries exist between ethnography and several other interpretive methods, most qualitative researchers cite the Chicago School of sociology as one of the major ontological influences on the development and advancement of this tradition of inquiry (Atkinson et al., 2001; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Deegan (2001) describes the impact of this group as systematically creating a focus on the social worlds experienced in the face-to-face functioning of everyday life. Through the use of life histories, interviews, and personal interaction combined with statistical data, researchers associated with the Chicago School explored the nature of social phenomena with an aim of interpreting the structures, meanings, and functions of everyday life for those in the context of investigation (Deegan, 1988). From this institution’s core ethnographies an anchor was established that fixed on the social nature of self and how a person becomes human through interactional processes. Of specific interest to the field of communicative sciences and disorders, the construction of patterns of shared language and meanings within communities or social groups was implicitly represented in these core early ethnographies.

The early field of anthropology also contributed substantially to ethnography as we know it. Anthropologists such as Boas, Malinowski, and Radcliffe-Brown influenced the development of methods and application of ethnography through a focus on making sense of social and cultural characteristics of existing so-called primitive societies (Geertz, 1973, 1983; Atkinson et al., 2001). These early attempts took the form of monographs containing firsthand accounts of long-term participant observations about a particular group of people (MacDonald, 2001). Development of ethnography in sociology and

anthropology occurred more in parallel rather than consecutively; however, both were driven by a need to embrace the complexity of the human condition and a rejection of the growing use of decontextualized, experimental methods associated with positivism, which was gaining momentum through much of the early twentieth century (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007).

Over the years, ethnography has found its way into many disciplines and fields of study concerned with understanding contextually sensitive, complex phenomena that require adequate interpretation in an empirically defensible manner (Atkinson et al., 2001). While there remains vigorous debate associated with the extent and consequences of the rejection of positivism in various aspects of ethnography (e.g., Atkinson et al., 2001; Atkinson, Coffey, & Delamont, 2003), we are most concerned with the implications of the evolution of ethnography as it relates to clinical populations and how this method repudiates tenets of logical positivism that continue to create challenges for researchers in the field of communicative sciences and disorders.

Reactions to Positivism

Logical positivism of the 1930s and 1940s gave rise to the priority of scientific theories associated with social research methods gathering definitions based largely upon what is (a) directly observable, (b) able to be operationalized so that the behaviors may be controlled and manipulated through experimentation, and (c) capable of generalizability of findings to populations that have been statistically represented through utilization of careful sampling procedures (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Implications and applications of these tenets in clinical settings have revealed the limitations of logical positivism that have been described by researchers in the field of communicative sciences and disorders. That is, researchers with a clinical focus have described how the application of the principles of logical positivism limit or prevent understanding of how authentic sociocultural phenomena can be interpreted so that authentic and meaningful assessment, instruction, and growth can occur (Damico & Ball, 2010; Damico & Nelson, 2010; Damico et al., 1999; Ericks-Brophy & Crago, 1993; Kovarsky & Crago, 1991; Kovarsky & Maxwell, 1992; Muma & Cloud, 2010; Nelson & Damico, 2006; Simmons-Mackie & Damico, 1999, 2003). Methods such as ethnography have been used and are ideal for overcoming some of these limitations.

Early advocates of ethnography recognized that research embracing tenets of logical positivism contradicted principles of naturalism, suggesting that the artificiality required for experimentation lacked fidelity to the phenomena of focus. Furthermore, concentration solely on observable behaviors ignored the unique ways in which persons interpreted their experiences. Mehan (1974) demonstrated this in the following example.

A question from [a] language development test instructs the child to choose “the animal that can fly” from a bird, an elephant, and a dog. The correct answer (obviously) is bird. Many first grade children, though, chose the elephant along with the bird as a response to that question. When I later asked them why they chose that answer they replied: “That’s Dumbo.” Dumbo of course is Walt Disney’s flying elephant, well known to children who watch television and read children’s books as an animal that flies. (p. 249)

The role of individual interpretation based upon experience in this example reveals one potential limitation among many in standardized methods. As Mehan (1974) argued, in order to understand social interpretations, methods must be embraced that give access to the meanings that guide the individual or group’s behaviors. With this perspective, the aim of investigation shifted from generalizability to description of behaviors in the form of detailed accounts of the concrete lived experiences of those within a particular culture. This shift in focus allowed for an interpretation of how the beliefs and social rules function and are negotiated within the day-to-day workings of life.

An application of how rich interpretation of the beliefs and meanings of daily life in persons with communicative disorders can be accounted for was reflected in a recent ethnography. Parr (2007) described the day-to-day impact on persons with aphasia as they negotiate the consequences of stroke once rehabilitative therapy ends. Her ethnography represents principles of the well suitedness of ethnography for the field as outlined by other researchers in the communicative sciences and disorders (e.g., Damico & Simmons-Mackie, 2003; Simmons-Mackie & Damico, 1999). Namely, ethnography is ideal for study of the mundane realities of specific individuals in the natural settings in which they abide, while maintaining the methodological flexibility to account for variables revealed as the process of interaction unfolds (Damico et al., 1999; Nelson & Damico, 2006). The end result in Parr’s study was a deep description and an in-depth understanding of social exclusion in persons with aphasia. By “watching people in their own territory and interacting with them in their own language, on their own terms” (Kirk & Miller, 1986, p. 9, cited in Simmons-Mackie & Damico, 1999), Parr’s work is illustrative of the promise and clinical value of ethnography for seeing the world through the eyes of those associated with communication sciences and disorders.

Implementing Ethnography

Determining a Focus

People’s identities evolve and are locally intertwined within the context in which they act (Goffman, 1959, 1963). Consequently, the processes that

govern structures and acts of significance to these individuals may not be easily revealed to a researcher with whom they are unfamiliar, nor may they be understood by those unfamiliar with the subjects and context. In order to discover these meanings and gain the desired understanding of how the social action under focus is accomplished, *ethnographers must be able to immerse themselves in the given context*. Rock (2001) suggests that the intimacy needed to gain understanding is more easily achieved if the researcher, at least at some level, respects their informants and that this feeling is, in some way, reciprocated. Wilcox and Corwin (1990) suggest that the goal of ethnography in communication sciences and disorders should be to learn from people who have, for a variety of reasons, experienced the world in a different way. This was demonstrated through their focus on understanding deafness from a cultural perspective as seen through the world of a young deaf child, BoMee. Their ethnography revealed complexities of a multicultural society in the day-to-day negotiations of the child and her efforts to construct social competency. The intricacies of these negotiations were only revealed through careful and rigorous reflection upon the rich descriptions the researchers gained from the vantage point of high familiarity with the subject. Similarly, Damico (1990) approached speech-language pathologists as a cultural group in order to understand the motivating mechanisms of practitioners in public school settings. In order to reveal the underlying complexity of motivation in practice, the clinicians had to accept the researcher into their world and he, for his part, had to immerse himself into their lived experience over the course of the 14-month ethnography.

As is typical of the initiation of ethnography, Wilcox and Corwin (1990) and Damico (1990) approached the study with loosely identified areas of inquiry. Their primary motivation was to determine what was going on or how the interactions of those they were interested in were being accomplished. This approach to inquiry stands in stark contrast to experimental methods where specific hypotheses are carefully formulated so that they can be systematically tested in a fairly linear, start-to-finish manner (Creswell, 1998).

For the ethnographic researcher, *the issue of access becomes important* because of the type of data and familiarity with the data that is required. Access involves more than just being granted permission of physical presence or legal and ethical authorization to collect artifacts. James (2001) illustrates the complexity of access in her study of childhood. She notes the intent of ethnography to describe the world through the lens of those who experience it as they go about doing what they normally do. James describes particular challenges in accomplishing this with populations where clear differences exist between researcher and subject. She notes that in studies of childhood, power relationships often result in children–researcher interactions that would not typically occur in child-child or child-caregiver interactions. For example,

while investigating how preschoolers interact, King (1984) found that only through hiding in an unoccupied playhouse was he able to gain access to the natural interactions of the children he was researching and still be sufficiently immersed in the environment enough to carefully observe.

Undergirding ethnography is a philosophy that *the research design be flexible*. Flexibility is required so that the social actions emerging from access to the focused group can be described and analyzed in sufficient detail and from the necessary perspectives so that adequacy of interpretation can be achieved. It is from this philosophically open stance that the ethnographer identifies a focus of inquiry and begins the process of data collection and analysis. Because of the depth of focus and density of the data, ethnographies typically consider a small number of individuals or contexts in a cyclical manner of increasingly narrow concentration (Agar, 1986). This is accomplished through use of several sources and principles of data collection and analysis traditionally associated with ethnography. While data collection and analysis are cyclically intertwined, they are described below separately for ease of presentation and description.

Data Collection

The cultural inferences arrived at through ethnography grow from interpretation of three primary sources: what people say, what people do, and the artifacts that they make and use (Spradley, 1979). Regardless of the data collection techniques, ethnographies must be tied to the settings in which the social action occurs. When field notes, interviews, and collected artifacts are separated from the social context in which they are produced, the defining character of ethnography is lost. This suggests that setting, which must include both the physical context as well as the interactional context, must be captured and represented with its meanings thickly described. Qualitative researchers in the field of communication sciences and disorders typically use sources and data collection strategies long associated with ethnography. How the data are used to reveal the dynamics of social institutions and organizational structures is what we believe is of the greatest import in the context of this chapter.

Participant Observation

Participant observation is one of the primary data collection tools of ethnographic research. The nature of this method of collection is ideal for many of the settings in which researchers and practitioners in this field find themselves. Yet, learning to be an effective participant observer may be challenging. This arises from the dual purpose that is created as one plays both the role of interactive participant and of observer. Spradley (1980) states that once

someone learns the cultural rules, those rules become implicit. As researchers enter the context, they must operate from both an insider and an outsider perspective. They must act appropriately for the situation while still maintaining the disciplined subjectivity necessary to function as a researcher. As explained by Atkinson and colleagues (2001):

Participant observation alone would normally result in strange and unnatural behaviour were the observer not to talk with her or his hosts, so turning them into informants or “co-researchers”. Hence, conversations and interviews are often indistinguishable from other forms of interaction and dialogue in field research settings. (p. 5)

Ethnographers using participant observation must perceive through a broad lens the action going on around them because it is here that many of the most important variables of the social action are discovered (Spradley, 1980). This requires the participant observer to reflect upon how he or she is reacting in certain situations. This balancing act is typically assisted by methods of documentation as the researcher may make initial notes and jottings that are later expanded upon into field notes in a more narrative form (Spradley, 1980). In addition to objective observations, expanded notes will often contain subjective reactions and impressions. The position the researcher holds as one who must balance the insider/outsider experience is crucial in helping explicate the meanings underlying mundane realities of the culture being studied. From these notes, analysis can be conducted to identify trends and areas of foci relevant to the investigation.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Many disciplines have utilized ethnographic interview techniques, in the form of semi-structured interviews, as primary and secondary data sources. The aim of the interviewing process is to collect data that reveal the culture of the person being interviewed. Specifically, insights into their perceptions and worldviews are obtained through strategic use of questioning techniques designed to elicit the informant’s “story” (Spradley, 1979). Westby (1990) describes the process as one where rapport is established so that the appropriate questions can be asked of the right people in a way that encourages the individual to talk about the social situations in their daily lives.

In clinical settings, overt efforts must be made to minimize the power differential that usually exists between researcher and client (Spradley, 1979; Westby, 1990). Augustine (1995) and James (2001) describe related strategies for interviewing children. Similar to Spradley’s (1979) concern for minimizing power differentials, these researchers recognize that the skill of the interviewer in providing supports necessary for the interviewee to convey their

story is something that must be negotiated within the context of the interview. Predetermined questions may serve as a starting point, but responsiveness and reflexivity to that which is shared within the context of the interview are what ultimately yields data appropriate for understanding the culture of the informant. Consequently, a defining attribute of a semi-structured interview is the discovery of relevant questions. Consistent with the entire ethnographic endeavor, the ability to allow questions to emerge is more easily accomplished when the interviewer sees him/herself as a student of the interviewee's. The actions of the interviewer must convey interest in gaining understanding of the interviewee's lived experience. In these contexts, both the interviewer and interviewee wear the cloak of responder and questioner. Semi-structured interviews are characterized by carefully worded, open-ended, descriptive questions, asked with the intent of allowing the interviewee to convey what is of greatest importance.

During the interview, the researcher tries to remain empathetic and non-judgmental of the world as it is described to them. What makes these interviews unique and an important part of ethnography is how the researcher, through his or her questions and responses, attempts to maintain the assumption that the interviewee is the expert of the world in which he or she lives. Ethnographers realize that the complexities of the culture of those interviewed are directly tied to the interviewees' unique interpretations of experience.

Data obtained from interviews are typically recorded electronically and transcribed or captured through processes similar to that of field notes used in participant observations. These accounts of information obtained through the interview are analyzed to determine patterns of interest to the research focus.

Behavioral Recordings

Due to the nature of clinical interactions, ethnographers in the field of communicative sciences and disorders often have access to video or audio recordings of interactions of particular interest. Simmons-Mackie (Chapter 2, this volume) and others in this handbook have demonstrated how qualitative researchers, including ethnographers, can utilize behavioral video and audio recordings. Nelson (2004), for example, collected over 25 hours of video from the clinical interactions of children with language impairment engaged in shared reading in order to describe how they constructed proficient literacy skills over time. The advantages of these types of electronically recorded data are that they can be analyzed multiple times. This can allow the ethnographer to describe and interpret the complex systematicity that underlies mundane day-to-day interactions. Abendroth (2008) relied heavily upon video analysis when she investigated the subtle and systematic ways in which typically developing siblings of children with autism provided mediation during play

activities. However, Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) cautioned that, as with all data collection, these interpretations from recordings must be carefully supported. They note that often the angle of the camera lens or sensitivity of microphones may miss important variables from the interaction that are critical to understanding the interaction under investigation.

Artifact Analysis

The three data sources described to this point have consisted primarily of what informants say and do (Geertz, 1973). Artifact analysis allows a focus upon what persons make and use as they participate in the institutions of interest to ethnographers. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) suggest that much of the mundane activity influential in the creation of social worlds involves manipulation of objects for the creation of material goods and the constructed meanings derived out of interpersonal relationships associated with and in the pursuit of these objects. Within the field of communication sciences and disorders, artifacts of interest frequently include products written by clients, significant others, clinicians, teachers, doctors, and other service providers. Additionally, individuals use objects to structure their environment and support their identities. For instance, Lynch (2010), in her investigation of the impact of aphasia on the literate lives of individuals, described how one person with aphasia, in spite of substantial literacy difficulties, carried a book around throughout his daily activities. In order to understand the day-to-day impact of aphasia on this person's literate life, how books assisted in accomplishing affiliation and identity had to be considered. The object of "book" as an artifact reflective of the cultural world for this person was important for coherence. Similarly, objects are often strategically positioned in clinical settings to facilitate specific types of interactions. The consideration of artifacts that make up the physical world is often necessary as a data collection source in ethnography if we want to make sense of social worlds. Furthermore, in our digital age, textual artifacts are becoming more frequently associated with social networking; fieldwork focusing on these virtual realities will need to be included more often as data sources. Ethnography is ideally situated to embrace the complexities associated with new mediums that contribute to the fabric of social life.

Triangulation

With the cyclical nature of data collection and analysis, a critical means of ensuring authenticity of data collection is triangulation. Agar (1986) wrote that in order to carefully define a social event from the standpoint of an ethnographic research design, the technique of triangulation should always be

employed. That is, a systematic process of comparing and contrasting data from different data collection procedures, contexts, and time frames to assist in achieving a high degree of authenticity should be used. Triangulation is typically achieved through collection of data from multiple meaning-making activities in multiple contexts and documented through multiple data collection procedures. This allows the researcher to test his or her interpretations of the meanings derived from collected data and determine the inquiry direction and type of additional data that may be needed. Simmons-Mackie and Damico (1999) describe this process as a means of “auditing” the authenticity of the data and the levels of understanding the researcher has of it.

Lamination

Lamination is a strategy of verification used in ethnography (Agar, 1986). This strategy includes eliciting and documenting informants’ reactions to the researcher’s interpretations. Once data are collected and analyzed by the researcher and some initial conclusions are drawn, the ethnographer may ask the informants what they believe is occurring in, and what the significance of, the same data source is. This layer of understanding can function as an additional means of establishing a thickness of data interpretation and can be quite valuable in leading the researcher to the desired coherence.

Data Analysis

There is no distinct stage of data analysis in ethnography (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Instead, analysis begins as the researcher formulates and develops the research question and begins the data collection process. For the purposes of communication sciences and disorders, the end result of analysis is coherence of understanding and interpretation. This is often achieved when the researcher understands how meanings of events or reactions to specific authentic social interactions were able to unfold (Simmons-Mackie & Damico, 1999). In ethnography, “what we call our data are really our own constructions of other people’s constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to” (Geertz, 1973, p. 9). This representational act requires analysis even at the most basic levels. In the same text, Geertz suggested that ethnographers attempt to identify and interpret through analysis how an individual’s actions are impacted by “structures of signification” (Geertz, 1973, pp. 9-10). This point by Geertz is consistent with Agar’s (1986) position that data analysis should reveal what was most relevant in documenting the social worlds and organizational structures of interest to the researcher. Predetermined categories, criteria, or themes of interest strike at the heart of the emergent, flexible intent of the methodology and should be avoided. Instead, cyclical

analysis leading towards coherence should direct the variation, amount, and type of data collected. As data are collected and analyzed, the interpretations should be verified as the ethnographer moves to an increasingly more narrow, yet deeper, understanding of the themes that underlie the social phenomenon. The iterative process of analytic interaction with the data is captured in the following:

Anthropologists, for instance, reflect upon fieldnotes: how they are constructed, used and managed. We come to understand that fieldnotes are not a closed, completed, final text: rather, they are indeterminate, subject to reading, rereading, coding recording, interpreting, reinterpreting. (Atkinson et al., 2001, p. 3)

Creswell (1998) describes the analytic process as organizing data so that the cyclical review explained by Atkinson can occur, and codes and taxonomies, qualitative as well as quantitative descriptions, can be generated and repeatedly refined and analyzed until coherent patterned regularities and themes emerge.

This process of analysis demands disciplined subjectivity from the ethnographer as he or she attempts to maintain a position of neutrality amidst the emergence of themes. Rigorous circumspection is required to ensure that data collection and analysis does not simply follow the path of least resistance, but leads to interpretations of social meanings that (a) are more plausible and credible, (b) connect the specific phenomenon with a larger understanding of the focus, and (c) clarify and enlighten to the point of an “a-ha moment” from the perspective of the researcher (Agar, 1986; Simmons-Mackie & Damico, 1999).

Agar (1986) describes the role of analysis in ethnography and ways in which the researcher can arrive at thick interpretation necessary for the level of acceptability. As data are collected, the ethnographer is oriented towards understanding how the day-to-day workings of the individuals or groups are accomplished and towards the meanings that underlie their social worlds. While analyzing collected data, the researcher may look for or experience instances of breakdown. These *occasioned* or *mandated* breakdowns in understanding between the researcher’s expectations and the meanings, actions, and reactions of those focused on, create the opportunities for the resolution that leads to the expanded understanding of coherence. Resolutions are initiated and achieved through a conscious testing of the researcher’s understanding of bounded strips of a phenomenon. Agar explains this process as a systematic way to determine if the practical interpretation of a specific schema can eliminate the occurrence of breakdown. In order to arrive at coherence, one must consider *anticoherence* as a possibility. That is, when the ethnographer begins to have an understanding of what is going on, he or she tries to challenge that

understanding by collecting or analyzing data that will expose breakdowns in those interpretations.

Presentation of Ethnographic Findings

Ethnography does not claim to be an objective, detailed accounting of an individual or group of individuals. It does not aim towards replicability or intend to predict future events. Rather, ethnography involves the process of mediating for the audience, a representation of frames of meaning constructed from interpretations of the researcher's experience with the studied individuals or groups (Agar, 1986). As researchers within the field of communication sciences and disorders prepare to present their ethnography, they typically frame the data and interpretation within the structure provided by their discipline. That is, the interpretation and the representation of the patterns of meaning are couched within both the culture and terminology of the field. This can be complicated since the concept of disability and disorder is socially constructed, yet mechanistically defined (Damico, Müller, & Ball, 2010) and the social lives of individuals from the cultures of inquiry typically do not fit neatly into decontextualized categories (Damico & Augustine, 1995). Published ethnographic and related qualitative research traditions allow for the complexity of the human existence within the contexts of interest to be more richly represented and understood. For example, Nelson's (2004) investigation into the acquisition of literacy in children classified with common language impairment and reading disability categories, showed that they progressed along uniquely different trajectories while exhibiting vastly different strategic reactions to literacy instruction. Similarly, Simmons-Mackie, Damico, and Damico (1999) found that the structure and role of feedback in aphasia therapy significantly influenced the affective context of the treatment.

For the researcher, presentation of ethnography creates the challenge of representing to the reader the lived experience in a manner that allows interpretation of the situation from the perspective of those who actually live it. Themes of interpretations are often presented through detailed description from the authentic, and often daily, events of those under investigation. In this way, the reader should be able to clearly recognize evidence supporting the interpretation.

Misconceptions and Directions

Ethnography is not merely the process of describing in fine detail the minutia of daily living. As Hanson (1965) has famously indicated, observation, description, and interpretation are inherently theory laden. Many of the attempts to apply ethnographic methods to communicative disorders have fallen prey to shallow descriptions of behavioral responses based largely on

a priori assumptions because the researcher—unfamiliar with crucial principles of ethnographic research—struggles to force the phenomenon under investigation into artificial themes. These thin descriptions have resulted in criticism of ethnographic methods as lacking rigor or serving only exploratory purposes.

While it has not been widely used in communication sciences and disorders, ethnography has a rich history that certainly holds clinical relevance. The editors referenced at the beginning of this chapter, and indeed the thrust of Jack S. Damico's career as a clinical researcher, have recognized a missing element within the discipline when it comes to our understanding of the realities and clinical considerations associated with the lives of those we strive to serve within the field. Too often clinical research does not adequately resemble the realities of clients, families, and clinicians. The complexities of human communication are fragmented and ignored (Damico, 1988). The qualitative research tradition of ethnography can reveal meanings of authentic behaviors and expand our understanding of communication sciences and associated disorders.

References

- Abendroth, K. (2008). *The use of systematic meditational strategies by siblings of children with autism spectrum disorder*. Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Dissertation Services.
- Agar, M. (1986). *Speaking of ethnography*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Atkinson, P., Coffey, A., & Delamont, S. (2003). *Key themes in qualitative research: Continuities and change*. Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press.
- Atkinson, P., Coffey, A., Delamont, S., Lofland, J., & Lofland, L. (Eds.). (2001). *Handbook of ethnography*. London, England: Sage.
- Atkinson, P., & Hammersley, M. (1994). Ethnography and participant observation. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 248–261). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Augustine, L. (1995). Strategies for effective child interviewing. *National Student Speech-Language Hearing Association Journal*, 22, 14–23.
- Creswell, J. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Damico, J. S. (1985). Clinical discourse analysis: A functional approach to language assessment. In C. S. Simon (Ed.), *Communication skills and classroom success: Assessment of language-learning disabled students* (pp. 165–204). San Diego, CA: College-Hill Press.
- Damico, J. S. (1988). The lack of efficacy in language therapy: A case study. *Language, Speech and Hearing Services in Schools*, 19, 51–67.
- Damico, J. S. (1990). Prescriptionism as a motivating mechanism: An ethnographic study in the public schools. *Journal of Childhood Communication Disorders*, 13, 85–92.
- Damico, J. S., & Augustine, L. E. (1995). Social considerations in the labeling of students as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. *Seminars in Speech and Language*, 16, 259–274.
- Damico, J. S., & Ball, M. J. (2010). Prolegomenon: Addressing the tyranny of old ideas. *Journal of Interactional Research in Communicative Disorders*, 1, 1–30.
- Damico, J. S., & Hamayan, E. V. (1992). *Multicultural language intervention: Addressing culturally and linguistically diverse issues*. Chicago, IL: Riverside.
- Damico, J. S., Müller, N., & Ball, M. J. (2010). Social and practical considerations in labeling. In

- J. S. Damico, N. Müller, & M. J. Ball, (Eds.), *The handbook of language and speech disorders* (pp. 11–37). Oxford, England: Blackwell.
- Damico, J. S., & Nelson, R. (2010). Reading and reading impairments. In J. S. Damico, N. Müller, & M. J. Ball (Eds.), *The handbook of language and speech disorders* (pp. 267–295). Oxford, England: Blackwell.
- Damico, J. S., & Simmons-Mackie, N. (2003). Qualitative research and speech-language pathology: A tutorial for the clinical realm. *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, *12*, 131–143.
- Damico, J. S., Simmons-Mackie, N. N., Oelschlaeger, M., Elman, R., & Armstrong, E. (1999). Qualitative methods in aphasia research: Basic issues. *Aphasiology*, *13*, 651–666.
- Deegan, M. J. (1988). *Jane Addams and the men of the Chicago School, 1892–1920*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books.
- Deegan, M. J. (2001). The Chicago School of ethnography. In P. Atkinson, S. Coffey, J. Delamont, J. Lofland, & L. Lofland (Eds.), *Handbook of ethnography* (pp. 11–25). London, England: Sage.
- Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. (Eds.). (1994). *Handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Duchan, J. (2010). JIRCD: An open letter to the journal. *Journal of Interactional Research in Communication Disorders*, *1*, 157–164.
- Ericks-Brophy, A., & Crago, M. B. (1993). Inuit efforts to maintain face: Elements from classroom discourse with Inuit children. In D. Kovarsky, M. Maxwell, & J. Damico (Eds.), *Language interaction in clinical and educational settings*. ASHA Monographs, *30*, 10–16.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Geertz, C. (1983). *Local knowledge: Further essays in interpretive anthropology*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Goffman, E. (1959). On face-work: An analysis of ritual elements in social interaction, *Psychiatry*, *18*, 213–231.
- Goffman, E. (1963). *Behavior in Public Places*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press.
- Hanson, N. R. (1965). *Patterns of discovery*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Hammer, C. S. (2011). Expanding our knowledge base through qualitative research methods. *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, *20*, 1–2.
- Hammersley, M., & Atkinson, P. (2007). *Ethnography: Principles in practice* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.
- James, A. (2001). Ethnography in the study of children and childhood. In P. Atkinson, A. Coffey, S. Delamont, J. Lofland, & L. Lofland (Eds.), *Handbook of ethnography* (pp. 246–257). London, England: Sage.
- King, R. A. (1984). The man in the Wendy House: Researching infants' schools. In R. G. Burgess (Ed.), *The research process in educational settings: Ten case studies* (pp. 117–139). Lewes, England: Falmer Press.
- Lynch, K. (2010). *An investigation of the impact of aphasia on the reading behaviors of individuals with dyslexia secondary to a cerebral vascular accident*. Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Dissertation Services.
- Kovarsky, D., & Crago, M. (1991). Toward the ethnography of communication disorders. *National Student Speech Language Hearing Association Journal*, *18*, 44–55.
- Kovarsky, D., & Maxwell, M. (1992). Ethnography and the clinical setting: Communicative expectancies in clinical discourse. *Topics in Language Disorders*, *12*, 76–84.
- MacDonald, S. (2001). British social anthropology. In P. Atkinson, A. Coffey, S. Delamont, J. Lofland, & L. Lofland (Eds.), *Handbook of ethnography* (pp. 60–79). London, England: Sage.
- Mehan, H. (1974). Assessing children's school performance. In H. P. Dreitzel (Ed.), *Recent Sociology*, no. 5, *Childhood and Socialization*. London, England: Collier Macmillan.
- Muma, J., & Cloud, S. (2010). Autism spectrum disorders: The state of the art. In J. S. Damico,

- N. Müller, & M. J. Ball (Eds.), *The handbook of language and speech disorders* (pp. 153–177). Oxford, England: Blackwell.
- Nelson, R. (2004). Investigation of the process of improved literacy construction in individuals with poor reading abilities and an identification of language impairment. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 65(11), 5674B. (UMI No. 3153731)
- Nelson, R., & Damico, J. S. (2006). Qualitative research in literacy acquisition: A framework for investigating reading in children with language impairment. *Clinical Linguistics and Phonetics*, 20, 631–639.
- Parr, S. (2007). Living with severe aphasia: Tracking social exclusion. *Aphasiology*, 21, 98–123.
- Rock, P. (2001) Symbolic interactionism and ethnography. In P. Atkinson, A. Coffey, S. Delamont, J. Lofland, & L. Lofland (Eds.), *Handbook of ethnography* (pp. 26–38). London, England: Sage.
- Simmons-Mackie, N., & Damico, J. S. (1999). Qualitative methods in aphasia research: Ethnography. *Aphasiology*, 13, 681–687.
- Simmons-Mackie, N., & Damico, J. S. (2003). Contributions of qualitative research to the knowledge base of normal communication. *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, 12, 144–154.
- Simmons-Mackie, N. N., Damico, J. S., & Damico, H. L. (1999). A qualitative study of feedback in aphasia treatment. *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, 8, 218–230.
- Spradley, J. P. (1979). *The ethnographic interview*. New York, NY: Holt, Rhinehart & Winston.
- Spradley, J. P. (1980). *Participant observation*. New York, NY: Holt, Rhinehart & Winston.
- Westby, C. E. (1990). Ethnographic interviewing: Asking the right questions to the right people in the right ways. *Journal of Childhood Communication Disorders*, 13, 101–111.
- Wilcox, S., & Corwin, J. (1990). The enculturation of BoMee: Looking at the world through deaf eyes. *Journal of Childhood Communication Disorders*, 13, 63–73.

This page intentionally left blank