Observation

Observation as a research method may be distinguished from just looking around by the degree of attentiveness we invest in the process, and by the intention we bring to it. Because, as Schutz (1970) pointed out, "Each phase of experience melts into the next without any sharp boundaries as it is being lived through" (p. 63), people who want to study other people's behavior have devised all sorts of means for focusing on, and so, defining, experiences. Learning, especially in schools, is one of the experiences we often hope to better understand. Mirrors for Behavior (Simon & Boyer, 1974) is an anthology of observational instruments developed for this purpose. Art educators may be interested particularly in Clements' system for categorizing art teachers' questions, and in Solomon's taxonomy of teachers' attempts to evoke imagery by providing concrete experiences, representational experiences, or abstract experiences.

Bateson and Mead (1942) were innovators in using photographic evidence for analysis rather than simply illustrating observations from field notes with photographs. Balinese Character has 759 photographs reproduced from 25,000 Leica stills. In this landmark method the researchers placed photos which they considered to be mutually relevant on the same page. Their commonality was the "same emotional thread" (p. xii), regardless of whether the behaviors depicted happened in different places and contexts. On the facing page Bateson and Mead provided an accompanying text: a few sentences which summarized the theme revealed in the photographs, and information which identified the people and circumstances involved in the individual images. For example, on Plate 15 they stated: "Among the

Balinese, learning is very rarely dependent upon verbal teaching. Instead, the methods of learning are visual and kinaesthetic" (p. 84). The first three photographs show a girl carrying offerings for a temple ceremony on her head, and two younger girls imitating her. The next two images are of a father teaching his very young son to dance by posturing his hand and assuming the typical dance smile; a third picture of this father and son reveals the toddler learning to play a xylophone as his father supports his hand. In the seventh photo a child nurse teaches a baby to walk while holding the upper part of his arms. Finally, we see three boys seated on the ground and grasping very small twigs; the boy in the center is drawing in the sand, and the authors note in the text that the others had stopped their drawing in order to watch him.

In an extension of this methodology Mead and Macgregor (1951) used 4000 stills from the Bali collection to compare general developmental stages in Balinese and American children. Macgregor employed her experiences as a documentary photographer, and as an analyst of photographic records of surgical procedures, to study the unique motor patterns of individual children.

Mead collaborated with Paul Byers, a professional photographer who has worked with behavioral scientists on a number of occasions, to observe The Small Conference (1968). In the introduction to his photographic presentation Byers explained his view of such evidence:

> In order to analyze the interaction, it is necessary to slow down or stop the ongoing behavior stream and to magnify and examine the details. When we do this, we no longer are looking at a conference as such or at the ideas that are being created. Instead of looking at what is happening, we are looking at the components of how it happens. That is, we are concentrating on the process. Still photographs provide one way of slicing into the behavioral stream and of examining the slices. (p. 57)

An examination of the camera as a research tool is available in
John Collier's (1967) <u>Visual Anthropology</u> in which he addressed photo-
graphing social interactions, interviewing with photographs, process-
ing nonverbal evidence, and photographing technology. As the Spindler's
stated in their Foreword:

> John Collier shows us how the camera can be used inductively, as
> all research techniques should be used in fieldwork. The field-
> worker can take a picture of something he does not fully, or some-
> times even partially understand, something that he can record for
> later understanding. (p. xi)

Collier called the camera an "image with a memory" (p. 3) and he main-
tained that, "Photography is a legitimate abstracting process in obser-
vation. It is one of the first steps in evidence refinement that turns
raw circumstances into data that is manageable in research analysis"
(p. 5). Nevertheless, he recognized that the people who use cameras are
not free from bias or personal projection. This is the sense in which
Wendt (1962) referred to photographs as "maps" because there is not a
one-to-one correspondence between their elements and the elements of the
events they depict. Since they can present only a few aspects of an
event, and much of what they present is controlled by the photographer,
they are abstractions of reality, or symbols. It is for this reason
that Hall (1974), in his review of <u>The Old Ones of New Mexico</u> by Coles
and Harris, contended that it "is a story by Coles and Harris. It is
<u>their</u> story, and a much better picture of what <u>they</u> see, think and value
than it is of the people who mouth the sentiments that Coles chose to in-
clude in the text" (p. 60). He cautioned that, "In discussing photo-
graphs it is very important to remember that man does not see passively.
He paints his own picture of the world with his eyes, and even more so

with a camera" (p. 60). Byers (1966) echoed this concern for the public

to understand that photography is a social interaction; the title of his

article, "Cameras Don't Take Pictures," reflected his point.

Becker (1974) compared the methods used in photography with those

used in sociology and traced the history of this relationship from

photos of the Crimean and Civil Wars, through those for the Farm Security

Administration in the 1930's, to current photoessays in magazines and

books. He argued that photographers and sociologists would benefit from

even more interchange of procedures. He considered photography to be

"often intellectually thin" (p. 11)--his discussion seems to include

only photography which is social documentary--and he blamed the photo-

graphers' reliance on lay theories for this condition:

> Since photographers, for all their public inarticulateness, tend
> to be in touch (via their connections in journalism and art, and
> increasingly, through their location in academia), with contemporary
> cultural currents, they use the ideas and attitudes that are making
> the rounds in order to organize their own seeing. (p. 12)

Social scientists, he charged, take pictures in the field that are really

vacation pictures. These are "no different from the ones they take on

any other vacation or that non-anthropological vacationers take, focusing

on what seems exotic and out of the way" (p. 12). He recommended to

photographers a procedure of sequential analysis, by which he simply

meant analyzing the photographs each day so that those insights can be

incorporated into the next day's photography. Another suggestion he made

was to use Collier's photo elicitation technique:

> Showing the pictures to people who know the situations under study
> and letting them talk about them, answer questions, suggest other
> things that need to be photographed, and so on. (p. 14)

He also proposed that photographers could adopt some rough sampling

procedures, such as establishing a convention about how much film they will expose in a given period of time. For art educators Becker's recommendations probably recall Beittel's (1966, 1972) research in which he took time-lapse photographs of students in the process of drawing; in some conditions the students determined the time interval for the photos. They privately discussed the time-lapse photo sequences of their drawings with Beittel or one of his graduate assistants. Although he referred to this procedure as process feedback, the method is similar to photo elicitation: students were asked to indicate stages in their drawings, talk about what they thought they were trying to do, and project what they might attempt in their next drawings. In Alternatives for Art Education Research (1973) Beittel considered these time-lapse still-photographs in relation to what he called "presentational modes":

> These records, when spread before one, constitute another kind of mute evidence of the expressive act. Unlike film and T.V. they reconstruct the art process in a more abstract way, by way of time sampling and by way of excluding events outside the drawing. (p. 24)

He believed such mute evidence was useful in stimulating the artists to recall their drawing experiences.

Becker (1974) thought that social scientists might adopt the chief device used by photographers--naming the places and perhaps the dates of their images:

> These labels, coupled with a reiteration of themes, so that one sees the same kind of place or thing or person from half a dozen widely scattered places in the country, imply the conclusion that if you can find it in that many places, it is really very widespread. Thus, when Frank shows you luncheonettes, diners, and coffee shops from Indianapolis, Detroit, San Francisco, Hollywood, Butte, and Columbia, South Carolina, all of which share a gritty plastic impersonality, you are prepared to accept that image as something that must be incorporated into your view of American culture. The logic of this needs further analysis. (pp. 17-18)

Observation

Although he does not identify the location for each photograph, Richard Ansaldi, in Souvenirs from the Roadside West (1978), used this strategy of reproducing images from a number of places so that a theme emerges. Fourteen colored photographs of neon signs, grouped under the title, "The Neon West," are an example.

As preparation for the assignment to use observation as a research method, the seminar viewed the film, Kienholz on Exhibit (1968), which was made during a museum tour. They were asked to reflect on the kinds of art knowledge that were being constructed in this tour. Following the film, pairs of graduate students talked with each other about the taken-for-granted assumptions concerning art which were manifested in the film. Copies of Nancy Johnson's (1977) dissertation abstract, in which she studied the art knowledge constructed through the social interactions between docents and children during art museum tours, were distributed for help with these discussions. Next, the seminar watched The Elusive Shadow (1966), a film in which John Schulze's students show some of the sources of ideas for their photographs and comment on these. They were to consider what beliefs about art were revealed in the film, and, in the class discussion afterward, to indicate evidence for their conclusions. Finally, portions of Balinese Character (Bateson & Mead, 1942) were shown and discussed. The assignment to collect photographic evidence of observations made in some kind of art situation encompassed two weeks in order to allow for film processing. Students were asked to stop at intervals during their observations to reflect on what they thought was going on, to decide on a central theme which emerged from the photographic data, and to use this theme as an aid in organizing the photographic

evidence which was to be accompanied by a written report. In addition,
several of the graduate students were familiar with McMickle's (1975)
thesis in which he used written and photographic records to analyze the
block building structures of pre-school children.

Regretably, cost precludes including the colored slides and photo-
graphs on which the following two students' papers were based. However,
I think their written reports are helpful indications of the kinds of
concepts which can be derived from photographic evidence.

REFERENCES

Ansaldi, R. Souvenirs from the roadside west. New York: Harmony Books,
    1978.

Bateson, G. & Mead, M. Balinese character: a photographic analysis.
    New York: Special Publications of the New York Academy of Science,
    1942.

Becker, H.S. Photography and sociology. Studies in the Anthropology of
    Visual Communication, 1974, 1(1), 3-26.

Beittel, K.R. Alternatives for art education research. Dubuque, Ia.:
    Wm. C. Brown Company, 1973.

Beittel, K.R. Mind and context in the art of drawing: an empirical and
    speculative account of the drawing process and the drawing series and
    of the contexts in which they occur. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and
    Winston, 1972.

Beittel, K.R. Selected psychological concepts as applied to the teaching
    of drawing. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University, 1966.
    (USOE, CRP No. 3149)

Byers, P. Cameras don't take pictures. Columbia University Forum, 1966,
    9(1), 27-31.

Collier, J. Visual anthropology: photography as a research method. New
    York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1967.

Hall, E.T. Review of The old ones of New Mexico by R. Coles. Studies in
    the Anthropology of Visual Communication, 1974,1(1), 59-60.

Johnson, N.R. Ethnoaesthetic socialization (Doctoral dissertation, University

of Oregon, 1977). Dissertation Abstracts International, 1978, 38
5857-A. (University Microfilms No. 7802529)

McGraw-Hill (Producer). Kienholz on exhibit. Iowa City: The University
Media Library, 1968. (Film)

McMickle, A. Stages of structures: observations of aesthetic decision
making in the block building of young children. Unpublished master's
thesis, The University of Iowa, 1975.

Mead, M. & Byers, P. The small conference. The Hague: Mouton & Company,
1968.

Mead M. & Macgregor, F.C. Growth and culture: a photographic study of
Balinese childhood. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1951.

Wendt, P.R. The language of pictures. In S. I. Hayakawa (Ed.), The
use and misuse of language. Greenwich, Conn.: A Fawcett Premier
Book, 1962.

Schutz, A. Phenomenological baseline. In H.R. Wagner (Ed.), Alfred
Schutz: on phenomenology and social relations. Chicago: The Univer-
sity of Chicago Press, 1970.

Simon, A.& Boyer, E.G. (Eds.). Mirrors for behavior, III (3rd ed.).
Wyncote, PA.: Communication Materials Center, 1974.

University of Iowa. (Producer). The elusive shadow. Iowa City: The
University of Iowa Media Library, 1966. (Film)

8