FIELD METHODS / MICHAEL WEINSTEIN

A GENERAL GUIDE / OUTLINE FOR A SOCIOLOGY FIELD RESEARCH REPORT

[The report is directed to an audience of advanced social science students like us, but who have not taken this course. We don’t have to explain the sociological imagination, but we do need to explain field research issues and the disciplined choices we made. It may help to reread the course description and clarify which (combination) of the foci now describes why each of us is taking this course and writing this paper.]

{Remember that what follows is the presented logical outline for the report. Chronologically the paper is being written “inside out.” Start with analysis of your field notes and draft Part IV below. Then integrate that with Section III; next write Sections V, I and II, and VI. Last, write the title and the little pieces that make this look like a competent, creative, even exciting, report of sociologically interesting research.}

TITLE: AND PERHAPS A SUBTITLE; what this project turned out to be.

Table of contents (rewriting the draft outline).

Reflexive Statement, a paragraph explaining how a person like you came to write a paper like this.
If the paper is mostly reflexive, present an abstract/summary including conclusions.

I. Introduction of something sociologically interesting, as the broader context of this project.
[Present one or more of sub-sections A to D.]

   A. Some sociology sub-field/course/classic interest which looks at issues like this.
   B. Some fairly new sociology book/article/study that raises a new interest/question and serves as a contrast for this study.
   C. Some current event in our community or society that raises issues worth exploring.
   D. The experience of being a sociology student/researcher at this time and place, so that everyday experience is worth examining.

II. A short description of this project: what you did. Omit this if you’ve already done the abstract.

III. The theory: explain some logical or systematic set of ideas to establish the concepts and language of this essay; find something in the sociological literature to relate to; lay out how these people fit into the largest view of contemporary society, and how common are people and places like this. [Present one or more of the sub-sections A to D.]

   A. Middle-range theories, deduction, propositions and hypotheses.
   B. The social construction of reality and the sociology of everyday life.
      1. Behaviors, patterns, structures, categories, values.
2. Ethnomethodology; grounded theory.

C. This group/community/society is a social category:
   1. Its solidarity is based on more-or-less shared locales, activities, meanings, characteristics.
   2. Conflict issues: power and leadership, social classes, intentionality and planning.
   3. This is Hawaii: notice cultural blends and contrasts, ethnic categorization, the island microcosm within the modern world system, the solidarities called aloha and ohana, etc.

D. Humanist sociology, participant-observation, and reflexivity.
   1. W. F. Whyte and Applied Social Research
   2. One’s own prospective career and practical interests.

IV. The sociological description and analysis, using the participant-observation field notes and other data.

   A. The scene, the environment.
   B. The participants, the social types.
   C. Some themes induced from the data; chronological progression during the course of the study.
   D. Social process: stages of development, the history and future of these people.
   E. “Typical” days and events, as documented or as reconstructed.
   F. Cultural meanings, values, symbols.

V. The study, and how it was done; dialogue with the Loflands, Whyte, Emerson, Weinstein, our classmates, and others.

   A. The role of the observer and the reactions to us.
   B. The kinds of data available and the extent of documentation.
   C. Key informants.
   D. Evidence of credibility, validity, reliability; our confidence in this study.

VI. Conclusions: relating this case study to the broader context.

   A. Induction: a contribution to the sociological literature.
   B. New propositions and refinements for the theory.
   C. Criticisms and reconceptualizations.
   D. Lessons learned, next steps for us, for others.

Appendices, bits and pieces that didn’t fit but are worth saving.

Bibliography.

Attachments, for our class but not really part of the paper.