# 1. Introduction: leaving Damascus
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In James Elroy Flecker's poem 'The Gates of Damascus' (1947), the poet imagines four exits from the safe comfortable city to the outside world. Each gate takes the traveller into a different set of temptations and dangers. The Aleppo Gate leads to trade and commerce, the Mecca Gate is for faith and pilgrimage, the Lebanon Gate for exploration and the search for enlightenment, and the Baghdad Gate leads to danger and even death. When we educational researchers leave our safe city, our ivory tower, our Damascus, we can choose which gate we take: that is, our destination, our goal, our dream. This introduction will explore the choices that face educational researchers, and the consequences of those choices. Issues of funding, faith, exploration and danger will be discussed with examples from controversies about educational research.

There are multiple dangers when a metaphor such as the gates of Damascus is taken to write about educational research in the post-industrial, or postmodern, globalized world. Flecker lived and wrote in a very different era: Constantinople and Smyrna have vanished. The most obvious danger is orientalism (Said, 1978): that is, authors in the west will always prefer their idealized orient to any corrective or corrected realities, because accepting the latter would force the westerner to abandon the unthinking superiority embodied in the 'othering' of the orient and the oriental (Marcus, 2001). Despite the dangers, I like the poem's extended metaphor, and am going to behave like the caravan passing out of Damascus, and press on, ignoring the perils, and use my four gates metaphor as ways to think about educational research. The Damascus, Aleppo, Baghdad and Lebanon of the poem are long gone. If there were a poem with rich imagery about the four great gates of Vancouver, or Brasilia, or Dunedin, that would have served just as well.

There are six sections. First, the routes leading out of each gate in Flecker's poem are distinguished. It has splendidly 'purple' passages where the metaphors and similes are heaped up like piles of oranges and lemons, and the images shimmer like silks in the bazaar. Each gate leads in a different direction geographically, philosophically, emotionally and socially, and those who leave by each gate are setting forth on very different journeys. The type of educational research each gate and route symbolize is explained. Then the introduction explores the familiarity

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problem in educational research. This is followed by a mapping of 'two traditions' in qualitative educational research, where a gulf of mutual incomprehension has existed between sociological and anthropological scholars for 40 years. The introduction then points out three ways in which qualitative researchers in education have not drawn on major changes in their parent disciplines, returns to the familiarity problem offering five strategies to fight familiarity and perhaps, do Lebanon Gate research.

## THE FOUR GATES

The Aleppo Gate – the North Gate – is chosen by traders. They have only a short journey ahead of them: two days and two nights, and there are no dangers. 'Fleas' are 'the only foes'. In Aleppo trade goods sell for three times the price they would fetch in Damascus, so the journey is amply rewarded. In the poem a merchant tells the reader that men (*sic*) have different ways of gaining status in the world: noble birth, warfare and the sword, science, the arts or trade. He exclaims:

> *Some praise a science or an Art,*
> *But I like honourable Trade!*

By contemporary standards this is too sexist, and few people have gained status in educational research by being born into the nobility, but the potential to advance in research by warfare, science, art or trade certainly exists. The Mecca Gate – the South Gate – leads to Saudi Arabia. This is a longer and more perilous journey than the route from Damascus to Aleppo. Pilgrims take that route, and God watches over them, providing 'shade from well to well'. These travellers have their bodies purified, gain stoic endurance, and can hope to achieve eternal life in the paradise gardens. For educational researchers, eternal life is to be read as academic immortality. The Baghdad Gate – the East Gate – is the 'Postern of Fate, the Desert Gate, Disaster's Cavern, Fort of Fear, the Doorway of Diabekir.' The route to Baghdad is across the desert, which sensible people approach with justifiable apprehension. It is not a route to take light-heartedly. The gatekeeper warns:

> *'Pass not beneath, O Caravan, or pass not singing'*

The heat, the thirst, the pitiless sun and the fierce Bedouin are bad enough, but worse still the desert route is the way madness lies.

Finally, the Lebanon Gate – the West Gate – leads to the sea:

> *The dragon-green, the luminous, the dark serpent-haunted sea,*
> *The snow-besprinkled wine of earth, the white-and-blue-flower*
> *foaming sea.*

However the sea is not the destination. Travellers who take the West Gate cross the sea to find, beyond it, strange lands full of giants, screaming rocks that spout waterfalls of blood, ancient vessels full of 'metal mariners' and eventually in the farthest west, Solomon himself. This is the exit taken by explorers and seekers for enlightenment.

In the next section, the type of research which is beyond each of the four gates is described.

## GATES AND EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

Damascus is our safe ivory tower, our university or college where we can read, and think, and teach, and reflect. There we are paid to be intellectuals, to be creative, to be iconoclasts, to be gadflies. Of course our ivory towers are full of disputes and feuds, best reflected in all those campus novels Ian Carter (1990) has written so entertainingly about, but we are privileged to work in them. However as educational researchers we cannot stay in our safe Damascus – we have to leave by one of the four gates, to raise funds, enter research settings, gather data, meet face to face, or via our research instruments, teachers, pupils, students, employers, parents, managers, and other dangers. Because educational researchers have to keep leaving Damascus to mix with the outside world its status is low, and it can even be stigmatized. As Basil Bernstein put it, education is, in universities 'a pariah discourse', and educational researchers 'are not kosher and live in profane places' (Bernstein, 2000). So educational researchers have no choice but to leave the ivory tower but do have a choice between four gates. We can choose the Aleppo Gate and engage in Honourable Trade, the Mecca Gate and be pilgrims, or the Lebanon Gate for exploration. It is not clear that anyone would or should choose the Baghdad Gate but sometimes we realize that in retrospect that was our exit. We discover that we left that way when we find ourselves alone and mad in the desert.

The Aleppo Gate is for trade and commerce. If we take this route we can sell our products for a good price. In educational research this is the route we choose when we undertake customer-contractor research, to answer relatively straightforward, practical, policy-related questions. The funders, the customers, the policy makers do not want intellectual curiosity and epistemological challenge: they want answers. The funders, the customers, the policy makers do not want methodological speculation,

risky new methods, open-ended theorizing, unending searches for obscure literatures or poetry: the demand is for findings, facts, clear expositions and straightforward policy recommendations. Flecker's merchant said he liked 'Honourable Trade' rather than science, art or warfare: and much educational research is exactly that: academic goods equivalent to

> *filigrane, apricot paste, coffee tables botched with pearl, and little beaten brassware pots.*

Educational researchers sell their skills in research design, in data collection, in analysis and in report writing.

The Mecca Gate is for pilgrims. When we take that gate we are motivated not by money but by faith and hope. We set out in faith and seek a destination where our beliefs are reinforced and revitalized. In educational research this is the gate we leave by when we are secure in our epistemology, in our methodology, and in our understandings of what education is, what its purposes are and why it matters. It is the Mecca Gate we choose when our research is guided by what we believe to be morally right, true and good. Because we are sure of our epistemology, we have faith in our methods, in our methodology, in the data we will generate, the analytic techniques we will use and the style in which we will write them up. We take the Mecca Gate when we are snug inside a paradigm, want our faith renewed by the pilgrimage. The aim is to have our intellectual self revitalized by the fountains in the paradise gardens.

The fourth and final gate to consider is the Lebanon Gate – the West Gate – the exit to the sea. This is a high risk choice: it could lead us to danger – we could drown. However it is also the most exciting route to take. The explorer crosses the sea to find not only the giants and screaming rocks gushing blood, but also if she reaches the isles of the utmost west, where Solomon is brooding for all eternity, wisdom and enlightenment. The Lebanon Gate is the high risk and high reward alternative. Many educational researchers never choose the Lebanon Gate because it exposes us to risk. We could lose our epistemological certainties, our standpoints, our methodological foundations, and we could be forced to find new literatures, new theories, new perspectives on education itself.

## FOUR GATES AND THE FAMILIARITY PROBLEM

Leaving our ivory tower by three of the four gates produces no solution to the biggest problem facing educational ethnography: the need to fight familiarity. By definition Mecca Gate research is firmly inside the

researchers' faith, their secure comfort zone. Baghdad Gate projects are so awful that no solutions to core problems are reached. Neither of these directions fight familiarity. Nor does 'contract' research. The Aleppo Gate – the route for trade and commerce – is always being urged upon us. There are pressures to undertake funded projects which are of immediate practical value to teachers and higher education staff, school managers, and higher education governors, local government, policy makers or central government. Aleppo Gate research is designed to answer questions posed by, and to gain information for, those with power and position. We are rarely urged to undertake research of immediate use to pupils, or students, to school and university cleaners, to clerical staff, to canteen workers, to the members of the trade unions. It is also designed to improve the status quo: the value of education is not challenged. Research is never commissioned to help those who reject or resist the dominant value system escape from the education system or resist it more effectively. Policy makers do not commission research to help truants escape the gaze of the truancy inspector or help non-reflexive teachers escape the rhetoric of reflexivity or self-satisfied ones avoid any staff development activities.

The Aleppo Gate is an honourable route, and one which it is perfectly sensible to take sometimes. Whenever we are contracted to solve a specific puzzle, do applied research, investigate a specific issue: whenever we are funded by a ministry, or its equivalent, we take the Aleppo Gate. So the Aleppo Gate is respectable, but educational research is not advanced by taking it, because there are no challenges to familiarity. The biggest problem facing educational research, as Blanche Geer (1964), Howard Becker (1971), M.F.D. Young (1971) and Harry Wolcott (1981) pointed out, is that it is 'all too familiar', it 'takes educators' problems', it is dominated by the educator subculture.

Geer (1964, p. 384) pointed out that familiarity was the enemy of decent research:

> Untrained observers . . . can spend a day in a hospital and come back with one page of notes and no hypotheses. 'It was a hospital', they say, 'everyone knows what hospitals are like'.

She demonstrated how she 'fought' the familiarity of American college life, at the start of the research project that became Becker, Geer and Hughes (1968). It was simultaneously an account of how the researcher's initial encounters with a field setting can be disproportionately valuable, as long as the researcher works hard to construct and abandon working hypotheses (or foreshadowed problems as they are often termed), and a plea for treating the familiar (be it hospital, college or classroom) as anthropologically strange.

Geer's second point was subsequently taken up and reiterated by her collaborator, Howard Becker (1971, p. 10) in a famous statement, tucked away as a footnote added to a paper by the educational anthropologists Murray and Rosalie Wax (1971).

> It is not just the survey method of educational testing, or any of those things, that keeps people from seeing what goes on. It is first and foremost a matter of it all being so familiar . . . It takes a tremendous effort of will and imagination to stop seeing the things that are conventionally 'there' to be seen . . . It is like 'pulling teeth' to get researchers to see or write anything beyond what 'everyone' knows.

The same year that Becker published his classic statement of the familiarity problem – interestingly not in a paper of his own, but added as a footnote to an editorial in an edited collection by others – a parallel argument was published in the UK. Young (1971) was the editor of the manifesto of the Young Turks who were arguing for a radical shift in the sociology of education: a shift from a focus on structures and outcomes to a concern with curriculum and pedagogy. Young argued that educational researchers too frequently studied research questions that had been formulated by 'insiders' (teachers, school principals, local government, central government) to the educator subculture, rather than setting their own agenda of research questions from their outsider vantage point. Too often, Young said, researchers 'take' problems instead of 'making' them.

A decade later Harry Wolcott (1981) made a parallel point; arguing that educational researchers are too submerged in the 'educator subculture', and rarely try to get outside it. A specific example, central to research at the time, was the investigation of pupils' 'time on task' (Denham and Lieberman, 1980), which Wolcott suggested, was fundamentally a confusion of 'busyness' with learning. The American graduate schools of Education, Wolcott suggested, compounded the problems by despatching graduate students to do their projects in educational settings, rather than forcing them to learn their trade in unfamiliar settings.

> We have not systematically encouraged our students . . . to go and look at something else for a while. We keep sending them back to the classroom. The only doctoral student I have sent off to do fieldwork in a hospital was a nurse-educator who returned to her faculty position in a school of nursing! (p. 253)

Aleppo Gate research is always grounded in that educator subculture, always 'takes' problems, and does not struggle enough to pull many teeth.

While Young was formulating his ideas, Becker and Geer were following up their own manifesto, by studying learning in a range of non-educational settings. The papers in Geer (1972) are all examples of

learning and teaching for non-academic occupations such as hairdressing. Young's impassioned call for a shift from taking problems to making them launched a short-lived, but highly controversial, flourishing of sociological research on the curriculum, called the 'new' sociology of education in the UK (Bernbaum, 1977). The wider issues implicit in Young's manifesto were not, however, taken up by Anglophone ethnographers. During the 1970s ethnographic methods began to be more widely accepted in educational research than they had been when Geer, Becker, and Wax and Wax were writing (Jacob, 1987; Spindler and Spindler, 1987; Atkinson, Delamont and Hammersley, 1988). While that growth took different forms in the USA and in the UK, in both countries the problems outlined by Geer and Becker were not tackled.

In 1980 Paul Atkinson and I drew attention to the gulf between the two predominant types of ethnographic research: by anthropologists of education in the USA and sociologists of education in the UK (Atkinson and Delamont, 1980). Despite the differences between these two ethnographic traditions, they shared a failure to make their own education systems problematic. The anthropological ethnographies of education done in the USA (Spindler, 1955, 1982) took many aspects of American schooling for granted, while the British sociological ethnographers took many aspects of UK schooling for granted. The scholarly purpose of that paper was not only to map the two terrains and reveal their differences, although as Metz (1984) was later to point out, as her novel discovery, that gap had not been previously documented, nor its implications explored. More important was fighting familiarity. We argued that if American ethnographers read British sociological ethnographies, they would develop a better standpoint from which to fight familiarity, and vice versa. The latter argument was elaborated in Delamont (1981): a critique of British sociological ethnographic research on the grounds that it focused on a very narrow range of educational settings and signally failed to make those settings anthropologically strange. In that paper six strategies for fighting familiarity were proposed with examples of how well they had worked, could work and should work.

The pattern of isolated voices raising the familiarity problem was perpetuated when George and Louise Spindler (1982) rehearsed similar ideas reflecting on their 30 years of fieldwork, in a paper subtitled 'From familiar to strange and back again'. As summarized by Parman (1998) the Spindlers compared 'the experience of doing ethnography in familiar and "exotic" settings'.

> Each setting imposes its own anthropological dilemma: first how to observe situations so familiar that it is almost impossible to extract oneself from one's own

cultural assumptions and be objective; the second, how to observe situations so different from what one is used to that one responds only to differentness. (p. 395)

Parman continues that 'making the familiar strange' is 'the ultimate goal of every anthropologist' (p. 395). What is striking about the Spindlers's formulation is that they, unlike Becker or Young, do mention some strategies to fight it, such as the use of film.

Ethnographic research on schools and classrooms continued to flourish during the 1980s, conducted by anthropologists and sociologists. Most repeated the pattern of failure: they did not start with robust foreshadowed problems designed to make schooling anthropologically strange; nor did they achieve strangeness in their eventual portraits of teachers and pupils.

During the 1980s the textual conventions and rhetorical genres used to publish qualitative research came under increased scrutiny (Clifford and Marcus, 1986; Atkinson, 1990, 1992, 1996; Spencer, 2001; Atkinson and Delamont, 2008). Educational ethnographies were one suitable set of texts for genre analysis. Atkinson and Delamont (1990; Delamont and Atkinson, 1995) showed, by close textual analysis of six monographs – three British and three American – that the rhetoric tropes, the unanalysed features of schooling and the citations were systematically different between the American anthropological ethnographies of education and the British sociological ethnographies.

The anthropologists of education had not addressed the familiarity problem for nearly two decades until in 1999 *Anthropology of Education Quarterly* (*AEQ*) celebrated its thirtieth birthday and key figures returned to the topic. Hess (1999, p. 401) recapitulated the ideas of Wax and Wax (1971), and raised the issue of whether anthropologists of education 'are still asking good rather than trivial questions, whether we are asking the right questions?' (p. 400). John Singleton (1999) argued that the anthropology of education needed to be better connected to anthropological work outside schools. He wrote: 'The critical confusion of education with schooling continues to bedevil us' (p. 457). He cites Lave and Wenger (1991), and draws his readers' attention to his research on apprentices learning Japanese folk pottery and to studies of occupational training and socialization in Japan in a range of other, non-school, settings (Singleton, 1998).

In 2007 Hervé Varenne edited a special issue of *Teachers' College Record* on educational anthropology. In his editorial essay (2007a, 2007b) he approvingly quotes Bourgois's (1996) dictum that 'the streets are almost always more powerful than the schools' (p. 1562) and remarks:

> The great paradox of work on education by social scientists is that it is mostly about schools . . . work on education is, paradoxically, rarely about education. (p. 1539)

Thus leading figures in the anthropology of education have raised the familiarity problem in their field for 50 years. In contrast sociologists of education after Young (1971) did not face up to the familiarity problem at all, and never engaged with the issues raised by Geer and Becker. A state of mutual ignorances between the anthropology of education and the sociology of education; and a strong ethnocentricism among researchers in the USA and in the UK have compounded the separation of the disciplines. Qualitative educational research could have been much better – taken the Lebanon Gate more often – if these failures to engage outside academic and national borders had not weakened it.

## FOUR SIGNS OF DISCONNECTION

The sociology and the anthropology of education both show 'disconnects' between the subspecialisms and the mainstream disciplines, largely because of the failure to fight familiarity and 'make' problems. The more qualitative educational researchers 'take' problems, the less they draw strength from the mainstream discipline. This can be illustrated by four specific points: methods, analytic concepts, theoretical frameworks and rhetorical, textual strategies.

### 1.   Methods and Methodology

Sociologists of education who use qualitative methods have been self-consciously reflexive about them, and consistently ground their work in methodological ways. However qualitative sociological educational research has relied heavily on semi-structured interviews, rather than deploying all the possible qualitative methods which are explored in this volume, and there has been relatively little attention paid to the methodological implications of the rhetorical or literary turn.

Although the past 30 years has seen an enormous increase in the number of methods books, especially handbooks, the anthropology of education is characterized by very brief, unreferenced, factual accounts of the data collection methods; no methodology; and noticeably very little reflection on methods of data collection, analysis, writing and representation or reading of the types that have become widespread since 1986 and are common in sociology (for example, Coffey, 1999). The papers in *AEQ* do not cite the

methods texts that exist, even those by anthropologists. Noticeable too is the lack of attention paid by most anthropological educational ethnographers to the work of sociologists who do highly relevant ethnographies which do analyse their methods, reflect on methodology and experiment with new textual forms. This work is neither utilized, cited, nor criticized. There are collections of papers by anthropologists which contain some reflections on methods, and autobiographical accounts of projects such as Lareau and Shultz (1990), Eisner and Peshkin (1990), De Marrais (1998), Generett and Jeffries (2003) and McLean and Leiberg (2007). However these focus much more on the personal, confessional narratives and autobiographies of the authors and their projects, rather than raising methodological issues.

## 2.    Analytic Concepts

There are two points to be made here. First, the sociology of education and anthropology of education are not, generally, deploying the analytic concepts at the frontiers of, respectively, sociology and social and cultural anthropology; and second, the emphasis on student failure in both sociology and anthropology has produced a series of familiar 'stories'. These are both serious criticisms. Sociology of education has been focused on failure rather than success. There has been a lack of engagement with powerful analytic concepts from the mainstream of sociology: a disconnect between sociology of education and the frontiers of sociology itself.

The first point can be illustrated by three works from mainstream sociology and mainstream anthropology that produced clear analytic advance, relevant to ethnographies in educational settings, that were not seized upon and deployed in the sociology and anthropology of education. In mainstream sociology Lash and Urry (1994) developed the idea of new, post-industrial economies of signs and space. They contrasted the identities of the educated, affluent and computer literate which are geographically dispersed but emotionally and intellectually close with the traditional, industrial working-class identity, grounded in a locality and an occupation. Their book did not address the educational causes or consequences of their analysis (which it should have done) but qualitative sociologists of education have not engaged with its implications either.

Qualitative sociologists of education have failed to draw on key concepts from the vibrant sociology of science and technology. Susan Leigh Star (1989, 2010) and Lucy Suchman (1994) have developed a sophisticated discourse around the ideas of boundary objects and boundary crossing which has rich potential for the sociological study of teaching

and learning. Those powerful concepts have not crossed into educational research. A more controversial example is Beck and Beck-Gersheim's (1995) exploration of the concept of a risk society's implications for interpersonal emotional relations. Their application of Beck's analysis of postmodernity is potentially valuable for rethinking any educational setting and any pedagogical relationship, but that potential has not been realized.

Parallel examples abound in the anthropology of education. Herzfeld (1985), for example, used the analytic concept of poetics to advance the anthropological understanding of manhood and masculinities. Subsequent mainstream anthropology builds on that concept, but educational anthropology does not cite Herzfeld or utilize his analytic insights. Connerton's (1989) discussions of memory and forgetting initiated a vibrant research strand in mainstream anthropology (for example, Littlewood, 2009) which has not produced analytic work on memory in educational settings, although it would provide an anthropological 'take' on school 'reform'. Similarly it is 20 years since Lutz (1988) drew attention to the analytic power of a focus on emotion and sentiment, launching a rich vein of anthropological work. This is an approach of enormous potential for the anthropology of education, yet is largely unexploited.

These are just three examples of 20-year-old analytic traditions in mainstream anthropology that are not readily apparent in the anthropology of education, which rarely deploys the same conceptual repertoire as the wider discipline. Anthropology of education routinely deploys the concept of culture clash. Anthropologists have focused most on clashes of ethnicity or language, sociologists on class inequalities. Both fields have included gender, but primarily focused on failure.

An outsider reading the anthropology of education could become seriously pessimistic about schooling. Study after study focuses on culture clashes between state schooling and ethnic or linguistic minorities, which produce drop out, low achievement, alienation and resistance in the pupils. An outsider reading the sociology of education could become seriously pessimistic about schooling. Study after study focuses on the failure of children from working-class families in the education system. The sociology and the anthropology of education are overwhelmingly the close observation of failure.

### 3.   Theoretical Frameworks

Anthropology of education papers do not normally embed the research in anthropological theory. If one takes papers from each decade since 1970 and compares *AEQ* papers with those in other anthropological

journals, such as the *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (*JRAI*) or *Current Anthropology* the theoretical disputes in mainstream anthropology are not apparent. The rise and fall of big theoretical concepts in the parent discipline is not mirrored in *AEQ* or the chapters in the edited collections. Structuralism, Marxism, semiotics, post-structuralism, postmodernism, feminist theory and the rhetorical turn are very rarely apparent. Reed-Danahay's (1996) use of Bourdieu is a striking exception in an under-theorized field. Spindler (2000) does not list Bourdieu, Douglas, Geertz, Herzfeld, Levi Strauss or Sperber in the author index, nor are there any index entries on structuralism, semiotics, poststructuralism, postmodernism, rhetoric, Marxism or feminist theory in the subject index. Anthropologists of the next generation are no more likely to embed their work in anthropological theory, so, for example, Peshkin's 1972, 1982, 1986, 1991, 1994, 1997, 2001 series of insightful ethnographies on Nigerians, rural Americans, school amalgamations, separatist born again Christians and on the schooling of Native Americans are largely devoid of anthropological theory.

The majority of sociologists of education have been active users of Bourdieu and, in the UK, Bernstein, and there are scholars who deploy Foucault and Butler. However, central figures in mainstream sociology, such as, in the UK Urry, Scott, Savage, Crossley, Bradley, Walby or Stanley, are not central in the sociology of education. In the USA a similar disconnect is apparent: major theorists are not central to qualitative sociology of education. No American sociologist of education today deploys Goffman in the way he deserves, for instance.

### 4.   Rhetorical Textual Strategies

Although there were scholarly analyses of the rhetoric of social science long before Clifford and Marcus (1986), as Atkinson and Delamont (2008) demonstrate, the publication of *Writing Culture* was the paradigm changing volume in anthropology. Three new research areas opened up. Papers were published in anthropological journals and edited collections which analysed the rhetoric of the canonical texts; which reflected on the writing of both fieldnotes and publications; and which attempted to change the rhetorical canon. This last trend involved putting the authorial voice into texts in much less detached and authoritative styles, experimenting with new textual forms and trying to preserve the voices of the informants. Brown's (1991) study of a vodou priestess, for example, has traditional ethnographic text, fictional episodes, autoethnography and autobiography blended in one text. While these trends are seen in many anthropological journals and collections, they are not noticeable in *AEQ*.

Anthropology of education has not internalized the paradigm shift that Clifford and Marcus (1986) crystallized.

A parallel judgement can be made about the lack of attention paid by qualitative sociologists of education to the rhetoric of 'canonical' texts (even Willis); to reflexivity around writing fieldnotes or publications, and few experiments with textual forms.

Both anthropologists and sociologists of education feel marginal to their mainstream disciplines, yet themselves fail to engage with core elements of that mainstream. The focus on schools and schooling, and failure to fight familiarity are compounded by the four disconnects I have just outlined. Fighting familiarity is essential.

## STRATEGIES TO FIGHT FAMILIARITY

This section sets out five strategies which will help scholars – especially ethnographers – fight familiarity particularly by providing the raw materials from which to construct robust working hypotheses or foreshadowed problems. Self-conscious strategies to create such hypotheses that enable, even require the researcher to fight familiarity are essential. The five strategies to fight familiarity proposed here are:

1. Revisiting 'insightful' educational ethnographies of the past.
2. Studying learning and teaching in formal education in other cultures.
3. Taking the standpoint of the researcher who is 'other' to view the educational process. (For example, by doing ethnography from the standpoint of participants from a different social class, race or ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation.)
4. Taking the viewpoint of actors other than the commonest types of 'teachers' and 'students' in ordinary state schools. (This can mean focusing on unusual settings in the school system, such as schools for learning disabled pupils, or the deaf or blind, or in the UK Welsh or Gaelic medium schools, or 'other' actors in ordinary schools such as secretaries, laboratory technicians, campus police, cooks.)
5. Studying learning and teaching outside formal education settings.

Examples of how each strategy can serve to strengthen qualitative research on education follow, addressing two agendas; first, fighting familiarity, and second, fighting fashion. The educational sciences 'forget' research very quickly and consistently reinvent the same wheels. It urgently needs to cultivate the *longue durée*.

## 1. Revisit the Insightful Educational Ethnographies of the Past

Educational researchers in general, and educational ethnographers are no exception, operate with very short timescapes or time horizons. Fashions come and go, terminology changes so that previous research seems obsolete, and work is quickly forgotten. It is salutary to revisit apparently obsolete, neglected, out of print ethnographies, using them as a lens through which contemporary educational settings can be re-envisioned.

## 2. Formal Education in Other Cultures

It may seem paradoxical that educational ethnographers are frequently parochial, and fail to read, cite and use ethnographies of schooling and higher education in other cultures. Exemplary scholarship that would be sovereign in the fight against familiarity is ghettoized and neglected. Such research done by fellow countrymen and countrywomen is ghettoized into 'the anthropology of education' or 'comparative education', equivalent research done by scholars from other countries is not registered at all.

## 3. Take the Standpoint of the 'Other'

Taking the standpoint of the 'other' is a valuable research strategy. All educational researchers should try to understand how the setting is perceived by, and experienced by, people who come to it, and live in it, from standpoints other than their own. This is partly an ethical and political point, drawing upon Becker's (1967, 1970) classic question 'Whose side are we on?' That paper is not routinely cited, although it addresses concerns fundamental to educational researchers. Its core concerns are still highly relevant, although a contemporary scholar may find its unproblematic treatment of the researcher a little perplexing. Atkinson, Coffey and Delamont (2003) explore how that paper should be read in a new century. For our purposes here, the word to be emphasized is 'we'. Too often the ethnographer has been a straight, highly educated middle-class white or Jewish man from the USA. With few exceptions the research has been done from that standpoint. Work by gay and lesbian authors, by women and by non-whites has been less common, and, once done, less widely known. The work from other countries that does get known in the USA also tends to be by straight white men. For example, the two books by British ethnographers regularly cited in America are Lacey (1970) and Willis (1977), when, for example, Cecile Wright's (1986) work, from the standpoint of an African-Caribbean woman, provides a far more useful comparator for American writers. The handbook edited by Denzin,

Lincoln and Smith (2008) focused on critical and indigenous methods and could provide fresh approaches for future ethnographers.

### 4.   Study Unusual Schools, or 'Other' Actors

The vast majority of educational ethnographies focus on pupils aged between 6 and 18 in state schools. Researchers rarely focus on schools for those with physical or mental disabilities; on the expensive schools that educate the children of the elite; on rural schools rather than urban and suburban ones. The few studies in religious schools, for Jews, Catholics, evangelicals or Muslims are not used for contrastive purposes as they should be. In the UK there are Welsh and Gaelic medium schools yet the very existence of these is not known by most ethnographers and there are no ethnographic monographs on them, nor are there scholarly evidence-based comparisons of everyday life inside them and in English medium schools. Educational ethnography would be far better if the research on the unusual, exceptional studies were systematically drawn upon to provide contrasts that force the research in the normal school to think about it in novel ways. An alternative way to achieve that critical distance is to focus on non-teacher actors in the setting. Ursula Casanova's (1991) ethnography focused on secretaries in Arizona elementary schools is a (rare) example of such a study.

### 5.   Education Outside 'Education'

Many settings outside formal schooling and universities are the location for teaching and learning. The research on that teaching and learning rarely crosses into the mainstream of educational research, and many settings have hardly been studied at all.

## ABOUT THE VOLUME

Both traditions and the five strategies to fight familiarity have been deliberately showcased in this handbook. The authors have been chosen to demonstrate why qualitative educational research needs to make the familiar strange. A range of disciplines, data collection methods, analytic techniques, and a set of reflections on the ways in which representations can be made. Additionally there are chapters on the ways in which qualitative methods have been used in different spheres and sections of formal and informal education. Overall the volume showcases the best that qualitative educational researchers have produced by leaving Damascus.

The volume opens with chapters focused on disciplinary traditions in qualitative educational research, not only sociology and anthropology but also sociolinguistics, social psychology and history. Then there are chapters on three more recent approaches to qualitative research, which are more like standpoints than traditional disciplines (7–9). I had intended to include a chapter on Critical Race Theory, but although I commissioned it twice, neither the original author, nor the replacement team, were able to deliver it. Part 2 contains overviews of the qualitative educational research done outwith schools (10–16) from cyberspace to medical school, from student dorms to apprenticeship. Part 3 focuses on data collection methods, and Part 4 on analysis and representational strategies. There is no section on schools, because so much educational research is de facto about schools, and all the chapters provide ample citations to studies of schooling. The other omission is discussion of ethics, because ethical concerns are present in different ways in all the chapters. The alert reader will notice I have written two chapters: this was due to the original author of one of them withdrawing too late to get it recommissioned.

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