

An Analysis

What can we learn from Marné's piece? I am sure you noticed dimensions of her experience that related to some of what you are already doing in your practice. Does it appear that she is super human? Or could you imagine keeping a journal of thoughts and experiences in your classroom and thinking about what you had written using tools such as Spradley's analysis procedures or others?

Let's look more closely at what this high school teacher was doing when she kept her journal. She did not write descriptions of everything that happened every day. She sometimes wrote only one or two observations about one student. At times, she wrote more; but her focus was often on the anomalies, the perplexing questions, the concerns she had. So, it is not necessary to take 'exhaustive' notes that capture the entire experience for all participants. That would be impossible even if you didn't have your educator role to worry about. Everyone filters what they are seeing and hearing, what they are thinking about their experience, the roles they are willing to play in a given social situation, what they are willing to share with others. Filtration of experience into your record is a given; how you filter relates back to the assumptions you make about your inquiry purposes and possibilities which are discussed in Chapter Two. Your major obligation to yourself as inquirer, as well as to your potential audiences, is to be as clear as possible about your assumptions and your filtration processes. You need to reveal yourself as inquirer through your writing. Marné does this throughout her paper and the list of assumptions she discovered she was making while analyzing her journal makes many of these assumptions explicit.

What about the quality of Marné's journal and subsequent analytic field notes? She uses some concrete language, quotations from students, and details, which make the scenes she is describing rich and realistic for the reader. She does this better in her later writing, indicating that she has improved with practice and increased attention to including specifics in her accounts that will not only communicate better with readers but will remind her more powerfully of her own experiences when she returns to the journals in later years.

Marné's writing contains descriptions of some of what she saw and heard and experienced, as well as her thoughts, feelings, and reflections on those experiences. She is present in the accounts but does not obliterate the others by only presenting her views on what was going on. The reader can almost imagine being with the people Marné describes, seeing and hearing what she saw and heard in addition to reading what she thought about during her participation in these scenes. She does not often describe the physical settings and contexts associated with the people and activities she relates. That would be a helpful addition at times but is not always necessary.

Marné summarizes some conclusions she made about her experience but does so in a context of describing how she conducted her inquiry. She leaves an 'audit trail' of her activities while being a teacher-researcher that allows the reader to independently assess her filtration processes, her sampling, relationship building, question asking, analysis, synthesis, and information collection strategies, her thinking, her blind spots, and her biases. She is not trying to hide anything behind a method. It is clear to the reader that she was simply learning all she could from the experiences she was having with students in several classrooms.



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