

Book Review

Frank, Carolyn (1999) Ethnographic Eyes: A Teacher's Guide to Classroom Observation. Portsmouth, New Hampshire; Heinemann.

by Cathy Compton Lilly

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What might it mean for teachers to have "ethnographic eyes? Ethnography is generally defined as the study of culture. With teachers' eyes and attention focused on the cultures they encounter and help to create, teachers may find themselves learning about their students and rethinking their assumptions about teaching. Becoming an ethnographer provides teachers with an opportunity not only to learn the practices and procedures of teaching, but also to observe and make sense of their classroom observations and experiences.

Ethnographic Eyes by Carolyn Frank is filled with suggestions and practices designed to help teachers become ethnographers of the classrooms and communities in which they teach. While focused primarily on the experiences of a cohort of student teachers, this book offers all teachers practices that they can use in their own classrooms to better understand the culture of their classroom, school and community.

Frank, a university supervisor working with nine student teachers, explores the issues and understandings student teachers confront and construct as they begin to apply an ethnographic perspective to their student teaching experiences. As Frank writes, I believed that an ethnographic perspective was going to help these nine teachers observe classrooms more effectively without making quick, critical evaluations or "leaps to judgment."

Frank recommends the use of ethnographic procedures to enable student teachers to develop an understanding of their students' lives outside of school and to gain access to the hidden rules and expectations of the classroom. She explains that when student teachers enter the classroom mid-year it is often difficult for them to understand procedures and practices that have been established over the the course of several months.

Ethnographic Eyes features descriptions of procedures that teachers and student teachers can utilize to gain understandings. Student teachers are expected to create a neighborhood map of the communities in which their students live. Student teachers walk or drive to the homes of each of their students and document their trips with photographs and fieldnotes. Student teachers also create a matrix of questions to interview the teachers they work with. Answers to these questions help preservice teachers to understand the types of decisions teachers make and the factors they consider when making those decisions. Frank's students also create ethnographic case studies by following three students over the course of their student teaching experience. These case studies are used by the student teachers to learn about child-centered classrooms, provide opportunities

to collect data on particular children, and are the basis for instructional actions that are appropriate for individual students.

Ethnographic Eyes offers a model of what student teaching could be, yet it also presents possibilities for teachers and groups of teachers who want to glimpse what happens beyond the surface of their classroom routines. *Ethnographic Eyes* will provide all teachers with practices that they can use to understand more about their students, the classroom culture, and the experiences students bring to the classroom.