CASE STUDY AS A BASIS FOR RESEARCH
IN A THEORETICAL CONTEMPORARY HISTORY OF EDUCATION

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Educational Research and Educational Theory

I want to set out here in interim form some considerations occupying me during work on an SSRC personal research grant for the study of qualitative and quantitative research methods in research in curriculum and teaching. I shall here be concerned in the main with the qualitative aspect of one method of approaching the study of schools in action, the case study, which seems to merit close attention because it is the classic instrument of generalization in qualitative studies, cases being instances drawn from classes.

Specifically, I shall explore the prospects of developing grounded educational theory within the framework of a contemporary history of education founded upon case study. I shall not be greatly concerned here with the problems of fieldwork.

I do not expect on this occasion to make explicit the link with my earlier argument for curriculum as research (towards a theory of practice) rather than as development (towards atheoretical practice). But the case study of schools is the prime instrument for documenting curricular realities, and being interested in research rather than in evaluation, I am concerned to emancipate case study approaches from the new wave evaluators. They have made a worthwhile contribution to the field but I am sceptical about the prospect of further progress within the rather narrow framework of their concerns. Broadly, I agree with most - though not all - of the criticisms of the new evaluation advanced
by Carl Parsons,\(^{(5)}\) and I feel that case-study work in education is threatened by ideological distortion in so far as it ministers to "the guidance of educational decision-making with regard to a specified programme".\(^{(6)}\) There is, no doubt, a place for evaluation studies, but in exempting itself from generalization and cumulation, evaluation sets itself lower aims and standards than does research.\(^{(7)}\)

The essence of educational research is the development through theorizing of the capacity to reflect about and thereby to improve practice. Theory should support theorizing, accrue from it, and be in some sense testable in practice. Theory within the positivist tradition, which consists of predictive generalizations, is a constituent of educational theory but is not characteristic of educational theory which is generally phenomenological in the sense of being founded upon the experience of educational process rather than positivist in the sense of resting upon the observation of educational behaviour. Behaviour is documented as the correlate of experience.\(^{(8)}\)

The idea of educational theory is unfashionable. Most research in education which is theoretically productive feeds psychological, sociological, philosophical or anthropological theory. Such theory exists primarily to guide and to sustain discussion of research in these disciplines. In relation to it the teacher or other educational actor is a lay person, not an expert professional. Educational theory may appropriately draw on the so-called "contributory disciplines", but their contribution is piecemeal within a theory whose integrative principle is to provide understanding in support of educational action.

Such a theory must be parsimonious of technical terms and testable by the experience of educational practice.

The parsimony of technical terms derives from the need to ensure that the theory is accessible as a public currency of discourse among those teachers disposed to theorize. So far as possible technical terms in educational theory should be definable in relation to the process
of education rather than the process of research. Nor should terms be used to signal affinities with traditions of research and scholarship unless there is confidence that theoretically inclined teachers are likely to be able usefully to interpret the signal. At the same time educational research cannot rely on the refinement of teachers' distinctions in their working vocabulary. I believe this was an error in the Ford Teaching Project, an important essay in teacher-based research which falls within the general value stance adopted here.

In aspiring to grounded theory I am favouring theory generated in the attempt to understand educational situations and acts, thus theory closely interacting with data but not claiming to be established or fully elaborated by experiment nor to provide reliable predictive generalizations linking actions to their effects in the face of complex variable interactions in multivariate situations. Such theory is useless to the practitioner unless he can subject it to situational verification, that is, test it in the situation in which he currently finds himself. But given the ethics of the situation, the teacher can test theory only by taking educational action, that is, action which can be justified in educational rather than experimental terms so that he could conscientiously take it without experimental intent.

**History and the Understanding of Action in Context**

In the face of these desiderata I am going to argue the relevance of historical study as supplying guidelines for qualitative research in education, instanced here by the case study. My view of history as capable of underpinning a practical research tradition such as we are seeking looks unconventional, but I hope to show that it is not in conflict with the practice of historians, and that it can contribute, as history does, to the development of practical understanding.

Understanding appears to me to be a concept involving two kinds of related claim, a personal one and a public one. To say "I understand" is to negate two propositions at the same time: the first, "I do not understand",
the second, "I misunderstand". When we oppose understanding to not understanding, we are reporting our experience. We are saying that we are, or are not, puzzled. When we oppose understanding to misunderstanding, we recognize that there are criteria by which the interpretation which supports our personal claim to understanding can be assessed. In short we are concerned with interpretations and critiques of interpretations.

The scientific critique of understanding is traditionally successful prediction of the outcomes of specified acts or events by reference to general laws or propositions. Such prediction is not based on the judgement of unfolding situations as a whole but upon an analysis of factors in the situation and the prediction of an outcome. The scientist does not weigh up: he weighs. His procedure is pre-ordinate not responsive. (12)

Another way to put this is to say that science appeals to intelligence, but not to common sense and experience. Consequently, it often does not seem to help us to improve common sense in the light of experience. This is the central task of theory applied to human action, and hence of educational theory.

A common sense approach to understanding action in the educational process goes, I think, something like this. We seek to interpret in the light of our experience which provides both explicit and tacit knowledge (13) the situations in which we have to act as they unfold. We seek to improve our interpretations by discussion with others and to check them in action through our experience of surprise. (14) This surprise is not experienced because of the negation of predictions based upon general laws but because of either the negation of predictions based upon diagnostic judgements or the experienced difficulty of making those judgements. (15) Analogies can be found in the conduct of games such as tennis or chess which provide structures which simplify the process. The responsive diagnostic predictions which interplay with action may be called anticipations. Surprise in a phenomenology of understanding is equivalent to falsification in scientific theory.
I am concerned here with how we can improve the professional
common sense understanding of the educator which supports anticipations
through diagnostics, - in short with the improvement of judgement.
I believe actors in a variety of human situations have traditionally
used history to improve their judgement, and that this potential of the
historical approach can be sharpened in a theoretical contemporary
history. (By "theoretical" here I mean comparative rather than narrative.)
Such a style of history can, I expect, be applied to a wide range of
educational situations. Here, I shall explore it in relation to the
case study of schools.

**History as the Discussion of Accessible Evidence**

The first characteristic of history which I want to cite is the
appeal to publicly available evidence. Historical work properly executed
quotes or refers to sources which are accessible on the same terms to
the reader as to the writer. They may be readily available printed
sources or manuscripts accessible only in one place or in microform,
but the reader can, if he will take the trouble, have recourse to them.
History is in one of its aspects the public discussion of accessible
evidence aimed at drawing the boundaries of the range of reasonable
interpretation. This accessibility of evidence to critical appraisal
is as crucial for history as replicability is for chemistry. The power
of the method depends upon some readers (with special interests in the area)
familiarizing themselves with the sources and entering into critical
discussion with the writer. Then there are two appeals made by both
discussers: to the evidence and to the informed reader who brings to
his assessment of the discussion a critical experience - of schools as
institutions, of how people act in committees, and so forth.

I want to propose the ideal that no qualitatively based theorizing
in education should be regarded as acceptable unless its argument stands
or falls on the interpretation of accessible and well-cited sources.
History and Generalization

I find it surprising that so much historiography still concentrates on narrative history, still adopts the stance that the historian does not generalise and is concerned with the unique. There is a sense in which history is resistant to generalization: it cannot be event-free. Because it is essentially concerned with human action, it cannot accept within its frame of reference causal theories which override the intervention of human action, such as for example theories of organic or mechanical development of society. Such theories do, of course, exist and are about "the march of time", but they lie outside history, because they elude its methods.

The precursor of modern event-free analysis is Darwinism, but the mainstream traditions of all the social sciences, including pre-history and archaeology, have been event-free, though not without critical reaction within the sciences themselves. The event-free sciences treat time as a process variable, not as a locational dimension for events. Hence in event-free sciences time per se is taken to bring changes. Such sciences encounter the problem of handling "the course of events" by turning it into "social change". I am arguing for an educational theory which accepts education as an eventful process.

Only such a theory can adequately inform educational (as opposed to policy) action. For the fact is that events at the level of school and classroom move so rapidly that the structure of variables changes from moment to moment. Theories of action where "other things being equal" means "the world being taken as event-free" will not adequately serve such day-to-day or moment-to-moment action situations as we face in education. They can best inform decisions subject to debate: they fall down when called upon in a context where action needs to be momently responsive to events.

History, because it accepts the centrality of eventfulness in human action, faces an alternative problem, that of finding an adequate
way of dealing with what might be termed the contextual inertia within which events are embedded. It is here that history generalizes and becomes theoretical. It is, as it were, the story of action within a theory of context. If we focus on the action, we may find ourselves taking the position of "learning the lessons of history". This is all very well in its way, but it is not my present concern, which is learning through the application of an historical research approach. Can historical methods applied to education supply us with contextual understanding such as can help us to act better the story of our acts? When a good historical novelist researches for his work, he masters historical context in order that he shall understand how his characters should act. Can a teacher, following the same strategy, use historical method to study his present situation, thereby helping him to plot the better his own educational adventure? This is to ask of history an authenticated context for hypothetical actions.

In the face of a possible objection that history is about an irrecoverable and unrepeatable past, I propose now to attempt to suggest how the approach of historians may be used to study an "historical present": that is, our own period.

Let me draw attention to a particular style of study undertaken by historians from which we can, I believe, develop this possibility. It might be characterized as a survey within a period, and it is, I suppose, a specialized development from Macaulay's famous chapter surveying the state of England in 1685. In the form in which I wish to consider them, such 'survey' studies are commonly defined by the intersection of a conceptual boundary and a bounded time, generally called in history "a period".

Common conceptual boundaries are: a way of life as in English Wayfaring Life in the Middle Ages, Church Life in England in the Thirteenth Century, The Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century, Home Life under the Stuarts; or an institution as in English Monasteries and their Patrons in the Thirteenth Century, English, Scottish and Irish
Joint-Stock Companies to 1720, The Victorian Country House. In education
The Teaching and Cultivation of the French Language during Tudor and
Stuart Times by Kathleen Lambley approximates the first type, while
A.R.M. Stone's English Grammar Schools in the reign of Queen Elizabeth
falls into the second. (19)

Both types of study, and variants of each, are relevant to the
contemporary study of education. The institutional case study is the
more relevant for comparison with the case study of schools, which is
the concern of this paper.

A good subject for our analysis is Girouard's The Victorian
Country House. The topic/period intersection is made quite explicit:

The dates 1840-90 were chosen to follow on Christopher Hussey's
Late Georgian volume, and allow for a concluding 1890-1940
volume — after which country house architecture, as a coherent
tradition, virtually ceased to exist. 1890 seemed a
convenient date at which to make a break; by then the
country house work of Shaw, Webb, and Nesfield was virtually
completed, and the generation of Lutyens, Blomfield, Lethaby,
Baker, Stokes, and Newton was just beginning to get under way. (vii)

The choice of period boundary is "convenient" rather than compelling
(though some historians go to such pains to justify their period
boundaries as to give them a greater apparent status than they can
logically bear). Some period boundaries would do violence to the
unity of the survey, but a range would be acceptable so that there is
real choice, which needs to be justified in terms of the coherence
achieved in the handling.

Similarly explicit is the topic boundary:

The book deals, as did the earlier ones in the series,
with country houses rather than houses in the country, that
is to say with houses built as the centres of sizeable
country estates, with all their appurtenances of parks,
lodge gates and tenantry. It excludes, accordingly, all
Victorian vicarages and all the innumerable houses, in
the Home Counties and elsewhere, built for prosperous
Victorian middle-class clients, who liked the amenities
of country life but were not prepared to set up as full-scale gentry. These more modest houses form a coherent architectural group . . .

Again, it is the potential for coherence and the development of interpretation which governs decision as to boundary.

Girouard's boundary intersection selects "500 country houses either built or remodelled between 1835 and 1889", a sample which can be readily handled. There is no example falling into his category which has escaped his attention.

It is quite clear that Girouard is generalizing. Broadly, the structure of this generalization is to establish a typology within a bounded area of variation and then to relate the types to one another both in terms of the logic of their characteristics and in terms of their position in a developmental sequence (early or late). There is a picture whose parts are in relationship but it is, furthermore, a moving picture within the time span of the period, there being early and late examples. Change is not, however, ascribed to organic development (not event-free) but is attributed to events. Some of these events, like the invention of improved water-closets or fire-proof construction, affect many cases; some, like the meeting and negotiation of architect and commissioning client, may affect one. However, account is also taken of that pattern of indistinguishable events which taken together as a communication or interaction network are characterized as a tradition (ie a culture). Within a tradition "influence" is commonplace. There is diffusion of ideas: there may be dissemination. (20)

This type of history, which is concerned with generalization, provides a basis for tentative action alertly held as hypothetical. It provides me, as a reader, with the data on which I could act with some understanding of the situation a role in an English country house or plot such action in a novel in that setting. For the most part it does this in common language with a parsimony of technical terms.
It can do this because of its concentration of concern in its substantive field and its period: it is not concerned to generalize about architecture or about life, only about life and architecture within its stated boundaries. In short it does not aspire to general laws independent of time and setting.

Application to Education

So long as we are concerned with education as a substantive area of action we are likely to be able to develop on a like basis an educational theory which is parsimonious of technical language other than that used by professional educators. Indeed, we may well be able to translate technical terms in sociology, psychology, anthropology and philosophy into this action language with no loss except of the signal of their position within their own disciplines.

First, we must recognise that all study of education is either out of time (as are the physical sciences) or it is study of the past. There is no study of the true present. If we opt against the attempt to base educational theory on timeless laws, we opt for a study of the past, and the method of history becomes a possible approach. But in the case being considered here, we want to study our own period - not the period of our predecessors. (Perhaps we also want to leave a record for our successors.21)

So our intersection will be, say, "the second half of the twentieth century" as period and "the comprehensive school" as topic boundary. Our enterprise, essentially similar to that of Girouard, is to attempt an empirical definition-by-exploration of a generalized term: in our case (for example) comprehensive school, in his case country house.

In order to compare our position with his we must recognise that our present is a point falling within our period of study. The present can only be assimilated by study when it has become past. Likewise, the future is open to our study as a past that is yet
to come. "Historians imagine the past and remember the future."(22) We are, as it were, in the position of a Girouard in 1870 with twenty years of the period of study lying ahead of him. All typologies and interpretations must be held as problematic, not only in the sense that they are hypothetical, but that they are subject to modification by the revelation of the past that is yet to come.

Two parenthetical points are worth making before we go forward. The first is that schools are, on the whole, little documented: our sources are less adequate than many historical sources. The second is that more, rather than less detail, than we commonly find in descriptions of schooling, is required for the development of theory in support of educational action.

We have now reached a point where we can view case studies as sources which will provide a data base for historical rather than predictive generalizations. We have accepted criticisms of the psychologically based tradition of educational research(23) which lead us to Hamilton's aspiration towards "the understanding of educational practice and to the generation and validation of pedagogical (rather than psychological) theory". (24) We have rejected the tradition of evaluation with its political rather than theoretical stance towards educational practice: it stands in relation to theoretical research in educational practice rather where psychometrics stands in relation to psychological theory. However, we have accepted the aspiration to illumination (as a glossing of understanding) and gone on to project an historical approach as the means of bringing educational practice out of its prehistoric age. This historical approach posits a contemporary history of educational practice as the "social science" most appropriate for the documenting of the context of action.

At this point I am picking up and hoping to refine a tradition of social investigation in which the Webbs' work on trades unionism is classic. This tradition is indeed close to
history, and it is one in which theory is grounded but parsimonious. In turning to this British empirical tradition of social study rather than to the American theoretical tradition and in relating the study of society to history rather than to natural science, I am both expressing some scepticism about systematic social theory as it has developed, (25) and aspiring to an educational theory in which the psychologist, sociologist and philosopher are lay figures and the teacher is not. I do not argue that this is the only legitimate approach to educational research, but that it provides an overarching theoretical framework for qualitative studies based upon a tradition rather than upon reaction against a tradition.

There is an historical tradition which can provide an integrating framework of contemporary history within which it is possible by the use of the comparative method to generate grounded theory applicable to, and testable in, action. The units of comparison are cases recognizable by simple and accessible criteria as members of classes and the yield is an understanding of the principles linking classes to properties and of the distribution of properties within the class.

The Problem of Evidence

I want to return now to my earlier argument that accessibility of evidence to public scrutiny is fundamental to history, this being the point where history is sharply distinguished from experimental science, where the evidence is not necessarily in principle open to critical scrutiny, but rather the appeal is to replicability. (26) "Results" are alien to history.

What evidence is desirable in the case study of schools; and how can it be made accessible to critical public scrutiny?

In the study of the past, the evidence has traditionally been written or printed evidence. The criticism of such evidence
is a major discipline of history, classically represented as palaeography and diplomatic, for example. In less technical areas distinctions are drawn between different types of evidence. Some written evidence is, as it were, a by-product of human action.

It is a peculiarity of human, and especially of social action, that it secretes records of facts, not with any view to affording material for the investigator, but as data for the future guidance of the organisms themselves. (27)

At an extreme from this is what I shall provisionally call "testimony": the recording for oneself or others of what are recognized as personal reactions and reflections. The classical forms of "testimony" are diaries and autobiographies or memoirs (28). Although there may be much mention of events, such testimony is essentially a case-study of the self and can be distinguished in principle from "witness" which is a matter of recording observations of events. The two are often intermingled and the questions about the feelings of witnesses which are asked in legal cross-examination are indicative of the fact that testimony can be used as a basis for a critical assessment of subjective distortion of witness. More closely defined and elaborated distinctions can be drawn, though I shall not attempt such an analysis here. The differential properties which define the categories are critical procedures: in this historical context, the evidence falls into a category or sub-category by virtue of the distinctive critical procedures appropriate to it.

In recent history we encounter extensive audio-, and audio-visual sources. In the past, audio-sources were almost entirely confined to music; visual sources to the fine and arguably the useful arts. (29) The principles of criticism of evidence are being extended to take account of the new media. (30)

In contemporary history, as conceived here, the historical phenomena under consideration may - within limits - be scrutinized
as going concerns so that a case study is a study of a case in progress. This involves the gathering of evidence, its historical criticism and its interpretation. Let us first consider the gathering of evidence in the case study of a school, and for the moment exclude from our consideration as evidence any observation by the case student.

There will probably be a good deal of documentary evidence of three main types: records, communication and presentation. The first of these is a by-product of the need to store information: for example, attendance registers, pupil records and minutes of committees. The second is a by-product of the need to communicate within the institution: for example, notices on the notice boards, writing on blackboards, and notes and letters. The third is a self-conscious presentation of the school: brochures, annual reports, and the like.

There is also oral evidence, of which the main types are the process record and the interview. These are not normally available to conventional historians on the same terms as they are available to historians of cases in progress. In a school a process record may be of an educational process (teaching/learning), an administrative process (staff meeting) or of an informal social process (chat in staff room). Since we have excluded from our evidence at this stage any observer, such records as we are considering here will normally be audio-recordings, preferably with transcript.

It is possible that there will be visual records such as architects' plans, photographs or even video-tapes or films. With the exception of photographs taken by a case-worker observer, these can be assimilated to categories of documentary or oral evidence, but they require different critical procedures.

Now, these first-order records constitute a data base which is both incomplete and incoherent.
At this point I return to Stake's notion of "portrayal" (32) and Kemmis's ironical "telling it like it is" (33) which echoes von Ranke's "wie es eigentlich gewesen". (34) There is, of course, as Kemmis recognizes, no doubt that it is impossible satisfactorily to "tell it like it is": the long line of criticism of von Ranke's position makes this plain. A portrayal is an interpretation. But here we face two types of portrayal: how the situation is portrayed by participants and how it is portrayed by a researcher. We seek to gather the first portrayal by interview, the second by some style of personal observation. (35) In both cases the researcher intrudes into the situation, in the first to invite participants to record their observations, in the second to record his own observations.

In each of these cases evidence emerges.

Typically, in the first case (so far at any rate as my own work goes) the evidence comprises audio-tape recordings of interviews with some participants, together with transcripts. My own preference is for this as the basic data of case study. What is it evidence of? Provisionally, I suggest that we are here concerned with evidence about how the school is perceived by those who are participant in it. (36) And if "telling it like it is" can be rendered as "telling like it feels to be in it", that is to say, telling it as it phenomenologically is, then at least some accessible criteria can be brought to bear on the problem of validating the portrayal, since it can be negotiated with the participants so that it may at least be regarded as a representation of what the participants are prepared to concede that it feels like.

Such material as I have just discussed is our primary evidence of what is thought and felt about the social world of the school by those living as participants in it. I am echoing Schutz: "Every social science, including interpretive sociology, therefore, sets as its primary goal the greatest possible clarification of
what is thought about the social world by those living in it." (38) Although the general argument for historically based case study does not hinge upon it, my position is to regard interview as the central data source and to draw on documentary, oral and visual records not evoked by the researcher to illuminate interview data.

Schutz writes of the "clarification of what is thought about the social world by those living in it". Such clarification can be clarification for the researcher or for the participant actor, and since I have adopted the stance that in the applied field of educational research clarification for the actor is of the essence, this is an important point. Let us follow Schutz in his analysis of interpretive clarification:

The interpretive schemes used by the observer in the social world to understand those who are his mere contemporaries are necessarily different from those of the social scientist, however. The indirect observer's knowledge is determined by his own direct experience regardless of whether what he knows is comprehended in Acts of judgement that are positional or neutralizing, explicit or vague, or are merely in the pre-predicative "having" stage of the social world. This is true because of the living intentionality of the Acts (Akte) in which this individual lives. On the other hand the complex of knowledge of the social sciences is based exclusively on explicit positional acts of judgement, on constituted ideal objectifications, that is to say, on conclusions of thought, and never on pre-predicative Acts of laying hold on (in Selbsthabe erlebte Erfassungen) the other person himself. Social science is through and through an explicit knowledge of either mere contemporaries or predecessors; it nowhere refers back to the face to face experience. (39)

The knowledge of social science is the knowledge which is related to the research act. "Science always presupposes the experiences (Erfahrungen) of a whole scientific community, the experiences of others who, like me, with me, and for me, are carrying on scientific work." (40) However, in educational research there are involved educators who are neither social scientists nor
are they lay persons because they exist, within our universe of discourse, in educational acts. Data gathered in educational settings can be utilized to produce science, which "presupposes the experiences of a whole scientific community" and speaks to that community about the relation of knowledge to the scientific act, or it can be utilized to produce educational theory, which presupposes the experiences of a whole educational community and speaks to that community about the relation of knowledge to the educational act. Here we are concerned with the educational community.

But note that the interviewer is not a participant in the school he is studying (though he interacts with it). Qua interviewer, he is a social scientist, not an educator. But his social science theory will be metatheory, that is to say it will be a theory of how to evoke educational theory from the interpretative clarification of "what is thought about the (educational) world by those living in it". He feeds his interpretation back to the participants in that world in terms accessible to them. Since the case study worker should ideally have a social science training, but should contribute to educational theory rather than social science, there is for some an act of abnegation involved.

However, the "participant observer" in the social science traditions which might be broadly called ethnomethodology (covering variants from the Chicago school of field sociology to ethnographic studies by trained anthropologists) generally works within social science both in substantive theory and in metatheory. Thus, to the educational theorist working through the historical case study approach described here, such case students are lay witnesses whose work is to be criticized as a source of evidence, not of theory. The status of social scientific studies as historical evidence remains interestingly problematic, though it must be suspected that the majority of such writers obstruct access to data by theory.
The case of the new wave evaluators may also be interesting. It seems clear that they work with a social science metatheory, but the emphasis on portrayal and presentation probably leads to a building of implicit theory into the picture of the situation publicly offered and it may be possible to tease this theory out. In contrast to the research position taken in the present paper the new wave evaluators have likened their communication to that of journalists or artists. Here we are concerned with theory oriented to practical educational action, and with communicating not to audiences but to educational actors as discussers of theory. (41)

The Interpretation of Evidence

The contrast between the position of the historical and the scientific case study worker will emerge more clearly as we now turn from the gathering of evidence to its interpretation.

Consider the evidence in a case study conducted on the historical principles described above. It is a contribution of the historical framework we have adopted that generalization be founded upon the comparative study of cases and that the data of such a study be accessible to critical scrutiny. The data of the case study are every documentary, oral or visual record together with all interview material (and possibly, though this is questioned here, the case worker's observational records). But what of the problem of bulk? In a recent project in which I have been involved, we accumulated 1,000 hours of audio-tape. This is the primary source, which I shall call the case data; but large accumulations of such data are virtually unmanageable as historical sources serving interpretive discussion. Probably in principle such data should be cleared for open access after a span of years just as government papers are; but it cannot be made publicly available in its entirety immediately by reason of its containing some sensitive material, nor could it be readily assimilated if it were so released.
Hence, an edited primary source is required as the record which is accessible to critical discussion. This I call the case record. The desiderata of a case record I hope to explore in detail elsewhere, and to discuss how they can be met. Acknowledging the problems involved in the suggestion, I propose that the best case record is an organization of documents and transcripts, cut as film is cut, to cover headings which may be those of participants or of recorder so long as we are clearly told which. Because the sources involved are less complete representations of life than film is, it is probably easier to avoid distortion in cutting: the lacunae of what is not represented are apparent. Also, a case record should make no concessions to the reader in terms of interest or communication. It is a condensation of the case data aspiring to the condition that no interpreter requires to appeal behind it to the data to sustain his interpretation. Of course, this criterion cannot be fully met: some case records will be better than others. A case record of a school attempts a portrayal through the organization of data alone, and a portrayal without theoretical aspiration.

The case study is the interpretive and analytic treatment of the case record. It is a secondary source. It should cite and refer to the case record as the historian cites his sources, but need not necessarily reprint the record in full. The comparison might be with the study of, say, a single cathedral: the student will review a great quantity of data and cite sources to support interpretation.

In turn, the general survey - of comprehensive schools in the second half of the twentieth century or of the deputy head or of mixed ability teaching - will rest on the cumulative comparison of case studies in which discrepancies and surprises are pursued back into the case records.
Conclusion

In this paper I tried to consider the nature of an educational theory directed towards the needs of educational actors. Such a theory I characterize as providing understanding of action in context, and I look to history as the traditional means of generating such understanding, noting as I do so the importance for historical work of accessibility of evidence. In this part of the paper I have left paradoxes and problems unresolved because I am merely sketching out ground which I intend to survey and map in later work.

Within the context of this sketched position, I then considered the strategy of generalizing survey in history as a study of context and argued its application to a contemporary history of education which picks up the British empirical tradition of social investigation and associates it with the discussion of accessible evidence which is characteristic of history. Problems of the nature of evidence are discussed and my preference for a phenomenological approach which stresses the experience of participants is noted, though the argument does not rest on this position. The possibility of assimilating studies within the social science tradition by treating them as historical evidence is suggested.

Finally, I distinguish four levels of data organization in descriptive work in a case-study tradition:

1. The Case Data are all the materials assembled by the case worker. These are likely to be too bulky for repeated handling and too sensitive for immediate release. This is the true primary source.

2. The Case Record is a theoretically parsimonious condensation of the material of the case data produced by selective editing without explicit comment (except perhaps about editing dilemmas). This record is
negotiated with the participants in the case, and may be regarded as an edited primary source. It must be publicly accessible, probably through microform.

3. The Case Study is an interpretive discussion of the case resting upon, quoting and citing the case record. It will probably most often be written by the case worker who compiled the record though this is probably not a methodological desideratum. This is a secondary source.

4. The Survey is an attempt to draw together case studies towards a grounded educational theory. The writer of a survey will use secondary sources (ie case studies) appealing behind them to the case record in the face of inconsistencies or problems.

The grounded theory emerging is offered to the educational actor who subjects it to situational verification and elaboration. The signals for theoretical review are surprise in observation of context or being taken by surprise by the actions of others.\(^{(42)}\)

No assertion that this is the only way to conduct qualitative research is intended; but, given the opportunity, I hope to test this approach by attempting to make it work in practice.

February 1977

Submitted to the Journal of Curriculum Studies
References

1. The quantitative approach to case study is also important. It has two aspects: the collection of physical and demographic data and psychometric approaches to the N = 1 design. See, for example, NORDLUND, OLA and RONNBERG, STEN, Reasons for N = 1 designs in educational research, Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research, 20, 2, 1976. 73-83

2. That cases are instances of classes is observed by evaluators, but their interest is by definition concentrated upon the case they are commissioned to evaluate.


7. This is not to question the work of high quality and the contribution made to qualitative research from within the constraints of evaluation by such workers as Bob Stake, Barry MacDonald, David Hamilton, Malcolm Parlett, Rob Walker, and Stephen Kemmis; all of these colleagues whose productive conversation has helped me towards this paper.


9. The previous footnote may be taken to imply that this paper, being addressed to those interested in the theory of educational research rather than straightforwardly in educational theory, does minimally signal its research affiliations.
10. Ford Teaching Project, booklets and other materials. Norwich: Centre for Applied Research in Education, University of East Anglia, 1975. Now available through John Elliott, Cambridge Institute of Education, Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge. One of the booklets in Unit 1: "Patterns of Teaching" is The Language and Logic of Informal Teaching by JOHN ELLIOTT and CLEM ADELMAN. This gives an account of the evolution of precision of distinctions within the language usage of the group of Ford T teachers. The emerging vocabulary seems to me both idiosyncratic and ensnared by unexamined preconceptions. I conclude that teachers must in the end grapple with public language rather than evolve private language in the working group. The same is true, of course, of educational researchers.

11. The problem of aptitude-treatment interactions intervening in independent/dependent variable relationships has worried Cronbach into seeking a systematic research approach to qualitative data, the concern too of this paper. See CRONBACH, LEE J. Beyond the two disciplines of scientific psychology, American Psychologist, 30, 2, 1975, 116-127.

12. The distinction between preordinate and responsive used here is drawn from STAKE, ROBERT E. Responsive evaluation, Mimeograph 2.6.74.


14. An excellent experimental representation of this process was created by TOM BURNS (Professor of Sociology, University of Edinburgh) who constructed a situation in which a panel of housewives met weekly under video-tape to discuss how to answer an agony column letter while a panel of judges who watched them each week was invited to predict the pattern of response to the next letter, which was disclosed to the judges in advance.

15. The first case is misunderstanding, the second not understanding.

16. I mean, for example, not simply the study of schools but of classrooms, or deputy heads, or conferences or staff meetings.


20. Dissemination is intended here to imply planned diffusion. The association with "tradition" would lead to cultural history, cp. RUDDUCK, JEAN Dissemination as the encounter of cultures, Research Intelligence, 1977 and The study of dissemination as "acculturation research" SSRC Newsletter No. 32, October 1976, 7-10

21. The implication is that there are common criteria for historical sources in contemporary history and conventional history. That which would be of most use to the future historian would also be most use to the contemporary.


24. HAMILTON, DAVID Educational research and the shadows of Francis Galton and Ronald Fisher, to appear in a reader on educational research edited by W.B. DOCKRELL and D. HAMILTON to be published by Hodder and Stoughton

26. However, inaccessibility of data leads to problems in science, as the current discussion of CYRIL BURT shows. BARRY MACDONALD also draws my attention to ARTHUR KOESTLER'S *Case of the Midwife Toad*.

27. WEBB, SIDNEY and WEBB, BEATRICE *Industrial Democracy*, London: Longmans, Green & Co. 1897. p. xi

28. In the terms used later in this article autobiographies are often *case studies* based on diaries as *case records*.

29. The evidence of material culture in the narrow sense is not our concern here; rather we are concerned with symbolic objects with meaning. In the useful arts some objects are expressive in some degree.

30. The Watergate investigation is the classic example. The British National Film School at Beaconsfield is greatly concerned with documentary film as interpretation and with the interpretation of documentary film.


32. STAKE, ROBERT E. An approach to the evaluation of instructional programs (Program portrayal vs analysis), a paper delivered at the AERA Annual Meeting in Chicago, 4 April 1972.

33. KEMMIS, STEPHEN, Telling it like it is: the problem of making a portrayal of an educational program. To appear in LOUIS J. RUBIN (editor) *Handbook of Curriculum*, Boston, Mass: Allyn and Bacon.

34. VON RANKE, LEOPOLD from Preface to *Histories of the Latin and Germanic Nations from 1494-1514*, accessible in translation in FRITZ STERN (Editor) *The Varieties of History From Voltaire to the Present*, London: Macmillan 1956, 55-58. p. 57. von RANKE was in fact renouncing moral judgement for descriptive history rather than asserting the possibility of objectivity against subjective but informed judgement. "To history has been assigned the office of judging the past, of instructing the present for the benefit of future ages. To such high offices this work does not aspire: it wants only to show what actually happened (wie es eigentlich gewesen)". The position is remarkably close to the illuminative evaluators who aspire not to judge but to invite judgement.
35. The Webbs speak of personal observation: I avoid participant observation as a confusing term. It would be helpful if it were restricted either to those who accept full responsibility for a non-observational role integral to the process being observed or, even more rigorously, to those who do not expect to escape from that role after reporting their observation.

36. Not as participant observers but as reflective participants, some element in whose reflection is evoked by the interview.

37. BARRY MACDONALD'S work on problems of negotiating the portrayal, partly about the possession of data, is also a style of phenomenological verification.

38. SCHUTZ, ALFRED The Phenomenology of the Social World London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1972 (German 1932) p. 222

39. IBID. p. 223

40. IBID. p. 221 NB In this translation: Act = Akt and act = Handlung

41. This is the aspiration pursued in the Humanities Curriculum Project, the Programme on Problems and Effects of Teaching about Race Relations and the Project on Problems Disseminating Action Research as well as in the Ford Teaching Project (John Elliott and Clem Adelman), the Small Group Teaching Project (Jean Rudduck) and Classroom Practice: the observations and perceptions of Teachers, Head Teachers and LEA Advisors (Rob Walker)

42. The OED articles on surprise (sb and v) are well worth reading as background to the use of the term here.