

the translations of texts. Other topics include the planning of interviews, kinds of interview formats (we are told how to ask "grand tour" questions about space, time, actors, and evaluation), the preparation of questionnaires, and the use of new technologies (e.g., microcomputers and video equipment).

Volume 2 is dedicated to the second half of the fieldwork experience. Part I contains eight chapters dealing with the organization of data and ethnoscientific analysis. Topics include data base management (we are told how to record field notes and how to index materials), structural analysis (we are exposed to the fundamentals of taxonomic and componential analysis), plans and decisions (we are told how to construct decision tables and trees, other semantic domains (we are briefly told how to study values, ethical systems and causality), text analysis, and statistics. Part II contains two chapters describing the planning and writing of ethnographic reports. Part III presents 28 minimum standards for ethnography. Here we are told, for example, to maintain our sense of cultural relativism, to develop a detailed autobiography, to learn the native language of those under study, to improve our communication skills, and so on.

*Systematic Fieldwork* is probably not intended to be read straight through. With its mix of typologies, algorithms, and esotericism, this work is something of a cross between a catalogue, a "how to" manual, and a technical primer. My guess is that Werner and Schoepfle would have researchers consult these volumes to obtain topical guidance intermittently throughout field research. Given the wide range of issues identified in these books, the authors cannot be faulted for abbreviated and sometimes uneven coverage. The best audience for the Werner-Schoepfle system for ethnography is composed of ethnoscientists who inventory non-Western and unwritten languages in the pursuit of knowledge.

Marc L. Miller  
University of Washington

**Pathways From Heroin Addiction: Recovery Without Treatment.** Patrick Biernacki. Temple University Press, 1986. Pp. xvi; 245. \$24.95, cloth.

"Once an addict always an addict" is an aphorism long taken as revealed truth by the legions who have studied, treated, or controlled opiate addicts, and, indeed, by addicts themselves. The pharmacological determinism implicit in this view has held sway across all treatment modalities and spheres of social policy for most of the twentieth century. The belief is based on a surfeit of statistical studies showing huge relapse rates among treated addicts. Yet, as this insightful new study shows, our vision of the seemingly intractable opiate addiction problem has been unnecessarily constricted by rigid assumptions about what addiction is, and by the oversampling of easy-to-find treated addicts.

Dr. Biernacki began by asking the unasked: What if there were large numbers of untreated addicts out there who had managed to quit on their own,

Vol. 11, No. 1+2  
1988

without treatment? What might be learned about addiction and its cessation from such people? He and his colleague, Dan Waldorf, proposed such a study to the National Institute on Drug Abuse and got the necessary funding. They used stratified chain-referral or snowball sampling techniques to locate (with surprising ease) over 100 bona fide addicts who had undergone "natural recovery" and had been abstinent for at least two years (the average was 5 years). In the course of three-hour life history interviews these respondents showed that addiction is not merely physical or pharmacological but has critical social and psychological components; that immersion into the junkie world is variable; that runs of addiction are not at all uniform; and that the prospects for self-initiated recovery are more and better than we have been led to believe.

This is not to say that recovery, with or without treatment, is easy. Yet some of Biernacki's addicts had just "drifted" away from their addiction, while many others made either gradual or crisis-induced decisions to quit. Most had never accepted the "once an addict" axiom and thus had never surrendered the belief that they *could* quit. Such beliefs are important in the cessation process because they can support (or undermine) addicts' resolve and their capacities for controlling cravings.

The process of natural recovery proceeds from resolve to "geographic cures"—literally (or symbolically) moving away from the addict world toward new involvements and identities. Once they decide what they do not want to be, the problem of how to fill the void arises. Most of these subjects immersed themselves into more conventional pursuits—political, religious, familial or occupational. This not only pushed them further away from the addict lifestyle but gave them an increasing stake in conventional roles. Such changes, Biernacki shows, provide abstaining addicts with "wedges" against going back.

Even after resolving to quit, moving away, severing links to user-dealer associates in the world of temptation, and building links to conventional worlds, the battle is not over. Craving continues, sometimes for years after quitting. On this subject, Biernacki's content analysis is particularly instructive. He shows that such cravings can be triggered by the slightest of cues (e.g., the smell of a burnt match reminded some addicts of how they used to "cook" heroin with matches before injecting it). In a world full of such cues, it is not easy to overcome cravings. This is part of the kernel of truth in the lore about always being an addict. Nonetheless, these addicts recount various strategies for managing their cravings, all of which entail the supplanting of thoughts about drugs with thoughts about new activities, and a reinterpretation of the triggered feeling states that places them in a negative context.

At least as difficult as craving is the stigma placed upon addicts by others. This labeling, also rooted in the assumption that "once an addict, always an addict," is an impediment to becoming and remaining "ordinary." Complete recovery entails more than just quitting and putting distance between the self and the drug world. It entails the transformation of identity. Biernacki distinguishes three types of identity transformation: the adoption of an emergent or wholly new identity; the process of "identity reverting" or taking out of dry-dock some unspoiled, conventional identity that had been held in abeyance during addiction; and extending an identity that had persisted throughout addiction (e.g., worker, parent).

The model is rooted in the looking-glass self of the symbolic interactionist tradition. If by successfully performing conventional roles former addicts can get significant others to reduce stigma and behave toward them in ways that accept their new, nonaddict identity, then they too can come to embrace more fully their new identities. Indeed, just as the process of becoming an addict builds upon itself until many other options and identities are foreclosed, so too the process of natural recovery can gain momentum. Success at work and the accumulation of ordinary material possessions confirm conventionality for others; even drug experiences—whether refusing offers of drugs or accepting them and having a negative experience—can confirm for the former addict his or her new, nonaddict self.

This book will be of interest to all students of addiction, treatment practitioners, policy makers, and, because it is so readable, addicts and their loved ones. Of course, many treatment professionals will scream heresy when they first encounter Biernacki's arguments. They shouldn't. The processes of natural recovery both add to and parallel those of therapeutic recovery, and traditional treatment programs would do well to build upon the insights of those, heretofore hidden, addicts who have won the struggle on their own. Because of the author's emphasis on the need for "identity resources," he might have done more to explain how these are distributed across society. One suspects, for example, that such resources are inversely related to social class. Biernacki shows very clearly that some have an easier time of it than others, and he has at least posed in a new way the very intriguing question of how to provide addicts of various sorts with the identity resources they need to make the change. However, this may require another book, and what he set out to do in this one—provide an analytic description of the processes of natural recovery—he has done very well. His work makes a compelling case for the need to study comparatively how people hooked on everything from chocolates to chewing tobacco manage to quit by themselves.

For this reader, the book was valuable in two additional respects. First, it is a showcase for qualitative methods. Naturally recovered addicts are invisible not only in all the normal ways criminalized deviants must be, but also in that they do not show up in treatment populations. Thus Biernacki was forced to use a qualitative approach. He was not, however, forced to use it to such good advantage. By letting former addicts "thickly" describe their lives in their own vocabularies and then culling from these accounts *their* "theories" of what they had experienced, Biernacki lays bare the contingent heterogeneity of careers where once we had only a stereotyped image of inevitable downfall. Other methods less alive to learning from research subjects and more prone to *a priori* categorization than to grounded theory or emergent concepts, might not have discovered that natural recovery even existed, to say nothing of how it seems to work.

There is a second, related contribution here that is substantive. In their zeal to ensure continued abstinence, most treatment programs have imported from Alcoholics Anonymous the notion that only by admitting that they are powerless before their drug and thereby internalizing the identity of the hopeless addict can addicts begin to overcome their addiction. In light of Biernacki's

discoveries, this approach seems a double-edged sword. Reifying the addict identity in the course of cure may, ironically, rob addicts of crucial identity resources and thus inhibit the very transformation of self needed for recovery. If knowledge of natural recovery can now be made part of both scientific and drug lore, perhaps more addicts will find the resolve and resources needed to defy the potentially self-fulfilling prophecy, "once an addict, always an addict."

**Craig Reinarnan**

*Northeastern University*