

Accessing the Backstage: Ethnographic Research Methods in Resistance Studies¹

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Abstract

This article aims to critically discuss particular advantages, disadvantages and challenges concerning ethnographic research within Resistance Studies. By so doing, four methodological aspects of ethnography will be scrutinized in depth. These are epistemological assumptions referred to as the ethnographic stance, the practice of doing participant observation, the emic-etic distinction, and the emphasis on thick description. Fusing James Scott's notion of hidden resistance with Erving Goffman distinction between the frontstage and backstage of self-presentation, this article suggests that ethnographic research methods could be particularly useful to access backstage spheres, and thereby a useful tool for observing hidden resistance practices. As hidden resistance draws its strength from the virtue of being disguised, ethnographic resistance studies imply ethical challenges particular to Resistance Studies. This is especially relevant in research contexts characterized by high levels of violence and repression.

Introduction

Several useful works are available on research methods and methodologies, some of which are particularly relevant for Resistance Studies. Some examples are Linda Smith Tuhiwai's account on decolonizing methodologies (Smith Tuhiwai, 2012), various works on feminist research methods (see e.g. Ackerly, B. and True, 2010; Laliberté & Schurr, 2016; Reinhartz &

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