

Book Review - Globe-Trotting in Sandals (Carol V. McKinney)

Globe-Trotting in Sandals: a Field Guide to Cultural Research by Carol McKinney, is a helpful overview of cultural research on the mission field. Written by a PhD missionary anthropologist with experience in Africa, it provides an excellent step by step treatment of how Christian workers should study cultures.

McKinney begins by describing cultural research methods and the ethics of ethnography. She describes including the ethnographic research proposal, the literature review, sponsorships, and practical matters such as health. Published in 2000, some of this material is dated but still useful overall. Her chapter on Beginning Fieldwork is especially valuable to the neophyte. Taking a page from James Spradley, McKinney describes participant observation and includes advice on getting local research assistants and dealing with culture shock.¹ Language learning is vital to all ethnographic research and total immersion is the way to do it.

Practical tips are the charm of this book. McKinney includes the basics about making ethnographic records and discusses possibilities and pitfalls of interviews. Structured interviews such as surveys fill an important need and can be analyzed with statistical methods as summarized in chapter 10. Such quantitative data can help researchers understand the demographics of their study population.² One area not well covered in the books I have thus far reviewed on this topic is the importance of maps; physical, genealogical and even cultural.

¹Carol V. McKinney, *Globe Trotting in Sandals: a Field Guide to Cultural Research* (Dallas, TX: SIL International, 2000), 55.

² *Ibid.*, 127.

The next section of McKinney's book is the most useful. She explains types of kinship and how to chart kinship. Rules for marriage, descent and residence are present in every culture and include who can marry whom, how people get together, what the wedding rites are, where the new couple lives, and how inheritance is handled. Her explanations and lessons on graphing social relationships open up new possibilities of understanding. The methods for collecting cognitive data such as triad tests, pile sorts, and rank order tests have inspired me so much that I want to run out and do a study.³ Oral traditions and music within cultures are pregnant with tantalizing information leading to profound understanding.

People needing to intervene quickly can do a rapid assessment and those embarking on a major project should do a social impact assessment beforehand. McKinney concludes by describing other field methods, but her explanation is not complete enough to make them practical without consulting other sources. The final chapter is on how to complete the project and publish the results.

Overall, *Globe-Trotting in Sandals: a Field Guide to Cultural Research* is a fine book with lots of reasons to turn back to it in the future. I just hope that an updated version will come out very soon.

³ Ibid., 199-200.