

Moderate Participation

Moving up the scale of involvement we come to the style of research described earlier in this chapter. Moderate participation occurs when the ethnographer seeks to maintain a balance between being an insider and an outsider, between participation and observation. Sanders' study of pinball players (1973) is a good example of moderate participation. He entered the scene of a West Coast pool hall as a "loiterer" and "game watcher," two roles that he observed were acceptable in this setting. From the start he kept careful fieldnotes, recording them after returning from a field trip. In time he played the machines, even developing particular preferences as regular players did, but he never achieved the skill or status of a regular.