

■ **TABLE 6.6** Tips for Conducting Fieldwork and Qualitative Observation

1. Make sure all observers are well trained, are good note takers, and know how to fit into diverse situations.
 2. Do background homework on the people and cultural settings to be observed.
 3. Be sensitive to gender, age, and cultural differences between you and the people being observed.
 4. Establish rapport and trust, starting with gatekeepers and informants.
 5. Don't promise anything to anyone in the setting that you cannot or should not deliver.
 6. Be reflexive (i.e., monitor yourself).
 7. Be unobtrusive (i.e., try to fit in and don't stand out).
 8. Remain alert at all times, and pay attention to anything that may be important.
 9. Find an effective way to record what is being observed (i.e., taking field notes or using audio-visual recorders).
 10. Try to corroborate anything important that you see, hear, or learn about.
 11. Conduct opportunistic interviews while you are in the field when possible.
 12. Be empathetic, but also remain neutral to the content of what people say to you.
 13. Make observations in multiple and disparate settings.
 14. Include descriptive detail in your field notes. Get direct quotes when possible. Include your own insights and interpretations when they arise, but keep them separate from the description and verbatims (i.e., quotes).
 15. Observe and record characteristics of the setting and context, interpersonal interactions, significant behaviors, verbal and nonverbal communication, formal and informal interactions, what does *not* happen, power and status hierarchy in the group, and anything else that seems important to you at the time.
 16. Spend sufficient time in the field to collect useful data and to allow corroboration of your findings.
 17. When you leave the field, immediately write up your field notes so that you don't forget what you have seen, heard, and experienced.
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