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Writing the Other, Inscribing the Self

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This research is concerned with fieldnotes as they form the building blocks of ethnography, at the representational intersection of self and other. Using fieldnotes generated by graduate students, we explore their dialectics of revelation and concealment, publicity and privacy, and awareness and unawareness, in the context of disciplinary politics.

KEY WORDS: other; self; fieldnotes.

Fieldnotes, the subject of some recent scholarly interest in sociology (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 1995) and anthropology (Sanjek 1990a) are the means by which fieldworkers come to grips with the other, the data of their ethnographies. Although there is some sentiment for writing ethnography without fieldnotes (see Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 1995), much of the pedagogy of ethnography stresses this task as the foundation of thick description and analytic adequacy. This paper is concerned with fieldnotes as they inscribe the self while writing the other. We bring together the themes of self-reflexivity in ethnographic work—the dialogue of self and other—with that of writing fieldnotes. Since the 1970s with the work of Gusfield (1976) in sociology, and the 1980s with the work of Clifford and Marcus (1986) in anthropology, ethnography has been centrally concerned with the issue of representation. And fieldnotes are the initial moment of representation, when other, in a sense, becomes self.

Fieldnotes, as the bedrock of ethnography, seem, at first glance, to epitomize the "lone wolf" approach to social research. As Sanjek notes, "fieldnotes are written, usually, for an audience of one. . . . they are . . . '*aides-memoires* that

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stimulate the re-creation, the renewal, of things past' " (1990a, p. 92). They may be written "in the field" as the interaction unfolds, or elsewhere, where they are notes "of" but not "in" the field. Fieldnote writing is inscribed as a series of stages, beginning with scratch or jotted notes, progressing to analytic notes, and ending with full-fledged typed, backed-up narrative fieldnotes (Sanjek 1990c, p. 97)—or as degrees of cooked-ness, "never raw" (Clifford 1990, p. 51).

However, fieldnotes may also be read by others (or requested by others) as a part of legal proceedings—unanticipated sharing. Van Maanen (1983, p. 282) describes the 1970 "Blazier incident" of alleged police brutality, in which he successfully protected the contents of his fieldnotes "on the feeble grounds of 'research confidentiality' " while his published papers were read into the record. Another, more recent ethnographic legal case is that of Mario Brajuha, who some years ago was writing his dissertation on the Long Island restaurant in which he was a waiter. A fire that damaged the restaurant led to a request for his notes by detectives. He refused. Several legal battles ensued, culminating in an agreement that he could first edit his fieldnotes for any confidential material, but then had to hand them over to the U.S. Attorney's office (Brajuha and Hallowell 1986). A third legal case, this one involving interviews, did not have such a happy ending: Rik Scarce, another Ph.D. candidate in sociology, was jailed for 159 days in 1993 for refusing to answer questions concerning his research (Scarce 1994).

More planned reading of fieldnotes by others occurs in team field research, and in classes and seminars where ethnographers are trained. Erickson and Stull (1998, p. 5) note that "It is in applied research that ethnographers most often find themselves in teams, usually multidisciplinary ones," including funded evaluation research. These teams are generally hierarchical, with the fieldwork agenda set by the team leader, and the fieldnote takers responsible to that agenda. Fieldnotes are written individually, sometimes about the same event, and teach the old lesson that "each one of us saw, or did not see, different things—and our interpretations of what we did see sometimes differed" (Erickson and Stull 1998, p. 19).

Sharing fieldnotes in seminars also occurs in a hierarchical context, with an instructor leading the seminar and supervising the fieldnotes. Our focus in this paper is on fieldnotes written over several years of seminars on Field Methods (and other seminars) at the University of Kansas, a workshop in which weekly notes are read by the instructor and sometimes by the other students as well. These student fieldnotes and papers represent a wide variety of settings and topics: Archer on a gay bar, Broderick (then an undergraduate in Los Angeles) on CoDependents Anonymous, Collas on a straight-to-gay bar, Dobbs on a residential facility for the elderly, Flores on a Hispanic campus organization (HCO), Futrell (1999) on city commission meetings, Grow on a Hispanic health care organization (HHCO), Hackney and Pereira-Nunez (separately) on Overeaters Anonymous, Karner (Karner and Warren 1995) on a VA hospital psychiatric ward for Vietnam vets, Johnson on a barbershop, Kivett on the stigma of Southern accents and on a group home for delinquent boys, Reilly on team pool playing in a pool hall, and Robinson on a lesbian and bisexual community.

The strategy for the course was—and is—for students to write weekly fieldnotes and make a copy for the instructor; various research experiences were then discussed during the seminar time in the context of the field methods readings. The students were given the traditional, general instruction to "write down everything they saw and heard," while at the same time being told that this was an impossibility. They were informed that they should write down analytic points, or their own thoughts and feelings about the setting, and that these were best set off in some kind of parentheses. Analytic descriptions of the settings were developed, in time-honored realist ethnography fashion, from these fieldnotes.

As Emerson and his colleagues indicate, the stance or general perspective from which fieldnotes are written is shaped, in part, by the "*intended or likely audience*"; "Under most circumstances, a researcher writes fieldnotes immediately for herself as a future reader" (1995, p. 44). They argue that the absence of actual readers "allows the researcher to write in relaxed and shifting styles . . . without worrying (at that point) about consistency or coherence" (ibid.). Since, however, ethnographers often imagine future audiences who will read the publications that are the endpoint of the project, "in writing fieldnotes most ethnographers probably shift between self and professional others as envisioned future audiences" (p. 45). Both Jackson (1990) and Obbo (1990) point out the reluctance of anthropologists to share fieldnotes, Obbo (p. 291) noting that they could be used by others if not copyrighted.

Where fieldnotes are written for actual audiences, we argue, the fieldworker writes the other (the respondents) in the context of an-other (the supervisor); in so doing, she writes herself to the audience of this second other. Our point is echoed by Kleinman, Kopp, and Henderson (1997), who asked their students for "freewriting" thoughts on doing fieldwork, separate from the formal fieldnotes. These freewritings served as one source of self-inscription and communication to the instructor.

THE TWO TENSIONS OF ETHNOGRAPHY

In the dialectic of self and other, setting and discipline, that is ethnography, fieldnotes are the critical point of contact between representations and "reality," moving from unpublished thick description to the embedding of parts of that thick description into published work. The postmodern debate over ethnography as fiction or fact has gone on unabated for several decades; it is a debate to which we have neither the space nor inclination to contribute. In proposing fieldnotes as a source of thick descriptions of settings—yet representations of them also—we side with Gubrium and Holstein's (1997) proposal for a new language of qualitative research, one poised between mirror and metaphor. Within such a new language, the two tensions of ethnography (to borrow a phrase from Gary Alan Fine, 1993) are the tension between thick description of settings and respondents on the one hand, and protection of the identity of settings and respondents on the other; and the tension between revelation and concealment of those aspects of the ethnographer's self which might have relevance for the ethnographic analysis s/he produces.

When "realist tale" (Van Maanen 1988) apprentices are instructed in the writing of fieldnotes, they are immersed in the pedagogy of thick description. Yet the published ethnography must be written so as to protect the identity of those within the setting. Thus, at the moment of inscription in fieldnotes, the other becomes vulnerable. This is the first tension of ethnography: the tension between thickly descriptive representation on the one hand, and protecting the people in the setting on the other. Even where fieldnotes are not read by others (indeed, perhaps more so if they are not), they represent an inscriptional danger for the other.

The novice fieldworker is also told, in contradistinction to the privacies of earlier eras, that it is better to reveal than conceal her own place in, and reactions to, the setting. This way, the reader may come to his own conclusions about the ways in which the research process might have shaped the analysis. In this, the second tension of ethnography, the writer of fieldnotes is encouraged to inscribe not only the setting, but himself. Some of this inscription may be intentional, expressions given, in Goffman's (1959, p. 4) terms; some is not—expressions are given off by fieldnotes even in such details as the use of a particular word processing program. And some of this inscription may be foregone; the ethnographer may intentionally conceal aspects of her research or herself from the reader.

There is a vast literature on the self to which we do not intend to contribute in this essay. Our interest in the place of the self in fieldnotes is limited to its boldest outlines, the arena of purposeful "expressions given," and those "expressions given off" (Goffman 1959, p. 2) that have been brought into awareness. This arena, as we authors and illustrators of this paper have come to see it, is one of the pedagogical self, and the personal self—the self who is a member of this graduate seminar in this graduate program in this discipline, and the self which is other things than these.

When students write fieldnotes for instructors, they write as the apprentice ethnographer seeking to do well in a seminar; many of the readings in Sanjek (1990a) allude to this pedagogically inscribed self. There is the "personal self," with ways of being in the world, habits, friends, families, interests, and disinterests. Since students often "start where they are" in choosing a setting for writing ethnography, the personal self becomes intertwined with the pedagogical from the first inscription to the published ethnogaphy. As Kleinman, Kopp, and Henderson (1997) have recently noted, the relationship between self and setting is somewhat reflexive; indeed, one of Kleinman's graduate student fieldworkers entered her setting (as she realized later) as a refuge for the self (p. 480). Ethnography as therapy may be one outcome of the second tension of ethnography.

The settings used illustratively in this paper cover a range of initial and later relationships between self and setting. Kivett's study of Southern accents, Flores's account of a Hispanic Campus Group (HCG), and Collas's and Robinson's work on the lesbian/gay community represent initial positions of close identification of self with setting, while Hackney's and Pereira-Nunez's work express ambivalences of identification and separation. Archer's ethnography, in which as a Mormon she entered a bar for the first time, exemplifies cases in which there is definite tension between self and other. Dobbs's study of a nursing home, Kivett's of a group home, and Johnson's of a barbershop represent ethnographies in which the researcher has a role in the setting (client, volunteer, worker) but not a shared identity. Broderick's, Grow's, Futrell's, and Karner's studies embody the older, Chicago-school model of field research: going into a setting cold, outside of any of one's own social circles (although with orienting research interests).

In writing the self through the writing of the setting, the fieldworker may consciously conceal or not-write parts of the setting or self that she does not want read by another. She may choose, at other moments, to inscribe aspects of her self; or she may give off expressions that mark such personal qualities and activities as ethnicity, sexuality, body, drinking, smoking, thinking, and dreaming, without necessarily intending to.

CONCEALMENT IN FIELDNOTE WRITING

The tension between thick description in fieldnotes and deliberate concealment of certain aspects of the setting, has a number of wellsprings, one of which is the desire to protect respondents. Protection of the other is, to some extent, a matter of current social policies protecting the confidentiality of the subjects of fieldwork, if not always (as we shall see below) their anonymity or privacy. This for-the-other concealment is mandated by federal and university regulations concerned with protection of the subjects of social research. The fieldworker deliberately changes the names of those s/he writes about, alters identifying details slightly, and perhaps renames the geographical locale within which the action occurs.

The fieldworker may also suppress parts of what might have gone into fieldnotes in order to protect some aspect of her or his own self. As Sanjek notes, fieldnotes "[reveal] the kind of person you are" (1990b, p. 34), both pedagogical and personal. As apprentice ethnographers, fieldnote writers worry about their "not being done well," their being skimpy, unfocused, verbose, or not looking at the "right" things if seen by others (Jackson 1990, p. 27); as a member of local cultures, fieldnote writers may worry about the consequences of self-revelation, from sexual identities to personal foibles. "Fieldnotes can reveal . . . your childish temper" (p. 22).

Alert to the protective aspects of concealment, Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw suggest writing up separate sets of fieldnotes for the supervisor or instructor and for oneself (1995, p. 222). This strategy was adopted by Robinson in her research; at the point at which this paper was proposed, she offered the “other sets” of fieldnotes as part of the data. Collas also indicated that she had “other sets” of fieldnotes that she had not turned in for supervision. After some thought, I decided that what had been censored had been censored for some reason—and to let sleeping dogs lie, as the old saying goes.

Human Subjects Regulations

Human subjects regulations, until recently more exacting in funded survey or interview than in lone wolf ethnographic research, seek to provide informed consent and protect respondents’ confidentiality. There have been and continue to be endless debates over the legitimacy of fieldwork in the context of informed consent, since informed consent in fieldwork is either impossible or improbable (for a recent example, see Allen 1997). It seems unproblematic to promise anonymity, confidentiality, or privacy—although it is not all that easy to ensure it. The insertion of quoted fieldnotes into published narrative—the first tension of ethnography—is the point at which the setting is displayed, and may be identified by the respondents, in our texts.

Although ethnographic others are not typically named in published work or fieldnotes (even if they ask to be, which they sometimes do), it is often difficult or impossible to disguise settings (we write of “Midwestern Town,” but it is no secret that we live in Lawrence, Kansas). Having located the setting, readers or listeners may speculate as to which individuals are being named in ethnographic work (see Warren 1980); they may be wrong or they may be right, but they are reading identity into the text. More than twenty years ago, in response to my book about the gay male community in “Sun City,” a respondent pointed out a serious error I had made in the protection of his anonymity. When I visited him after the book had been published, I noticed he had completely changed his home decor. Later he said sarcastically, “You gave a perfect description of my house in that book” (Warren 1980, p. 99). Given the current situation of lawsuits against ethnographers pressed by children of research respondents (together with cases of subpoenaed fieldnotes), concealment within fieldnote writing becomes not just an ethical issue, but also a legally self-protective strategy.

In the context of human subjects protections and the concealing of identity, I ask my students to try to use pseudonyms at the point of writing fieldnotes rather than later. I advise them to change identifying details, again preferably in the fieldnotes, noting that a woman has five children instead of six, or four roommates instead of five. I teach them that they should probably not, however, make her a black woman if she is white, or sixty years old if she is forty-five. In attempting to resolve the first tension of ethnography, there is a fine line between changing details and changing the meaning of people’s lived experiences.

Protection: the Other(s) and the Self

At the intersection of self and others, ethnographers may suppress material about others, or the self, that they do not (along the axes of their own interests) want to be known. Ethnographers sometimes refrain from writing about aspects of “their field settings” that might cast discredit upon “their people” (Warren 1980), perhaps “embarrassing or illegal activities of poor urbanites” (Obbo 1990, p. 291). In our studies in Lawrence, Kansas, students, faculty, and respondents were frequently acquainted with one another, creating the potential for fieldnotes-as-gossip. In her fieldwork in the lesbian and bisexual community, for example, Robinson heard talk about other graduate students, instructors, undergraduates, staff, and professors within the university. In response to this instance of the second tension of fieldwork, Robinson omitted all such references from her fieldnotes, protecting the other (and, in a sense, herself, as one who does not gossip).

Fieldworkers may also conceal details in order to protect themselves, preserving aspects of the pedagogical and/or personal by not-telling. Since Robinson is an insistently “out” lesbian, concealing her own lesbianism (as opposed to talk of others’) within her fieldnotes would have been, to her, transgressive. The same might be said, in general, of Collas and her study of the boundaries between straight and gay in a bar that, on Tuesdays at 9:30 p.m., changed clientele. And yet Collas suppressed, in her fieldnotes, one of the details of her Tuesday experience: her interest in and pursuit of the manager of the straight-to-gay bar, a woman who was featured in her ethnography as a key informant. She later told me that she did not want to seem like an unengaged student pursuing nonpedagogical ends.

In past times and even now, to some extent, some researchers engaged in research in lesbian, gay, transgender, or bisexual settings have written ethnographies implying or stating that the researchers are not members of these settings; others state or imply that they are. Students writing fieldnotes have similar choices. Several students (other than Robinson and Collas) have “come out” to me in fieldnotes over the decades (but no further); none of these fieldnotes are used in this paper. Even those students who, conversely, identify themselves as lesbian, gay, transgender or bisexual may, as Collas did, suppress mention of romantic or sexual encounters in fieldnotes, the identity of hard-working ethnographer taking inscriptive preference over that of partying bar-goer.

If censoring occurs at the initial point of fieldnote inscription, it may accelerate throughout the stages of drafting, presenting, and publishing ethnography, and throughout one’s career as an ethnographer. Bond notes that “fieldnotes . . . connect the ethnographer both to the particularities of the field and to the general contours of sociological [or other] theory” (1990, p. 278). The disciplinary (or interdisciplinary) field within which fieldnotes are written shapes what is concealed and revealed at various stages of a career: what can be “got away with” in graduate school may not be so easily resolved at the point of job-seeking, tenure, or promotion. This reflexive, historical, and cultural component in the representations (perhaps versus realities) of academic ethnography is particularly evident in arenas of stigma such as drug use, criminal activity, and sexuality—including matters gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered.

In the 1960s and l970s, the sexual identity of the gay community researcher was typically not addressed, or, if it was, the author stated that s/he was not gay. Sagarin, the Donald Webster Cory gadfly of the '60s and '70s sociology of gayness, complained of this:

> Some of the works that defend and even glorify homosexuality are written by . . . secret deviants . . . I deeply respect their right to self-protection in an atmosphere of continued hostility . . . if the scene should change and such people do remove their masks. . . . No longer . . . could they be quoted and cited as scholars in whatever their area of specialization, protected by the mantle of objectivity, for their vested interests would place their work under a shadow. (quoted in Warren 1980, p. 97)

In the 1980s and l990s, in vivid contrast to the earlier eras and despite Sagarin's dire warning, gay identity politics and membership declarations are now inscriptively apparent at all stages of ethnographic research, from fieldnotes to publication (see, for example, Esterberg 1997), given warrant by the postmodern prescription toward self-revelation. However, the careers of those "out" in academia may not be entirely unproblematic even today; for many gays, even in the 1990s, the second tension of ethnography is resolved by staying in the closet in fieldnotes and beyond.

INSCRIBING THE SELF

Writing about the self—expressions given—is structured by the initial and later relationship between researcher and setting, by the researcher's own habits of self-revelation or concealment, and by the dynamics of the seminar as it is situated within the department, local culture, and the discipline. Futrell, in a written commentary on a draft of this paper, said that in his study of local political processes he

> did not feel, either for sociological precision or for a desire for sociability with you as a teacher, [the] need to inscribe any of myself in the notes . . . my fieldnotes were first and foremost for myself as the researcher/analyst (as you often pointed out that they should be). . . . You and anyone else reading my material (notes and paper) were, in my mind, mainly "coming along for the ride."

Karner, similarly, approached the VA hospital Vietnam vet ward as a stranger. However, during the course of her research she was drawn into a sociable acquaintanceship by her key informant, a staff member, in a way that Futrell never was. In the light of similar experiences I had had researching a court setting some fifteen years earlier, I found this sociable relationship interesting for its impact on the study. Partly as a result of my interest, Karner focused her later fieldnotes largely upon this dialectic of self and other.

Given these varying prompts toward self-revelation or concealment at the intersections of self and others, what is it that is most often inscribed about the self of the graduate student fieldnote writer? In the several decades during which I have supervised graduate students' ethnographic projects, I have found that several themes arise fairly consistently. Fieldnotes express various forms and levels of identification, disidentification, and proximity or distance in relation to the setting and its members, and these may change over time. Fieldnotes are used as purposively expressive channels of communication about the self—pedagogical and/or personal—by students. And expressions are given off in fieldnotes of which students may be momentarily unaware. These communications on the page take place in the context of a dialectic of identification and disidentification, proximity and distance, in the relationship between setting and ethnographic self.

Proximity and Identification

By "starting where they are," ethnographers may begin their study, thus their fieldnotes, as members identified with the group (Adler and Adler 1987). This was the case in Robinson's study of the lesbian, gay, and bisexual community in "Midwestern Town" and Kivett's interview study and auto-ethnography of Southern-accented speakers. From the beginning, fieldnotes mark, celebrate, and explore the ramifications of membership and identification, and later, perhaps, undergoing some change.

Identification is not, however, always either clear-cut or agreed-upon. As I have noted elsewhere (Warren 1982), researchers may identify with the setting and its members or not, but the setting's members' reading of the situation may be different from the researcher's. After Beverly Broderick had been doing covert participant observation at a CoDependents Anonymous group, she became uncomfortable with her covert role and revealed that she was "in fact" a researcher and not a member. The other members of the group responded, "Oh yeah, we've heard that story before," continuing to reinforce their identification of her as "in fact" a true codependent like themselves.

In these situations of proximity, members' identification of the researcher as a member herself is dependent upon some shared constellation of characteristics—after all, a six-foot-tall researcher will not be identified by anyone as a member of the Little People of America. In the context of shared constellations of interest, identification by and with the group is latent, to be marked (perhaps) by self or others at points during the research. Since, in the CoDependents Anonymous example, over 90% of the population may be considered codependent by CoDa, then anyone present is likely to be defined by the group as codependent and thus "really" a member of the group (Mitchell-Norberg, Warren, and Zale 1995).

Identification by others as a member does not enforce self-identification; however, seasons or moments of self-identification may be inscribed in fieldnotes.

In (slender) Pereira-Nunez's participant observation at an Overeaters Anonymous group, during her second visit:

> Joane said, "Lourdes, do you want to share something?" I said, "I am a foreigner." Joane said welcome. I started crying and I said that . . . I have been on a diet since I was 14. That, like Jocelyn, I also felt alone. I said that I used to be overweight.

Especially for women, self-help groups based upon perceived "eating disorders" are a potent site for cycles of self-and other-identification reflected in fieldnotes. Religious cults and sects have provided other ethnographic examples. During the course of their fieldwork, both Hackney and Pereira-Nunez inscribed both the collective, group pull toward identifying themselves as overeaters and an internal pull based upon their own sense of body problematization. They dealt with these pulls in their fieldnotes in different ways, Pereira-Nunez by rapid capitulation and public self-identification, Hackney by lengthy resistance.

Pereira-Nunez's fieldnotes marked an identification between self and setting not only in relation to her body and weight, but also in relation to her (Hispanic) ethnicity and non-native English speaker status (identifying with fellow Hispanics but disidentifying with the Anglo members of the OA group; see following). Her fieldnotes consistently marked her mistakes in conversational English, and thereby her Hispanic identity. Similarly, Flores's fieldnotes made accessible the unspoken ways in which ethnicity may be monitored in groups, noting the hair and skin color of participants in HCO:

> I notice that there are a lot of people with dark brown hair and that there are around half men and half women in the room. I also notice a young woman with blond hair. I think to myself, "is that natural or does she dye it?" I think this is for the most part because there are a lot of Hispanic people that have dark brown hair as a characteristic and she has blond hair. I wondered if she would be ostracized or if she would fit in. I also wondered, why am I thinking this? My sister, who is a Hispanic female, has light brown hair and blue eyes. Why am I thinking like people who discriminate against Hispanics by characterizing them in one way?

Disidentification and Distancing

In other instances, ethnographers' fieldnotes highlight differentiations between themselves and others and between themselves and their setting from the outset, sometimes where there is not, and sometimes where there is, some grounds for "seeing" shared characteristics. (Dobbs would never have been taken for an old person, nor Kivett as a teenage boy, although Archer, as "any bar-goer," could have been taken for a drinker rather than the teetotaler she was.) Pereira-Nunez identified with OA group members as an overeater, but disidentified as a "foreigner". At times, her fieldnotes marked her ethnicity as different from those in her setting, and their language as not her language:

> Sylvia then asked me to spell my name. I said "l-o-u-r-d-e-s." Joellen asked, "like the saint?" I did not understand what she meant at the beginning [language problem], but then I realized and said yes.

In a conversation about her fieldnotes, Archer also described them as written by a "foreigner"; as a Mormon, Archer had never been to a bar until she began her fieldwork in one. I found her fieldnotes notable for their vivid description of the action of dancing, the attention focused on one that seemed to be a "Martian" in the sense used in the old methodological literature on fieldwork:

> 3 black males on dance floor, 2 sort of dance together, one in yellow ballcap, other in overalls, they both are doing splits, then up, overalls moves very feminine with exaggerated movements of hips, yellow hat moves in back of him, puts crotch close to overall hips, but they separate, and play to the music again.

Such studies, in which the researcher is initially a stranger in the experiential sense, may infuse (especially at first) the researcher's fieldnotes with difference, since indeed the researcher is quite different from all or a class of those under study. Grow's HHCO study involved several experiential spaces between self and other: ethnicity, organization, and medical conditions. Although Johnson went to the barbershop to have his hair cut and thus was the same as any other customer, the slightness of the role of barbershop customer is not one (at least not initially) wherein one would expect the closing of distances between self and other.

The role of worker or volunteer, although it involves activity and participation in the setting, is also one of potential distance (from either or both directions) from the clients worked or volunteered upon. In Dobbs's and Kivett's studies of workplaces, the researchers, as volunteers and workers, were indubitably (see Goffman 1961) in a different hierarchical space than their clients: elderly day care residents and juveniles placed out of their families of origin. Dobbs's fieldnotes inscribed the distance between self and other—young and old, client and worker, client and volunteer:

> After serving Mr. Houston his prune juice I tried to start a conversation with him by saying, "I have never had prune juice, what does it taste like?" He really had nothing to say to me. That was the impression I got from a number of residents who didn't want to converse with me and become acquainted before, during or after dinner; they simply wanted me to serve them dinner.

Difference and distance from the group under study may also be somewhat more deliberate; fieldnotes and other writings may be fashioned with a separation of self and other firmly in mind. This deliberate distancing seems to have a historical, cultural component, at least—and again—with reference to studies of sexual collectivities or activities. Distancing disclaimers were commonplace, for example, in the 1960s–70s studies of wife swapping, homosexuality, or prostitution (see, for example, Rasmussen and Kuhn 1976). Similarly, Laud Humphreys, in his classic tearoom study, focused the audience's attention upon his role as "watch queen," distancing himself from the assumptive possibility that he would be taken as gay. Despite these disclaimers, however, Humphreys "ran afoul of his Dean" (Warren 1980, and see following).

Expressions Given: Fieldnotes and the Instructor

As a communicative form, fieldnotes can be crafted to make purposeful statements, ask questions, and tell about the self as well as the other; and, as we have noted, as expressions given off, fieldnotes mark the writer as a communicator—one who writes well or poorly, carelessly or carefully, whose descriptions are thick or thin, who has poor handwriting or creates beautiful diagrams, who appears to work hard or tends to slack off. Over the years, I have found that graduate students use fieldnotes to communicate (mainly) their pedagogical selves to me as the instructor, and that they mark their personal and pedagogical selves in various ways by expressions given off.

For decades, students have communicated with me via fieldnotes about fieldnotes and fieldwork; for example, here is Johnson on fieldnote writing strategies:

> [I have routinely gotten into my car to make the drive back from the barbershop, reached for my small tape recorder, and dictated a series of free associations into the recorder. . . . Then, that night, I listen to the tape and expand upon what I have said. Is this OK? Could it be improved upon as a process?]

Others used their fieldnotes to make inquiries concerning the adequacies of their fieldwork strategies. Grow, for example, wanted to know if the attempts at entrée she recounted in her fieldnotes were adequate, and if the instructor had any ideas concerning a more successful sociability strategy. She comments in her fieldnotes after a discussion of gender issues in ethnography:

> Awkward in human relations and communication as I was in other social skills, I never thought that being a female gave me any special edge in “establishing rapport” with anyone. Coming from an emotionally dysfunctional family, I took sociology classes mainly to find out what was going on with my family and the rest of the world that I was apparently missing!. . . . If there is a magic “female” muse of ethnography, or any other aspect of human relations, send her to me quickly!

Kivett asked questions in the context of seeking to make theoretical sense of the social world under observation. He asked about his description of an interaction at a boys’ group home, framed in Goffman’s theory of team collusion:

> Jack got defensive, but that only makes sense. It makes sense that he would want to retain the attitude so as to appear consistent. In other words, retain the *fake* attitude as a way of showing off for Colin. Consistency would mean his attitude was real, not just a performance for the audience. (Sorry I’m low on detail here. Am I lacking?)

Disclaimers are commonplace in graduate school, placing some distance between self and inscription “just in case” the inscriptions might be deemed inadequate by the reader—and the self along with them. Disclaimers were, for example, commonplace in Kleinman et al.’s “freewriting” texts (1997, p. 469); in my seminars, they tended to be more commonplace when first drafts were handed in than in fieldnotes. But there were some; Johnson noted of his fieldnote recording: “I talk into the recorder for a total time of maybe 8–10 minutes . . . I don’t try and say everything . . . just enough to cue me to more extended thoughts.”

Expressions Given and Given Off: the Personal and the Pedagogical

Besides communicating about fieldnotes and fieldwork, fieldnotes may be the site of other self-communications, intentional or otherwise. Robinson, for example, told me through her fieldnotes, as well as her seminar comments, of her own lesbianism in the context of describing her setting. In extracts from Stull's fieldnotes on his Garden City team ethnography, he includes the following self-descriptions:

> No one but me tries to set and keep to common agendas. But then I think everyone looks to me to play that role. Then again, maybe I am just too anal. . . . I am getting surly in my dealings with other team members. (quoted in Erickson and Stull 1998: 33)

Less purposively Grow, who is a very well-turned out and slender Angla woman, frequently wrote in her fieldnotes about the clothing and weight of persons she observed in the Hispanic health care organization. It seemed to me as I read these notes that in doing this she was marking her own appearance, clothing, weight, and ethnicity in contrast to those of her respondents:

> Maria wore a red blouse and "skort" [divided slacks-shorts] splashed with bright yellow, pink and orange tropical flowers. I felt that she looked typically colorful and Hispanic, while I in my cobalt blue and white striped sweater and denim jeans looked typically pale and conservatively Angla.

In my students' fieldnotes, these "personal" revelations were as variable as personal selves can be, related by various sleights of hand to the matters at hand. Kivett, who had kept me abreast of his job status during the past couple of years, marked his acquisition of a girlfriend in the context of a pedagogical communication concerning fieldwork ethics:

> Just this weekend I was talking to my girlfriend about the ethical issue of taking fieldnotes at the group home. When I was hired, I think I may have signed something saying that I would keep confidential what happens at the Institution, but that issue *was* brought up. Does what I'm doing now breach that promise of confidentiality? Yes, since you have read last names, first names, and even descriptions of guys at the Institution, I figure confidentiality has been breached. Does that mean that what I'm doing is unethical? Not necessarily. I don't think you'll ever meet any of the guys from the Institution. Secondly, I will certainly use pseudonyms if this ever turns into a paper [we are using pseudonyms in this paper].

In writing up her first fieldnotes on her and other teams' playing in a pool hall, Reilly noted her wish to be noticed by, and to flirt with, one of the male players in the hall. She described her unusual attention to her dress after meeting this man, her usual casual dress, and another man's reactions to this usual attire. In her fieldnotes, she countered the man's negative appraisal of her with a detailed rebuttal, telling the reader about her situated self:

> This guy told me that he thought I had low self-esteem because I wore baggy jeans, an old flannel shirt and t-shirt, and a ball cap. I thought that this was pretty interesting so I let him ramble on. I didn't bother to tell him that my self-esteem was high enough that I really didn't care what I looked like at Terry's, that I usually wear clothes that I don't mind getting smoky, and that I wore a cap to keep the hair out of my eyes since it wasn't quite long enough to put in a pony tail. I think he also made some comment along the lines of

> my looking a bit butch. I was so astounded at his nerve that I thought it was funny and I let him say what he wanted just to see how far he would go. I may have looked like hell, and I may have looked butch, but it didn't stop him from buying me drinks and inviting me home with him.

This incident also inscribed for the reader (whether intentionally or not) a heterosexual self, one flirting with males.

Although these examples are arguably "personal," to steal a phrase, in graduate school the personal is the pedagogical. Since ethnography is one pathway to disciplinary or interdisciplinary professional success, fieldnotes can provide preliminary evidence (quantitative or qualitative) for that success. As Fine (1993) comments, the image of the proper sociological ethnographer (and the ten lies of fieldwork that protect the image) haunts the fieldnote writer:

> Consider the kindly ethnographer, the friendly ethnographer, the honest ethnographer, the precise ethnographer, the observant ethnographer, the unobtrusive ethnographer, the candid ethnographer, the chaste ethnographer, the fair ethnographer, and the literary ethnographer. (p. 269)

Anthropologists write of the quantity, quality, and temporality of their fieldnotes—the long-resident ethnographer? the voluminous ethnographer?—as part of the requisites of their discipline. In the preface to his volume *Fieldnotes: The Makings of Anthropology*, for example, Roger Sanjek describes his fieldnotes on Ghana as "nearly 397 single-spaced pages of fieldnotes covering eighteen months" (1990c, p. xiv). Nancy Lutkehaus's description of Camilla Wedgwood's fieldnotes valorizes Camilla as the precise ethnographer, and the voluminous one too:

> Wedgwood wrote her notes in a series of thirty-four neatly bound notebooks. They were so carefully dated—sometimes even indicating the time of day—that it was easy to follow the chronology of her fieldwork. She left the left-hand pages blank so that if she had new information to add later or a correction to make, she could insert it alongside the original version. She would write the new information in pencil as a way of distinguishing the two versions. (Lutkehaus 1990, p. 311)

Expressions given off through these "ideal ethnographer" descriptions crystallize the identity of dedicated scholar; Jackson notes that "fieldnote writing creates and maintains my identity as a journeyman anthropologist," and "fieldnotes are a synecdoche for the anthropologist" (1990, p. 22; 31–32). As Futrell implies in the quote earlier in this paper, perhaps the self most protected by fieldnote concealment or revelation in a seminar in ethnography is that of the future sociologist, however the writer configures her or him.

CONCLUSION

In writing the other, we write the self; such has been written about ethnography for at least the last twenty years. What we highlight here is one small corner of this edifice of reflexive representation: fieldnotes. Yet this small corner is also the foundation of the edifice: the building blocks, in realist ethnography, of our tales of the other. This foundation is subject from its very first moments to the involvement of the self and its audiences: as source of communication, as marker of identification and disidentification, as site of concealment and suppression, as source of retrospection and revision.

The two tensions of fieldwork are those between thick description and concealment, and between inscribing the self and inscribing the other—and ethnographies are built upon the resolutions of these tensions. Although fieldnotes are only the first building blocks of published ethnography, it is in writing them that we come to terms with these tensions and thus with the nature of the ethnographic enterprise itself.

Unfortunately, we cannot prescribe, in the abstract, the resolution of our dilemmas; they are resolved in each case within each particular web of setting and social circles. The consequences of various resolutions of the two tensions of ethnography have been written about extensively for several decades in the context of *published* work, a narrative of betrayal, sanctions, legal action, and sparse praise (limited, it seems, to the "helping" ethnographic arts). In commenting on sociologists Vidich and Bensman some thirty years ago, Dean Grisley of Cornell University said of their book *Small Town in Mass Society*, "It made people mad" because:

> It was in total violation of the understanding which they felt existed between the university and themselves and the community. Second, it made other people feel very badly and hurt them . . . Further, I think the distortion of the characterization of these people . . . created a self-consciousness of these individuals which they found very discomforting, which lasted for a time, but from which they recovered. Fourth, I think that the community itself could not particularly welcome the outside attention that it received. (Vidich and Bensman 1964, quoted in Warren 1980, p. 287)

And, from the continuing saga of *Street Corner Society*, one of Whyte's Cornerville respondents noted: "The trouble is Bill, you caught the people with their hair down. It's a true picture, yes; but people feel it's a little personal" (Whyte 1964, p. 60). It is a true picture, yes, at least for we realist ethographers; and, indeed, it is a little personal. But our fieldnote pictures are not just personal or even pedagogical, they are the first steps toward the depiction of the other and of the self, the first resolution of the two tensions of ethnography, the beginning of analytic description and ultimately public discourse. In noting the distance between self and other in the residential care facility for the elderly, Dobbs began to inscribe that difference in theory, writing the ways in which the care facility, in the eyes of the respondents, was not "home" but "a home" and the staff not families or even caregivers but servants—and fairly incompetent ones at that. In noting the social control strategies engaged in by members like herself, Robinson increasingly came to disidentify with identities she had previously taken for granted. Identification or distancing from the other, stranger or friend, all our stances in the text, from fieldnotes to publications shared by others, has not only analytical but also social consequences in a world where representations coexist with realities.

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