Fieldwork, Participation and Practice

Ethics and Dilemmas in Qualitative Research

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To Lisa, Thompson and Georgie

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Now that the richness and power of ethnography and other kinds of qualitative research are confirmed in social science, practitioners work through the complications of fieldwork looking for less harmful possibilities for making sense of people's lives. The free exploration of intriguing ideas was tempered in anthropology over the last half of the twentieth century by the importance given to other values, including human rights. The individual has the right to determine for him or herself what others might do with their ideas and attitudes. A great deal of soul searching has taken place; terms like deception and informed consent have emerged to inform of a concern by anthropologists and sociologists for the rights of the individual and those studied.

The emergence of new forms of social research, especially critical participatory and applied research, has meant fieldworkers must make their research goals explicit and seek permission from and respect the privacy of the people (Barrett, 1996). Knowledge for its own sake was no longer acceptable among some segments of the academic audience, who argue for a critical perspective on social life. The issues emerging in qualitative research in contemporary times importantly include what we consider constitutes ethics, and an explication and extension of traditional ethical models to deal with the new activism (Lincoln, 1995).

With the 'crisis of representation' the emphasis has largely been concentrated on textual matters but there are a number of fieldworkers who would prefer to see more attention paid to grass-roots level actual fieldwork practice (Fabian, 1991). The conditions of fieldwork (paradoxes, ambiguities and dilemmas) that require researchers engage in face-to-face contact with subjects, rather than assume an impersonal detached approach of positivism and quantitative research, are considered inherently problematic. The production of knowledge puts fieldworkers in close contact with subjects and this closeness creates problems with the management of anonymity and confidentiality (Lincoln, 1995). Ethical problems and dilemmas are a necessary part of fieldwork. They cannot be adequately anticipated and usually emerge *ex post factum* (Fabian, 1991).

In contemporary fieldwork the trend is for more participation and less observation. Detachment of the subject from the researcher and the research is rejected. The gap between researcher and subject has to be closed and there is to be communion with methods, analysis, interpretation and 'writing-it-up', and with social relationships. The new 'activism' calls for social relationships that are intimate and close and requires researchers to demonstrate more authenticity, sensitivity, maturity and integrity than in previous moments of social science (Lincoln, 1995).

Fieldwork becomes especially problematic when researchers cross boundaries of conventional and sensitive topics, public and private space, overt and covert methods, field notes to texts, and overlap roles and relationships. Multiple roles and relationships in the field are a feature of some feminist participatory and activist approaches. The researcher who demonstrates empathy and care and engages on an emotional level with subjects can enter the ground of the therapist, but without the same training and back-up support in sociology and anthropology needed for debriefing or counselling services and sessions. Overlapping or multiple roles and relationships present researchers with a range of complex and unavoidable ethical and practical dilemmas.

Friendships that facilitate access to confidences and physical regions that are private and secret can make problematic disclosure and publication of personal information. Research goals can become complicated when ethical and professional obligations to disclose and publish clash with moral and personal obligations to subjects to ensure secrets be kept private, confidentiality maintained and trust not betrayed. When various parties with different interests and expectations clash there can arise an ethical and practical dilemma for which there is no satisfactory solution, but only a compromising experience that must be lived through and lived with.

The 'ethics of relationships' that is established in the field between the researcher and subject carries over into the text. The author must accord the subject the same respect in print as would be conveyed in the face-to-face situation; one must not say in print what would not be said to someone's face (Hornstein, 1996). Professional and research standards of a discipline do not favour concealing information and 'gatekeepers' may exert a powerful moral pressure on the researcher to meet their demands of disclosure. Managing the conflicting expectations of gatekeepers, sponsors and subjects can put pressure on the researcher to conform, but one party (usually the subject) may be compromised, along with the researcher.

Ethical dilemmas

Ethical and moral dilemmas are an unavoidable consequence, or an occupational hazard of fieldwork. Dilemmas and ambivalences do not

always reveal themselves clearly and are virtually impossible to plan for in advance (Punch, 1986: 33). An ethical dilemma arises when the researcher experiences conflict, especially conflict that cannot clearly be addressed by one's own moral principles, or the establishment of ethical codes (Hill, Glaser and Harden, 1995).

An ethical dilemma may be described as a problem for which no course of action seems satisfactory; it exists because there are 'good' but contradictory ethical reasons to take conflicting and incompatible courses of action. Ethical dilemmas are situations in which there is no 'right' decision, 'only a decision that is thoughtfully made and perhaps "more right" than the alternatives' (Hill, Glaser and Harden, 1995: 19).

When confronted with an ethical dilemma, the researcher needs more than a code of ethics for guidance (Hill, Glaser and Harden, 1995). The researcher needs some understanding of how to use the code together with other resources to make a decision that is more 'right'. The individual's intentions, motivations and ways of cognitively structuring the ethically sensitive situation are equally important to ethical and moral practice as are conforming to or violating an ethical code. Ethical decision making includes being consciously aware of one's values, principles and allegiance to ethical codes, intuition and feelings, within a context that is characterized by professional and power relationships.

Sieber suggests a number of ways in which ethical dilemmas may arise in research on human behaviour and social life (Sieber, 1996: 15–16). Students may be attuned to ethical issues in research but still find themselves enmeshed in dilemmas because they had not foreseen how research may impact on the participant's privacy, or adequately anticipated the risk of harm arising from research for participants and for the self. On the other hand, an ethical problem may be foreseen but there may be no apparent way to avoid the problem (Sieber, 1996). The researcher may 'assume' disclosure of information will cause participants to consider they have been 'wronged' and this may lead to attempts to reduce harm through partial self-censorship (Lee, 1993). The researcher may foresee a problem but be unsure of what to do because the consequences of subsequent action are unclear (Sieber, 1996). The student's current moral outlook may simply be inadequate to the task of envisaging ethical implications arising from use of non-verbal communication.

The literature about the ethical decision-making process describes ethical codes in various forms, notably absolutist and relativistic, and the general moral principles underlying codes (do not betray confidence and trust; do no 'harm' to others). From the perspective of ethical codes and guidelines, dilemmas are almost exclusively looked at objectively and from an intellectual distance (Hill, Glaser and Harden, 1995: 23). In actual fieldwork, researchers experience ethical dilemmas with an immediacy and personal involvement that draws on intuition and empathy, feelings and emotion. These dimensions cannot be separated out from

decision making in a complex power structure. In a feminist approach, one's personal experience and involvement are 'legitimate' and necessary factors to take into account when making ethical decisions.

Situational and contextual elements cannot be adequately handled by drawing on ethical codes because other elements (moral values, ideals, personal and professional standards, empathy or intuition), a necessary aspect of feminist analysis, are missing. Ethical codes are general and absolute. They are intellectualized, objective contructions that make no allowance for cultural, social, personal and emotional variations. The personalized relationships that are currently recommended in some segments of the academic audience underpin one of the emerging issues for discussion in qualitative research today: the extension and reconfiguration of what researchers consider ethics in research is about (Lincoln, 1995). The tradition in ethics committees has been to see ethics in terms of what we do to subjects, rather than the wider moral and social responsibilities of simply *being a researcher* (Kellehear, 1993: 14). The traditional impersonal and objective ethical model assumed the separation of researcher and researched, but the new fieldwork being practised suggests less distance or detachment between researchers and researched; and a new ethic or moral imperative that is not yet codified.

Ethical dilemmas that admit of no comfortable outcome but must be lived are experiences that researchers need to know about. The researcher without a satisfactory solution to an ethical problem may have to reconcile the self to compromise. Contingencies or controversies of fieldwork, however, need not be seen only as obstructions to data collection; they can be experienced as opportunities for celebration since they force self-awareness and give promise of change. A moment in fieldwork may be created to implement a more 'open' attitude toward what subjects expect of the researcher and how they experience the fieldworker. This could contribute to the establishment of fieldwork that is more moral (Liberman, 1999).

The aims of this text are:

1. To promote an understanding of the harmful possibilities of fieldwork.
2. To foster ways to deal with ethical and practical dilemmas.

In each of the chapters, attempts are made to describe the pitfalls and dangers likely to confront the fieldworker; to provide examples of ethical and moral dilemmas, how they were created and how the fieldworker solved or lived with the problem; and what, if anything, could have been done to avoid them.

In Chapter 2 consideration is given to the issue of moral choice. Students are advised to adopt a new form of research that is more moral and less morally objectionable (Schwandt, 1995). The concept

'moral career' provides a useful conceptual frame for investigating the moral dimensions of the interpretivist inquirer, especially her or his conceptualization of their fieldwork practice and conceptualization of self (Schwandt, 1995). The term 'career' has usually been reserved for those who expect to enjoy pathways leading to a rise in status within respectable professions. Goffman (1961a) used the concept to trace the *moral* aspects of mental patients, whose passageway through the institution involved the internalization of a fair amount of *moral* transformation. The concept moral career facilitates a dual focus and makes possible a stereoscopic look at internal matters (felt-identity), and external public matters of official position in society (self-image) (1961a).

In Chapter 2 Schwandt's (1995) hypothesis is explained. He offers no comprehensive examination of the moral career of the interpretive enquirer, only a few observations about one specific passage in fieldwork that allows for two ways of problem solving. Fieldwork requires the inquirer confront controversies; these controversies constitute a moral passage, defined as wrestling with 'problems of self-identity and relationship' (Schwandt, 1995: 133). Controversies, as problems of identity and researcher–respondent relationships in actual fieldwork, for a truly moral outcome, require 'organization of the connections between self, other and world, and reflection on what is right to do and good to be as a social inquirer' (Schwandt, 1995: 134). Fieldwork problems demand the union of intellect and passion to constitute a moral passage, an emphasis only on the intellectualizing aspect of research means something of the human quality is missing.

Ditton's (1977a) work is drawn on to show how the conceptual tool 'moral career' has been used in social science to identify different contingent moral steps or decisions that facilitate a fair degree of *moral* transformation. The example focuses on salesmen at a bakery who are inducted and acclimatized to normative practices for the situation, and how they attempt to neutralize *moral* consequences to ensure they do not contaminate the production of a total social 'me' (to use interactionist terminology). The normative experience for salesmen is assumed as Ditton's lived experience, since participant-observation was carried out in the bakery. Engaging with 'situational honesty' may not be that uncommon for fieldworkers, burdened by 'guilty knowledge' that could adversely impact on self-image and felt-identity.

The practical side of the ethical problem is made understandable by a focus on a variety of neutralization techniques that provide a sociological perspective on co-workers processes of adjustment to activities that affect identity (Ditton, 1974). There is a need to ensure that the subsidiary and minor deviant role assumed by salesmen does not assume a controlling and master status and contaminate the production of a total social 'me'. To this end a variety of excuses and justifications are employed, an overview of which is provided in this chapter.

The traditional ethical model, in both perspectives (absolutist and relativist), is examined and compared with an alternative ethical model proposed by Denzin (1997). He calls the 'postpragmatic' or postmodern alternative to the 'traditional impersonal positivist ethical model', into which students have been socialized during undergraduate years and against which postgraduates continue to justify fieldwork, characterized by *looking at*, rather than *being with* the other, the 'feminist communitarian ethical model'. Other ethical issues to be considered in Chapter 2 include covert research and the issue of 'passing' (concealing discrediting information that could damage identity).

Chapter 3 features the issue of access, mainly in terms of access to a conceptual framework for staging appearances and performances; but access is also looked at in relation to entry into back regions of social establishments as well as back regions of the mind. In fieldwork, uncovering the member's intersubjectivity is central to one's capacity to portray emotional and motivational attunement to a group's moral order and to perform activities appropriate for an audience the fieldworker confronts. Access to 'insider' information is crucial to 'impression management' and precedes the major research task, that of data collection. Staging the self appropriately, with appearance and performances, is shown importantly to require access to codes, 'recipes' or scripts (terminology depending on methodological or philosophical perspectives).

Access to 'experts' in the field, who assume the role of trainer and facilitate the researcher's socialization to a subculture, and observation of degradation ceremonies, that bring together previously implied scattered pieces of information, are shown to facilitate access to a moral order and provide a shared understanding of appropriate acts for staging subsequent appearances and performances. 'Status degradation ceremonies' relate to any communicative work that results in the transformation of another's identity to that of subordinate figure (Garfinkel, 1956: 420). Status degradation ceremonies usually feature a number of witnesses who share a common definition of the situation of a rule breaker, and who are sufficiently inspired to moral indignation to promote public denunciation. Such denunciation ceremonies or confrontations between a marginal person and agents of control serve to communicate the values and norms of the social group. They can illuminate the source of ethical and moral dilemmas that confront the researcher and co-workers in a specific socio-political situation.

The concept 'moral community' is explored to highlight the ambiguous and anomalous situation that can be the context in which the researcher is lodged, and required to perform activities in an appropriate way, in advance of knowing what 'appropriate' means in social, motivational and emotional ways for that situation; projecting a definition of the situation for 'normals' is made questionable. In situations where rules and roles are not clearly formed or are ambiguous, the stage is set for

making mistakes. Time is needed to learn the script. One not able to recognize and generate acceptable behaviour display for the situation may risk being caught 'out of face' or in 'wrong face', and is confronted with the task of having to 'save face'. A critique of Goffman's earlier work (1959, 1967) is included in this chapter, since Goffman assumed performing roles would be unproblematic for 'normals'; his earlier work is critiqued on such grounds in this chapter. During the preliminary phase of fieldwork, when the researcher is learning implicit roles and rules, the cues to correct for discrepancies may be inadvertently ignored. This may evoke the antagonism of others towards her or him and cause the researcher to experience personal stress.

Informed consent is considered in terms of access to multiple roles and relationships. From a dramaturgical perspective, the manipulation that is implied in human social life is carried over into research practice with the suggestion of a continuum where research is more or less overt. This type of argument raises the issue 'when is manipulation not considered ethical?' (Hunt and Benford, 1997). The concept 'passing' once again captures matters of 'impression management', with management of undisclosed discrediting information about 'the self', when the actor is in the damage-control mode (Goffman, 1963: 58).

The dramaturgical approach to social phenomena acknowledges that the staging of the self or 'impression management' is problematic. With dramaturgy, life proceeds like a drama, with each person as actor, director, audience and critic of herself and her relations to others, who are seen as having the same qualities (Lyman and Scott, 1975: 107). Concepts borrowed from the theatre (actors, roles, scripts, performances and audiences) are terms used in this and other chapters, in relation to techniques used and the principal problems with impression management in the field and in the text. Appearance is shown to set the scene for social interaction and reference is made to the work of Stone, who claims 'through appearance identities are placed, values appraised, moods appreciated, and attitudes anticipated' (Stone, 1962: 101).

Chapter 4 directs a focus on back regions and sensitive methods, and problems with deception and betrayal of trust. Privacy is linked with back regions and relates to a person or group's interest in separating self from others. Fieldworkers have traditionally explored activities in physical locations that are generally not frequented by the public. In ethnographies there is sometimes a distinction made between two vantage points, 'front stage' and 'back stage', and associated interactional modes. According to Goffman (1959: 110), when we examine the order that is maintained in a given region we find two kinds of demands – 'moral and instrumental': the former refers to rules regarding respect for people and places. Instrumental demands refer to duties such as an employer might demand of an employee to whom they pay a wage (care of property, maintenance of work levels, and so on).

In the front region of establishment actors express appropriate conduct for the sphere of activity in progress with characteristically formal behaviour, composure, involvement and social interaction to capture respect for the activity in progress. Appropriate behavioural displays are aimed to convince an audience of what actors purport to be and what they purport to be doing. A back-stage vantage point may provide the researcher with access to interpersonal conflict, private family problems and attitudes and behaviours that deviate from the ideal or official policy (Hansen, 1976). A back-stage vantage point may require the researcher engage in some mild form of deviance or deviation from the official or normative behaviour for the situation. Back regions allow informal social practices to flourish in relatively non-threatening circumstances. Back-stage language consists of 'reciprocal first-naming, co-operative decision-making . . . playful aggressivity and kidding' (Goffman, 1959: 129).

How social interaction and information are managed in back regions constitutes the interpersonal dimension of privacy. Interacting in such areas and reporting on such matters is crucially linked with ethics. Privacy rights may be threatened where uninvited observations of behaviour that diverts from the ideal, the official or 'legitimate' are made. Researchers who focus on such situations can anticipate finding themselves faced with problems of disclosure that relate to protection of privacy and from harm. Observation of back-stage activities carries a responsibility to respect a person or group's interest in having information managed appropriately.

One who intrudes into back regions may pose the threat of risk to others who fear exposure; formal approaches for access may be refused. Those who study back region sites and back-stage activities may be drawn to the use of dubious methods for infiltration of 'fronts'. Researchers have gained access to back regions without consent. Deception, betrayal and clandestine observation, aspects of the 'darker side' of fieldwork (Wolcott, 1995), conjure in the minds a picture of back-region activities that are not strictly 'legitimate'.

Addressed in this chapter also are complicity and probing, strategies used to gain access to back regions like corridors and women's powder rooms, and to back regions of the mind. Informed consent is shown to be no guarantee that research will be ethical and moral. A focus on some of the early interactionist studies show that a number of Chicago School ethnographers performed fieldwork in back regions and used dubious methods. At the time they may not have been overly concerned by the ethics of fieldwork, but later some were burdened by 'guilty knowledge'.

Researchers had not anticipated they would be socialized into performing activities defined 'sensitive' by virtue of choice of topics, which have lodged them in back regions. As a consequence, they may have internalized a fair amount of moral transformation and been required to use strategies of neutralization to protect identity. In this chapter a number of strategies are explored. These include researcher-based and

ethical relativist-oriented rationales, the 'indeterminacy repertoire' and excuses and justifications. Students are advised to be cautious with choice of fieldwork topic, setting and methods since associating with sensitive phenomena has the potential to contaminate. An example is provided that shows how the researcher's moral career was perceived by an outspoken other, at a time when attempts were being made to use past fieldwork experiences to make a theoretical point, in a class instigated for the purpose of learning about qualitative research.

Chapter 5 focuses on the difficulty with directing the role-playing self into and through roles and relationships in the field. A consideration is given to personal qualities as prerequisites of role and the various types of roles that may constitute being a researcher (peripheral, active and complete membership, insider/outsider, complete observer/complete participants), and the strengths and weaknesses of different modes of involvement. Multiple roles and overlapping relations are addressed with a focus on the researcher as therapist, and the associated ethical and practical problems discussed. Friendships and 'friend-like' relationships are addressed, whether friendship is different in fieldwork and the 'closeness/distance dilemma' that can have ethical ramifications for the researcher.

Feminist approaches to overlapping roles and relations are explored and close friendships formed in the field are considered in relation to 'exploitation'. One may become detached from role, cease to consider the academic group as the prime and dominant reference group and 'go native'. The tendency to 'go native' may be abetted by 'prolonged engagement' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The researcher who is in the process of becoming detached from the profession may subsequently struggle with role conflict (Adler and Adler, 1987). These matters are also discussed in Chapter 5.

Multiple roles are shown to set up 'a conflict of interests' or of consciousness and create ethical and practical dilemmas. The dual roles of friend and researcher create the possibility of collecting information willingly shared, as well as unwittingly conveyed (Hansen, 1976: 132). The ethnographer may use confidences passed between friends as data. A paradox of the communicative process is that the more relaxed the participants are in the company of the researcher, the less likely the transfer of personal and secret information will be inhibited, and the more likely betrayal and trust could occur with disclosure. The individual's rights of privacy may be best protected by ensuring subjects are aware the friend is also a researcher, and by careful consideration of materials that should be kept 'off the record'. Dual roles are shown to create ethical implications with disclosure and publication.

Chapter 6 directs a focus on audience segregation and juggling with the interests and agendas of various parties linked together in the research enterprise, (gatekeepers and sponsors, the academic community, comprised of supervisors, other staff members and postgraduates,

assessors and publishers, the subjects and, importantly, the self). Ethical dilemmas emerge from disparities between the rights of various parties to the research enterprise and the clash of expectations and demands made by powerful parties. The rights and responsibilities owed various parties are addressed: the subjects' right to privacy and protection from harm; the wider community to knowledge that holds promise of benefit to the community; the profession to original knowledge for the discipline; and the ethnographer's right to protect the self from the harmful possibilities of fieldwork and disclosure. When disclosing information to a wider audience, the researchers are shown to be vulnerable. They must take into consideration the receptivity of the wider audience, mainly constituted by academics, and the participating audience's interpretation of the author's representation and position on disclosing information (Hunt and Benford, 1997: 116). The latter obligation is shown sometimes to clash with the former and cause ethical and moral dilemma.

Postgraduate students rely on their supervisor/s to advise them on matters of ethical significance. Postgraduate students are not in a particularly strong position to question the advice offered by a supervisor and most postgraduates would feel uncomfortable about disagreeing with superiors, especially over the most important feature of a researcher's work life – the alibility to do research. They would avoid conflict with supervisors. Academics are unlikely to support a student who disagrees with a colleague or opposes the bureaucratic system on moral and ethical grounds. The structure of the researcher–supervisor relationship can blunt the student's sense of ethical and moral sensitivity and the bureaucratic structure can work against researchers assuming a high moral and ethical stance.

The hierarchical system of academic departments can encourage the neophyte researcher to believe responsibility can be transferred to another person. The postgraduates' sensitivity toward their own ethical obligations are shown to be adversely affected by a number of forces operating outside the researcher's control, including the impersonal bureaucratic structure which gives an impression that matters of ethical importance can be dealt with at another level. The researcher–supervisor relationship may become strained where 'assumed' rather than 'actual' responses of subjects to textual representations create a pressure for partial self-censorship and the profession demands disclosure. Possible ways of dealing with such circumstances are provided in this chapter.

Fieldwork may trap the researcher in a web of cross-cutting ties that run counter to one's moral values, ideals, personal loyalties and allegiances, intuition and feelings, and require major compromise of self. Case studies are provided to highlight the ways that different parties might seek to have agendas implemented and what the consequences are in moral and ethical terms for the researcher, the subjects and the research. Most settings of ethnographic interest are complex and stratified, with differing and shifting allegiances and loyalties that have the potential to

set up a 'conflicts of interest' (Fabian, 1991). Physical separation of audiences may facilitate information control and protect identities to some extent, but ultimately the researcher must address the matter of conflicting loyalties, obligations and expectations.

Chapter 7 looks at field notes, ethics and the emotional self. Contemporary researchers are paying more attention to the ethnographer's emotional experience, as a valuable way of interpreting findings, as well as understanding the ethnographer's fieldwork experience (Jackson, 1990). Without description and analysis of the emotional dynamics of interpersonal relations a valuable piece of the framework or context necessary to interpret findings and understand the research experience is lost (Berg, 1988; Jackson, 1990).

During fieldwork the ethnographer must work out her or his relationships in the field to other participants, to various parties with an interest in the research and to their emotions (Jackson, 1990: 29). The process by which the researcher moves from writing field notes to a final written account is by no means obvious, but we know some researchers have sought solace in an impersonal, detached approach toward fieldwork and field notes. The traditional approach towards emotions has tended to be superficial; a 'cognitive bias' in sociology and anthropology has meant neglect of the affective and subjective dimensions of experiences in the field.

The norm of traditional or modern ethnography, that downplayed the emotional dynamics of interpersonal relations in the field, and emotions generated within the researcher as they conduct their work in the field, may have clouded the researcher's perceptiveness of what counts as data. Researchers have responded in various ways to the suggestion that they record in field notes such information as emotional states and feelings. Reference is made in this chapter to the fusions of thinking and feeling that are evident in the traditional representation of fieldwork experience in field notes, with consideration given to field notes that depict epiphanies (Johnson, 1975; Lehnerer, 1996).

Field notes provide a glimpse behind the scenes, a look at impression management, as it was taken for granted among fieldworkers at different moments in the historical unfolding of qualitative research in the social sciences. Textbooks on fieldwork almost exclusively focus on gaining entry, establishing rapport, building trust and so on, but critics have identified the step-by-step plan or process as far too simplistic, since fieldwork appears as a series of resolvable problems when in fact this is not the reality. Each step in fieldwork is affected by the development of interpersonal contingencies in the setting. Being in the subject's world means being surrounded by the real life contingencies, as an enduring problematic of fieldwork (Gumbrium and Holstein, 1997: 68–69). Contingencies make the researcher vulnerable and may cause personal stress.

I discuss in this chapter the place of emotions in traditional fieldwork and in contemporary feminist scholarship. An overview is provided of the social constructionist view of emotions, with an emphasis on Hoschild's 'emotion work' (1979, 1983). Young and Lee's (1996) analysis of Young's field note account is explored. I take into consideration degradation ceremonies and epiphanies that have functioned to highlight the highly personal and emotional aspects of fieldwork experiences. Epiphanies are shown to be 'turning point experiences', moments when people redefine themselves and their life projects (Denzin, 1992a: 82). Such interactional moments 'leave marks on people's lives (and) have the potential for creating transformative experiences for the person' (1992a: 15). 'Role detachment' may constitute an epiphany or 'turning-point event', or the death of a family member or near death experience of a research subject, or a point in the moral career of the interpretive inquirer, when there is realization that all 'honesty exits' are closed and they must live with the consequences, or when the lived experience of fieldwork forces a realization that the methods section of a dissertation proposal is more appropriately the topic of the doctoral thesis (Lehnerer, 1996).

The liminal properties of field notes are explored in this chapter, with reference to betwixt and between words, betwixt and between selves and betwixt and between worlds (Jackson, 1990). Supporting evidence of crossing boundaries between worlds and selves is found in the work of McGettigan (1997) and in the field notes provided by Lehnerer (1996). A discussion of field notes and ethics covers auditing the content and form of notes and cultural scenarios reflected within them that provide a commentary on the emotional displays of research respondents to researchers in the role of moral entrepreneur. Field notes are shown to reflect on patterns of 'involvement', 'comfort' and 'identifying', as collective experiences of fieldworkers of various theoretical and philosophical persuasions, published in ethnographies of mainstream sociological literature, that ideally are templates for learning; but which can become problematic for the management of 'emotion work' when there is lack of fit with actual fieldwork practice (Young and Lee, 1996).

Chapter 8 looks at 'textual management' of self and others. Academic writing has undergone considerable change during the last few decades, particularly since the ground breaking text *Writing culture: the poetics and politics of ethnography* (Clifford and Marcus, 1986), the companion volume *Anthropology as cultural critique* (Marcus and Fischer, 1986) and Van Maanen's *Tales of the Field* (1988) ushered in the 'writing culture' debate in the mid-1980s. A brief historical overview is presented of the 'crisis of representation' debate.

Prior to the postmodern turn, anthropology and sociology have not been overly concerned with communicative contexts (dialogue, social relationships, voice, intuition and feelings). The position of the third-person omniscient author in realist texts, which spoke on behalf of others

with an authority based on having 'been there', was not questioned. The main critique of 'ethnographic realism' is shown to have come from within the discipline of anthropology. Ethnographer critics, broadly sympathetic to ethnography and themselves with considerable experience in the use of the ethnographic method, questioned their own practice, reporting styles and procedures, and accused others of not being reflexive enough and for failing to adopt a critical attitude (Brewer, 1994). In questioning their own practice, ethnographers have also drawn attention to the problematic nature of the author, the playing out of power and ethical relations through 'voice'.

In this chapter emphasis is on the alternative contemporary approach to textual representation, emphasizing in particular the issue of author and the concept of voice in its multiple dimensions, and political and ethical implications. How to present the author's self in text, while simultaneously writing in the subject's accounts and representing their selves, is the main focus of the chapter. The contemporary focus on voice is shown not to be exclusively around the theme of power, but rather on ethics or the moral relationship of the observer and observed. The feminist ideals of equality and solidarity between the researcher and researched that underpins the two-pronged crisis set in motion broadly within the academic audience with the 'writing culture' debate calls for the emancipation of voices.

Biographies, autobiographies, confessional tales, confessional and dramatic ethnography, such new forms of writing in disciplines like anthropology and sociology, are explored in relation to socio-political, ethical, moral and personal concerns. The focus on dramatic sequences captures the presentational style of new experimental ethnographies; the stories or narratives experienced by the ethnographer in the field are dramatic events with transformative potentiality (McGettigan, 1997). Some say writers have turned cultural objects, including themselves, into subjects. 'Dramatic ethnography' is shown to focus on a particular event or sequence of events of obvious significance to the cultural members studied (Van Maanen, 1995).

The 'ethics of relationships' is shown to surface in the text in the way authors demonstrate the same respect in print to those with whom they have formed close relationships in the field. One is being advised not to say in print what they would not express to others in the face-to-face social situation (Hornstein, 1996). The 'textual management of self' requires the author give attention to the public's right to know and the subject's right to privacy. Emphasis is given to the author's need to be accountable to relationships they write about, but to balance these with ethical and moral imperatives (there is the public's right to know that needs consideration). The decision to write the self into the text in sociologically relevant ways, in case studies, life histories and autobiographies, is recommended, but with recognition that such practices produce a sufficient amount of descriptive material to make a deductive

disclosure. Links could be made between the researcher and subjects and information divulged that they would prefer others did not know about.

The greater freedom to experiment with texts is recognized as not automatically a guarantee of a better product. New styles of writing are shown to require new criteria to evaluate the quality of qualitative inquiry. In particular, reference is made to verisimilitude, aesthetics and ethics. When moving from fieldwork to 'writing it up', decisions have to be made on how best to present information to persuade an audience of the text's credibility (or verisimilitude) and for promoting appropriate moral and ethical tone.

In this chapter, disclosure and publication are portrayed as events that make the ethnographer-author vulnerable to critics from the two main audiences (academic and subject), and a successful performance is linked with partial 'self-censorship' (Lee, 1993) and 'ethical proofreading' of manuscripts (Johnson, 1982). Harms from fieldwork are generally thought to occur with publishing and disclosure (Lee, 1993). The problem posed by secrecy moves beyond 'how to get it' to include 'what to do with it' (Fabian, 1991). Data themselves are not necessarily sensitive or particularly harmful, but the possibilities of causing harm accrue from the uses to which data are put. The new ethnographer or postgraduate needs adequately to anticipate problems of disclosure and publication and be mindful of potential ethical and moral implications.

When deciding what to include in the text and how to include it, the author goes beyond reporting what actually happened to interpreting how an audience will respond. The social, emotional, political and ethical implications of fieldwork may all feature in the author's perceptions of audience receptivity. Anticipatory strategies of 'writing it up' enable the author more adequately to deal with identity, loyalties, obligations and interpretations. Strategies of 'self-censorship' are dealt with. Some authors are shown to omit materials from published reports in consideration of self, professional associates, the research institution and research participants (Lee, 1993: 187). Others decide not to publish at all. Some intentionally delay publication so as to promote good personal relations, protect individuals and groups from harm and avoid becoming entangled in embroilment of various kinds.

Moral and ethical problems may arise where individuals or members of a group are not appropriately acknowledged, or acknowledged in a manner they deem to be less than appropriate, given their status, past experience or role performance in a given team project that is being written about. To be appropriately presented requires attention be paid to protocols. Included in this chapter is a discussion of acknowledgements, referencing and the ethical and practical issues associated with co-authorship.

Ethnographers who enter another culture (as well as those who do fieldwork at home and enter subcultures) must be personally and pro-

fessionally responsible for the problems they choose to study, their conduct in the field and the use to which their findings are put (Partridge, 1979). Each of these aspects of fieldwork constitutes a moral dilemma. New ethnographers and postgraduate students cannot adequately foresee the ethical and moral consequences of fieldwork. This book covers sensitive topics, back-region study, dubious methods, multiple and overlapping roles and various role relationships (power, intimate and social), the necessary negotiations between the researcher and others in professional and power contexts. The conditions of fieldwork (the paradoxes, ambiguities, indeterminacies and dilemmas connected with these dimensions), in a type of research that requires the researcher be in contact with subjects, rather than the impersonal detached stance of positivist quantitative research, means ethical and moral problems are an inherent part of fieldwork (Fabian, 1991).

Controversies and contingencies of fieldwork, however, are not to be viewed merely as obstructions to observation and cause for avoidance of fieldwork. The controversies and contingencies may be regarded as opportunism for celebration, since they carry the potential to make the researcher less immune to what others expect and experience the researcher as, and thus force self-awareness. There is the promise of development of moral researchers and moral fieldwork in the future.

CHAPTER 2

The moral career of the qualitative fieldworker

A number of external forces have been recognized as influential to the rise of ethics in research: the rise of feminism and feminist scholarship; consciousness with the rights of the individual; the emergence of critical and participatory approaches in social science research; and the establishment of ethics committees within various disciplines, university departments and research institutions (Punch, 1994). Within the various social science disciplines, notably anthropology and sociology, and feminist scholarship there has been more emphasis in recent times given to ethical and moral dilemmas of fieldwork, and concern with the traditional ethical model (comprised of both absolutist and relativist perspectives), as being too impersonal, objective and rational to handle the practice of fieldwork that has moved towards a more personal, interactive and moral form.

The conditions of fieldwork (paradoxes, ambiguities and dilemmas) that is qualitative, by way of contrast to quantitative research inquiry (positivistic-oriented and impersonal), that put the researcher in direct contact with people to form various types of relationships (power, personal and social), make fieldwork inherently problematic (Fabian, 1991). Ethical and moral dilemmas are an occupational work hazard of fieldwork that the researcher cannot plan for, but nonetheless must be addressed on the spot, by drawing on values, ideals, ethical codes, moral and professional standards, intuition and emotions.

A significant moral issue at the heart of fieldwork practice in social science is the call for more participation and less observation, of *being with* and *for* the other, not *looking at*. The alternative to the traditional detached aloof observer, distanced from subjects to foster analysis and interpretation, is the researcher in the 'round'; is the thinking, feeling human being who is caring, sharing and genuinely interested in friendship and the needs of others. The new form of fieldwork being suggested not only puts people in contact with others in more sensitive ways than in past moments in social science, but also calls for more maturity, greater sensitivity, authenticity and integrity. It also creates difficulties with the management of *anonymity* and *confidentiality* (Lincoln, 1995, 1998). The traditional absolutist ethical model that favours impersonal