

## INTERVIEWS

As an anthropologist, Spradley introduces the very important concept of interviewing as a major Qualitative method for the collection of data. Two major themes are involved in this process: developing rapport with those you are interviewing and attaining meaningful information. The rapport process, if developed correctly, has four stages: (1) Apprehension—most interviews have an element of uncertainty that may cause apprehensive feelings, both for the subject being interviewed and the researcher conducting the inquiry; (2) exploration—once rapport begins to be established, the researcher and the subject become more comfortable with each other; (3) cooperation represents the third stage. Here, mutual trust is established between both parties, and as a result, cooperation exists; (4) participation is the last step in gaining rapport. After some time spent together, the informant begins to perceive his or her role as a teacher to the researcher. At this stage, complete participation is achieved. Spradley then goes on to describe and analyze the various types of ethnographic Questions that the interviewer asks and elicits answers that have to be drawn from those being Questioned. This process should lead to further probing Questions and more in-depth information. The author examines numerous descriptive Questions. He goes on to offer the novice researcher practical methods in conducting an ethnographic interview.

# ASKING DESCRIPTIVE QUESTIONS

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**E**thnographic interviewing involves two distinct but complementary processes: developing rapport and eliciting information. Rapport encourages informants to talk about their culture. Eliciting information fosters the development of rapport. In this step we will examine rapport and discuss the nature of ethnographic questions, particularly descriptive questions.

## THE RAPPORT PROCESS

Rapport refers to a harmonious relationship between ethnographer and informant. It means that a basic sense of trust has developed that allows for the free flow of information. Both the ethnographer and the informant have positive feelings about the interviews, perhaps even enjoy them. However, rapport does not

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necessarily mean deep friendship or profound intimacy between two people. Just as respect can develop between two people who do not particularly like one another, rapport can exist in the absence of fondness and affection.

It is impossible to identify universal qualities that build rapport because harmonious relationships are culturally defined in every society. And so the ethnographer must pay particular attention to friendly relationships in each cultural scene to learn local, culture-bound features that build rapport. For example, when I interviewed Kwakiutl informants in British Columbia, I observed that friends and kinsmen sat together in long periods of silence. Although difficult, I learned to sit in silence and to converse more slowly. The rapport I gained through adopting these local patterns of interaction contributed to successful interviews. What follows regarding rapport must be taken as general suggestions. Some will work well within our own society in many cultural scenes; other suggestions must be modified to fit local cultural situations as well as the peculiarities of individual informants.

Probably the only universal characteristic of rapport is that it changes and fluctuates over time. On first encounter a potential informant may appear eager and cooperative. During the first interview this same informant appears uncomfortable, anxious, and even defensive. A different informant, after several interviews conducted in a harmonious fashion, becomes suspicious and bored, even discontinuing further contact. Laura Bohannon, in her classic anthropological novel, *Return to Laughter*, graphically describes the fluctuating rapport she experienced with her informants. Yabo, an old man who showed initial antagonism, became the first informant to reveal the secrets of witchcraft. Kako, the chief, took the anthropologist into his homestead and expressed willingness to help from the start. However, circumstances changed and he soon refused to talk of anything significant, influencing others to ignore the anthropologist. Finally, this phase in the relationship passed and Kako again became a willing and helpful informant.

Although sometimes unpredictable, rapport frequently does develop in a patterned way. I want to suggest a model of the *rapport process* in ethnographic interviewing. This model will provide the beginning ethnographer with a kind

of compass for recognizing when rapport is developing well and when it has wandered off course. It can provide a basis for identifying and correcting problems that arise in the ethnographer-informant relationship.

The rapport process, in cases where it develops successfully, usually proceeds through the following stages:

APPREHENSION -- EXPLORATION --  
COOPERATION -- PARTICIPATION

I want to discuss these stages by focusing on the interaction that goes on *during* interviews. In doing this, however, we should not lose sight of the wider context of field work. Most ethnographers will conduct participant observation at the same time, thus encountering key informants when they are working, visiting friends, enjoying leisure time, and carrying out ordinary activities. These encounters contribute to rapport as much as, or more than, the encounters during actual interviews. Under such conditions, the relationship may move more quickly to full cooperation. However, rapport still goes through a sequence of stages. Many times an ethnographer may want to conduct interviews with people not encountered during participant observation; rapport can still develop in a positive manner.

### Apprehension

Ethnographic interviews always begin with a sense of uncertainty, a feeling of *apprehension*. This is true for both experienced ethnographers and the beginner. Every time I contacted a tramp and asked if we could talk, I felt apprehensive and sensed that each potential informant had similar feelings. Sometimes apprehension is slight; at other times informants express deep anxiety and suspicion. I recall one tramp who seemed overly anxious. I explained my purpose and began asking questions but received only brief, curt replies. I felt increasing discomfort and made further attempts to put my informant at ease. "Are you with the F.B.I.?" he finally blurted out. I assured him I was a professor at the nearby medical school and had no connection with the F.B.I., or the local police department. He made me promise that I would not divulge his name

to anyone, that all his statements could only be used anonymously.

Such extreme apprehension is rare, but some degree of uncertainty starting with the first contact through one or two interviews is common. The informant doesn't know what to expect, doesn't really understand the purposes and motives of the ethnographer. Both researcher and informant are unsure how the other person will evaluate responses. Informants may fear that they will not meet the expectations of the ethnographer. They may comment: "I don't know if I know enough," or "I'm not sure I can really help you, maybe you ought to talk to someone else about this."

The realization that ethnographic interviews begin with some uncertainty in the relationship can help the beginning ethnographer relax and accept this fact. At the same time, several things can help move the interviews through the stage of apprehension. The most important thing is to get informants talking. As we shall see later in this step, *descriptive questions* are especially useful to start the conversation and keep an informant freely talking. It does not usually matter what a person talks about; it does matter that the informant does most of the talking during the first couple of interviews. When an informant talks, the ethnographer has an opportunity to listen, to show interest, and to respond in a nonjudgmental fashion. These kinds of responses represent the most effective way to reduce an informant's apprehension. They communicate acceptance and engender trust. One of the most important principles, then, for the first interviews is to *keep informants talking*.

### Exploration

Apprehension usually gives way quickly to *exploration*. In this stage of the rapport process, both ethnographer and informant begin trying out the new relationship. Together they seek to discover what the other person is like, what the other person really wants from the relationship. Exploration is a time of listening, observing, and testing. What does he want me to say? Can she be trusted? Is she going to be able to answer my questions? What does she really want from these interviews? Am I answering questions as

I should? Does he really want to know what I know? These questions often go unspoken but exist nonetheless.

Apprehension, the first stage, arises in part from simple unfamiliarity with the terrain of ethnographic interviews. Exploration is the natural process of becoming familiar with this new landscape. Although each party begins exploring immediately, there comes a point where they leave behind the feelings of uncertainty and anxiety to enter the fullblown stage of exploration. It may occur when each laughs at something said, when the informant seems to go off on an interesting tangent, or when the ethnographer mentally sets aside prepared questions to talk about something. When a sense of sharing occurs, a moment of relaxation comes. Both can then begin to explore the territory with greater freedom.

Informants need the opportunity to move through the stage of exploration without the pressure to fully cooperate. It takes time to grasp the nature of ethnographic interviews. It takes time to see if the ethnographer's actions will match the explanation offered during the first interview. Valuable data can be collected during this stage if the ethnographer is willing to wait for full cooperation. During this stage a certain tenseness exists and both parties may find the interviews exhausting.

Three important principles facilitate the rapport-building process during this stage. First, *make repeated explanations*. A simple statement may suffice: "As I said earlier, I'm interested in finding out how you talk about things, how you see things. I want to understand things from your point of view." One dare not assume that informants appreciate the nature of ethnographic interviews based only on the first explanation. Repetition before each interview, during interviews, and at the end of each will pay great dividends.

Second, *restate what informants say*. Using this principle, the ethnographer selects key phrases and terms used by an informant and restates them. Restating in this fashion reinforces what has been said by way of explanation. Restating demonstrates an interest in learning the informant's language and culture. Here are three examples of restatements typical of my interviews with tramps:

1. "Then you would say, 'I made the bucket in Seattle.'"
2. "So, if a man was a trustee, he'd do easy time."
3. "Then I might hear another tramp saying, 'He's a bindle stiff.' Is that right?"

Restating embodies the nonjudgmental attitude which contributes directly to rapport. When the ethnographer restates what an informant says, a powerful, unstated message is communicated—"I understand what you're saying; I am learning; it is valuable to me." Restatement must be distinguished from reinterpreting, a process in which the interviewer states *in different words* what the other person said. Reinterpreting prompts informants to translate; restating prompts them to speak in their own ordinary, everyday language.

The third principle states, *don't ask for meaning, ask for use*. Beginning ethnographers often become overconcerned with meanings and motives. They tend to press informants with questions like, "What do you mean by that?" and "Why would you do that?" These questions contain a hidden judgmental component. Louder than words, they seem to shout, "You haven't been clear; you haven't explained adequately; you are hiding the true reasons for what you told me." Ethnographic interviewing differs from most other approaches by the absence of probing "why" and "what do you mean" questions.

Let me contrast the use of *why questions* and *meaning questions* with the strategy of asking informants how they use their ordinary language. An unfamiliar term emerged in my interviews with tramps; it was called "days hanging." I heard an informant say, "I had twenty days hanging so I pled guilty and asked the judge for the alcoholism treatment center." Another recalled, "Well, I left town because I had a lot of days hanging." Tramps could respond to direct questions and at first I asked things like, "Why did you have twenty days hanging?" "Why did you leave town?" and "What do you mean you had twenty days hanging?" However, this kind of questioning led directly to translations for my benefit. "Well, I had twenty days hanging because I'd made the bucket four times in a row." "I left town 'cause I knew I'd do hard time." And such

translations required still more probing "why" questions—"Why did you have twenty days?" "What do you *mean*, did hard time?" Such questions communicated to my informants that they had not been clear. In a subtle, unspoken way, these questions pressured informants to use their translation competence.

As time went on I learned that instead of asking for meaning, it worked best to ask for use. Cultural meaning emerges from understanding how people *use* their ordinary language. With tramps, I would restate, then ask how the phrase was used. For example, I would say, "You had twenty days hanging. Could you tell me what you would say to the judge if you had ten or thirty or sixty days hanging?" Or I might ask for the way others used this phrase: "Would tramps generally talk about the days they had hanging before they went into the courtroom? What kinds of things would I hear them saying?" I might be more direct: "What are some other ways you could talk about days hanging?" or "Would someone ever say, 'I had twenty days hanging so I pled *not* guilty?'" Asking for use is a guiding principle that underlies all ethnographic interviewing. When combined with restating and making repeated explanations, ethnographic interviews usually move quickly through the stage of exploration.

### Cooperation

In time, the rapport process moves into the next stage—cooperation. Informants often cooperate from the start of the first interview, but this stage involves more complete cooperation based on mutual trust. Instead of uncertainty, the ethnographer and informant know what to expect of one another. They no longer worry about offending each other or making mistakes in asking or answering questions. More and more, both persons find satisfaction in meeting together to talk. Informants may offer personal information and feel free to ask the ethnographer questions. Most important, both share in the definition of the interviews; they both know the goal is to discover the culture of the informant in the language of the informant. Now informants may spontaneously correct the ethnographer: "No, I wouldn't say 'the police arrested me,' but that 'a bull pinched me.'"

### Participation

The final stage in the rapport process is *participation*. After many weeks of working closely with an informant, sometimes a new dimension is added to the relationship, one in which the informant recognizes and accepts the role of teaching the ethnographer. When this happens there is a heightened sense of cooperation and full participation in the research. Informants begin to take a more assertive role. They bring new information to the attention of the ethnographer and help in discovering patterns in their culture. They may begin to *analyze* their culture, but always from their own frame of reference. Between interviews they are on the lookout for information relevant to the ethnographic goals. Not all informants progress to this last stage of participation. If they do, they increasingly become participant observers in their own cultural scene. The ethnographer's role is then to help informant/participant-observers record what they know.

Building rapport is a complex process, one that every ethnographer must monitor when doing field work. In conducting ethnographic interviews, this process is facilitated by following certain principles: keep informants talking; make repeated explanations; restate what informants say; and don't ask for meaning, ask for use. When combined with asking ethnographic questions, rapport will usually develop in a smooth way from apprehension through cooperation and even into the stage of participation.

### ETHNOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

In most forms of interviewing, questions are distinct from answers. The interviewer asks the questions, someone else responds with answers. This separation often means that questions and answers come from two different cultural meaning systems. Investigators from one cultural scene draw on their frame of reference to formulate questions. The people who respond are from a different cultural scene and draw on another frame of reference to provide answers. This kind of interviewing assumes that questions and answers are separate elements in

human thinking. In the study of other cultures it frequently leads to distortions.

Ethnographic interviewing, on the other hand, begins with the assumption that the question-answer sequence is a single element in human thinking. Questions always imply answers. Statements of any kind always imply questions. This is true even when the questions and answers remain unstated. In ethnographic interviewing, *both questions and answers must be discovered from informants*. Mary Black and Duane Metzger have summarized this point of view:

It is basic to communications theory that you don't start getting any information from an utterance or event until you know what it is in response to—you must know what question is being answered. It could be said of ethnography that until you know the question that someone in the culture is responding to you can't know many things about the responses. Yet the ethnographer is greeted, in the field, with an array of *responses*. He needs to know what question people are *answering* in their every act. He needs to know which questions are being taken for granted because they are what "everybody knows" without thinking. ... Thus the task of the ethnographer is to discover questions that seek the relationship among entities that are conceptually meaningful to the people under investigation (1965:144).

There are three main ways to discover questions when studying another culture. First, the ethnographer can record the questions people ask in the course of everyday life. An ethnographer on a university campus in the United States might hear students asking the following questions about motion pictures: "Who stars in that one?" or "Is it rated R?" Other questions would probably be asked about particular courses such as: "Is that a sluff course?" or "When does it meet?" Some settings offer unique opportunities for discovering questions, as Frake has pointed out:

The ethnographer can listen for queries in use in the cultural scenes he observes, giving special attention to query-rich settings, e.g., children querying parents, medical specialists querying patients, legal authorities querying witnesses, priests querying the gods (1964a:143).

Second, the ethnographer can inquire directly about questions used by participants in a cultural scene. Black and Metzger have suggested three strategies:

1. To ask the informant, "What is an interesting question about \_\_\_\_\_?"
2. To ask the informant, "What is a question to which the answer is \_\_\_\_\_?"
3. To ask the informant to write a text in question-and-answer form on some topic of interest to the investigator (1965:146).

In my ethnographic research with tramps and cocktail waitresses I found it useful to create a hypothetical situation and then ask for questions. For example, I would ask a waitress-informant, "If I listened to waitresses talking among themselves at the beginning of an evening, what questions would I hear them ask each other?" To which they might answer, "Who's the other bartender tonight?" or "Which section would you like to work?"

A third strategy for discovering questions simply asks informants to talk about a particular cultural scene. This approach uses general *descriptive questions* that are less likely to reflect the ethnographer's culture. Answers can be used to discover other culturally relevant questions. This approach is like offering informants a frame and canvas and asking them to paint a word-picture of their experience. "Could you tell me what the jail is like?" and "Could you describe a typical evening at Brady's Bar?" are examples of such *descriptive questions*. A variation on this approach developed by Agar (1969) in his study of heroin addicts in prison, is to ask two or more informants to role-play typical interactions from the cultural scene under consideration. As informants talk to each other, the ethnographer can record questions and answers. In the rest of this chapter I want to discuss in detail several kinds of descriptive questions.

## DESCRIPTIVE QUESTIONS

Descriptive questions take "advantage of the power of language to construe settings" (Frake

1. Grand Tour Questions
  - 1.1 Typical Grand Tour Questions
  - 1.2 Specific Grand Tour Questions
  - 1.3 Guided Grand Tour Questions
  - 1.4 Task-Related Grand Tour Questions
2. Mini-Tour Questions
  - 2.1 Typical Mini-Tour Questions
  - 2.2 Specific Mini-Tour Questions
  - 2.3 Guided Mini-Tour Questions
  - 2.4 Task-Related Mini-Tour Questions
3. Example Questions
4. Experience Questions
5. Native-Language Questions
  - 5.1 Direct Language Questions
  - 5.2 Hypothetical-Interaction Questions
  - 5.3 Typical-Sentence Questions

**Figure 1** Kinds of Descriptive Questions

1964a:143). The ethnographer does need to know at least one setting in which the informant carries out routine activities. For example, I needed to know my informants spent much of their time in jail to be able to ask, "Could you tell me what the jail is like?" I needed to know that cocktail waitresses worked evenings in Brady's Bar to be able to ask, "Could you describe a typical evening at Brady's Bar?" Because ethnographers almost always know *who* an informant is, they almost always know at least one appropriate setting to be used in a descriptive question. If one is studying air-traffic controllers, it is easy to ask, "What do you do as an air-traffic controller?" If one is studying the culture of housewives, it is easy to ask an informant, "Could you describe a typical day? What do you do as a housewife?"

There are five major types of descriptive questions and several subtypes (Figure 1). Their precise form will depend on the cultural scene selected for investigation. Descriptive questions aim to elicit a large sample of utterances in the informant's native language. They are intended to encourage an informant to talk about a particular cultural scene. Sometimes a single descriptive question can keep an informant talking for more than an hour.

One key principle in asking descriptive questions is that *expanding the length of the question tends to expand the length of the response*. Although a question like, "Could you tell me

what the jail is like?" qualifies as a descriptive question, it needs expansion. Instead of this brief form, I might say, "I've never been inside the jail before, so I don't have much of an idea what it's like. Could you kind of take me through the jail and tell me what it's like, what I would see if I went into the jail and walked all around? Could you tell me what it's like?" Expanding descriptive questions not only gives informants time to think, but it says, "Tell me as much as you can, in great detail."

### 1. Grand Tour Questions

A grand tour question simulates an experience many ethnographers have when they first begin to study a cultural scene. I arrived at the alcoholism treatment center and the director asked, "Would you like a grand tour of the place?" As we walked from building to building, he named the places and objects we saw, introduced me to people, and explained the activities in progress. I could not ask tramps to give me a grand tour of the Seattle City Jail, so I simply asked a grand tour question: "Could you describe the inside of the jail for me?" In both situations, I easily collected a large sample of native terms about these cultural scenes.

A grand tour usually takes place in a particular locale: a jail, a college campus, a home, a factory, a city, a fishing boat, etc. Grand tour questions about a locale almost always make sense to informants. We can now expand the idea of "grand tour" to include many other aspects of experience. In addition to *space*, informants can give us a grand tour through some *time* period: "Could you describe the main things that happen during the school year, beginning in September and going through May or June?" They can take an ethnographer through a sequence of *events*: "Can you tell me all the things that happen when you get arrested for being drunk, from the first moment you encounter the police, through going to court and being sentenced, until you finally get out jail?" An informant can give the ethnographer a grand tour through some group of *people*: "Can you tell me the names of all your relatives and what each one is like?" Some large events such as a ceremony are made up of *activities* that can become the basis for a grand tour question: "What are all the things that you do during the

initiation ceremony for new members who join the fraternity?" Even a group of *objects* offers an opportunity for a grand tour: "Could you describe all the different tools and other equipment you use in farming?" Whether the ethnographer uses *space, time, events, people, activities, or objects*, the end result is the same: a verbal description of significant features of the cultural scene. Grand tour questions encourage informants to ramble on and on. There are four different types which vary the way such questions are asked.

*1.1. Typical Grand Tour Questions.* In this form, the ethnographer asks for a description of how things usually are. "Could you describe a *typical* night at Brady's Bar?" One might ask a secretary informant: "Could you describe a *typical* day at the office?" In studying Kwakiutl salmon fishing, I asked, "Could you tell me how you *usually* make a set?" Typical grand tour questions ask the informant to generalize, to talk about a pattern of events.

*1.2. Specific Grand Tour Questions.* A specific question takes the most recent day, the most recent series of events, or the locale best known to the informant. "Could you describe what happened at Brady's Bar last night, from the moment you arrived until you left?" An ethnographer might ask a secretary, "Tell me what you did yesterday, from the time you got to work until you left?" "Tell me about the last time you made a set, fishing for salmon." Some informants find it difficult to generalize to the *typical* but can easily describe a recent situation.

*1.3. Guided Grand Tour Questions.* This form asks the informant to give an actual grand tour. A secretary might be asked: "Could you show me around the office?" The ethnographer might ask a Kwakiutl fisherman, "The next time you make a set, can I come along and could you explain to me what you are doing?" Some subjects, such as a typical year or month, do not lend themselves to a guided tour.

*1.4. Task-Related Grand Tour Questions.* These questions ask the informant to perform some simple task that aids in the description. For example, I frequently asked tramps, "Could you draw a map of the inside of the Seattle City

Jail and explain to me what it's like?" While performing this task, they added a great deal of verbal description. The map helped informants to remember and gave me a better understanding of the jail as they saw it. In studying the cultural scene of backgammon players, I asked, "Could you play a game of backgammon and explain what you are doing?" When informants perform tasks in the context of grand tour questions, the ethnographer can ask numerous questions along the way, such as, "What is this?" and "What are you doing now?"

## 2. Mini-Tour Questions

Responses to grand tour questions offer almost unlimited opportunities for investigating smaller aspects of experience. Because grand tour questions lead to such rich descriptions, it is easy to overlook these new opportunities. One ethnographer, investigating the culture of directory assistance operators working for Bell Telephone Co., began with a grand tour question: "Could you describe a typical day in your work as a directory assistance operator?" After a lengthy description, she discovered that one recurrent activity was "taking calls." Each call lasted an average of 37 seconds. This led to a mini-tour question: "Could you describe what goes on in taking a call?" The informant was able to break down that brief period of time into more than a dozen activities, ones that were far more complex than the ethnographer realized when she asked the question.

Mini-tour questions are identical to grand tour questions except they deal with a much smaller unit of experience. "Could you describe what you do when you take a break at Brady's Bar?" "Could you draw me a map of the trusty tank in the Seattle City Jail?" "Could you describe to me how you take phone calls in your work as a secretary?" The four kinds of mini-tour questions (typical, specific, guided, task-related) use the same approaches as their counterparts do with grand tour questions.

## 3. Example Questions

Example questions are still more specific, in most cases. They take some single act or event identified by the informant and ask for an

example. A tramp, in responding to a grand tour question, says, "I was arrested while pooling," and so I would ask, "Can you give me an example of pooling?" A waitress states, "There was a table of guys who really gave me a hard time last night." An example question: "Could you give me an example of someone giving you a hard time?" This type of question can be woven throughout almost any ethnographic interview. It often leads to the most interesting stories of actual happenings which an ethnographer will discover.

## 4. Experience Questions

This type merely asks informants for any experiences they have had in some particular setting. "You've probably had some interesting experiences in jail; can you recall any of them?" "Could you tell me about some experiences you have had working as a directory assistance operator?" These questions are so open ended that informants sometimes have difficulty answering them. They also tend to elicit atypical events rather than recurrent, routine ones. They are best used after asking numerous grand tour and mini-tour questions.

## 5. Native-Language Questions

Native-language questions are designed to minimize the influence of informants' translation competence. Because descriptive questions are a first step to discovering more culturally relevant questions, they sometimes contain words and phrases seldom used by informants. This encourages informants to translate. Native-language questions ask informants to use the terms and phrases most commonly used in the cultural scene.

When I first began studying tramps, I only knew they were often incarcerated in the Seattle City Jail. "Could you describe the jail?" was a useful grand tour question, but I still was not sure that "jail" was a commonly used term. And so I asked a native-language question: "How would you refer to the jail?" When informants uniformly said, "Oh, most guys would call it *the bucket*," I was able to use this term in future questions. "How would you talk about getting arrested?" led to the term "made the bucket."



Only then could I ask more meaningful descriptive questions like "Could you describe in detail what happens from beginning to end when you make the bucket?"

Native-language questions serve to remind informants that the ethnographer wants to learn their language. They can be used whenever one suspects an informant is translating for the ethnographer's benefit. They should be employed frequently in early interviews until an informant begins to state voluntarily, "The way we would say it is \_\_\_\_\_," or "Our term for that is \_\_\_\_\_." Every ethnographer can develop ways to insert native-language queries into each interview. I want to identify three useful strategies.

*5.1. Direct-Language Questions.* This type of native-language question simply asks "How would you refer to it?" when an informant uses a term. Sometimes it may take the form "Is that the way most people would say it?" For example, tramps often spoke of trying to find a place to sleep at night, so I would ask: "Would you say, 'I was trying to find a place to sleep?'" "No," they responded. "Probably I would say I was trying to *make a flop*." An ethnographer studying the culture of secretaries might ask the following native-language question:

SECRETARY: When I type letters I have to watch out for mistakes.

ETHNOGRAPHER: How would you refer to *mistakes*!

SECRETARY: Oh, I would call them *typos*.

The more familiar the informant and ethnographer are with each other's cultures, the more important native-language questions become. I asked many direct-language questions of cocktail waitresses for this reason. An informant would say, "These two customers were really hassling me," and I would ask, "How would you refer to them, as *customers*!" To which she would reply: "I'd probably say those two *obnoxos*."

*5.2. Hypothetical-Interaction Questions.* Speaking takes place between people with particular identities. When an informant is talking to an ethnographer, it may be difficult to recall ways to talk to other people. The ethnographer can

help in this recall by creating a hypothetical interaction. For example, an ethnographer could ask, "If you were talking to another directory assistance operator, would you say it that way?" Tramps not only interact among themselves but with policemen, or *bulls*. I often phrased hypothetical-interaction questions to discover how tramps talked to bulls as well as to other tramps.

Hypothetical-interaction questions can be used to generate many native-language utterances. I have interviewed children about school who could easily recall native usages when placed in situations such as the following: "If I were to sit in the back of your classroom, what kinds of things would I hear kids saying to each other?" "If a friend called on the phone to ask if you were going to bring your lunch, what would that person say?" It is even possible to construct the situation in more detail, as in the following question to a waitress: "Imagine yourself at a table of four male customers. You haven't said anything yet, and you don't know any of them. What kinds of things would they likely say to you when you first walked up to their table?" By being placed in a typical situation and having the identities of speaker and listener specified, most informants overcome any tendency to translate and recall many phrases used in ordinary talk.

*5.3. Typical-Sentence Questions.* A closely related kind of native-language question, this one asks for typical sentences that contain a word or phrase. "What are some sentences I would hear that include the phrase *making the bucket*" or "What are some sentences that use the term *flop*?" are two examples. The typical-sentence question provides an informant with one or more native terms and then asks that informant to use them in typical ways.

Descriptive questions form the basis of all ethnographic interviewing. They lead directly to a large sample of utterances that are expressed in the language used by informants in the cultural scene under investigation.

All ethnographic questions can be phrased in both personal and cultural terms. When phrasing questions *personally*, the ethnographer asks, "Can *you* describe a typical evening you would have at Brady's Bar?" or "How would

you refer to the jail?" This tells the informant to present his own point of view or her own particular, language usage. When phrasing questions *culturally*, the ethnographer asks, "Can you describe a typical evening for most cocktail waitresses at Brady's Bar?" or "How would most tramps refer to the jail?" An informant is someone who can tell about patterns of behavior in a particular scene, not merely his or her own actions. I recall one novice ethnographer who asked a letter carrier about lunch. "I don't eat lunch" was the reply. The ethnographer later rephrased the question in cultural terms: "What do letter carriers do at lunch time?" This query brought a long response which included those who didn't eat lunch, those who brought lunches and ate together, those who ate at restaurants, and several other variations. The various things letter carriers did at lunch turned out to be important cultural information. But eliciting this information depended on phrasing the question in cultural terms.

In this chapter we have examined the rapport process and some of the principles that will facilitate the development of rapport. In addition, we have examined the nature of ethnographic questions and descriptive questions in particular. Descriptive questions form the backbone of all ethnographic interviews. They will make up most of the questions asked in the first interview and their use will continue throughout all subsequent interviews. With practice, a beginning ethnographer can easily gain skill in asking this type of ethnographic question.

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## ENTERING THE FIELD

A researcher's capacity to transcend differences between the occupational culture of the group being studied from that of the researcher is illustrated by Van Maanen's ability to conduct a participant observation study of police within their own culture. By retrospectively discussing his early field experiences with an urban police department, the author analyzes the different roles he played while conducting his study. Of particular importance is the reciprocal relationship that occurs over time between those being studied and the researcher. Van Maanen explains how the completion of a successful research project is very dependent on the reactions and responses of the subjects being studied to the participation and involvement of the researcher within their social milieu. Last, the author offers advice for fieldworkers. He suggests that when conducting such active research, they should, upon entering the field, attempt to remove themselves from outside distractions that are not part of the research scene. This is the only way to gain access to the study groups' world without imparting the fieldworkers' own values into it.

# PLAYING BACK THE TAPE

## *Early Days in the Field*

JOHN VAN MAANEN

It is neatly the case that persons under the eye of an avowed researcher may well act in ways knowledgeable of this fact. This principle has been documented so many times that any statement attesting to its presence is now a methodological cliché. What is often overlooked, however, is the implicit reciprocity embedded in the cliché. That is, while researchers attend to the study of other persons and their activities, these others attend to the

study of researchers and their activities. An underlying theme of the confessional and cautionary tale I tell here is that the success of any fieldwork endeavor depends inherently on the results of the unofficial study the observed undertake of the observer.

My own research takes place in police agencies, where for the past 20 years I have been in and out of various research roles. Primarily from the bottom up, I have been trying to make

sense out of the police life, its consequences for the people who live it and for those subject to it. Like my own, it is a life patterned by the society in which it is located and by the specific organizations that, in imperfect ways, direct it. Significantly, a large body of writing relevant to the police life, policing as an activity, and police organizations in general has been generated through ethnographic fieldwork of the sort I practice. This chapter is about some of my practices as played out in the early days of my work with the police.

Framing my remarks is the view that social researchers are typically aliens in the worlds they study, if only because of their supposed double-edged and academic interests in these worlds. Fieldwork amplifies such strangeness because the researcher comes into the setting as an uninvited, unknown guest, carrying a suitcase, wearing an uncertain smile, and prepared for a long stay (Sanday, 1979). Moreover, the work routines of a field-worker, what Agar (1980) calls a "professional stranger," are rather unnatural or at least unusual ones in most settings—hanging around, snooping, engaging in seemingly idle chitchat, note taking, asking odd (often dumb) questions, pushing for disclosures on matters that may be a source of embarrassment to some on the scene, and so forth. In image and in fact, the activities that fill out the ethnographic curiosity represent a most uncommon adult role in virtually any social setting.

In strong form, the role carries with it a social stigma that can potentially discredit the fieldworker who embodies the role. Much of a fieldworker's behavior—particularly during the initial stages of a lengthy, live-in project—can be understood as an attempt to manage this stigma so that it does not loom large in everyday interaction and its potential is never fully realized. In weak form, the field-worker is in a *berwixt-and-between* position, akin to any newcomer on the studied scene who must undergo a shift from outsider to insider, recruit to member, observer to participant. Understanding fieldwork from this angle requires coming to terms with the characteristic problems faced by neophytes everywhere (Jackson, 1990). Both of these perspectives are applied below as I play back some of the actions that marked my initial encounters in the police world.

## RATIONALIZING FIELDWORK

My work began with a nine-month stay in the field. From the beginning, my official interest in police organizations has been presented to others in the form of a most practical logic. In 1969, for example, I wrote in my thesis proposal:

The police are quite possibly the most vital of our human service agencies. Certainly they are the most visible and active institution of social control, representing the technological and organizational answer to the question of social order. Through their exclusive mandate to intervene directly into the lives of the citizenry, the police are crucial actors in both our everyday and ceremonial affairs. As such, they deserve intensive and continual scientific study for their role and function in society is far too important to be taken-for-granted, or worse, ignored.

Such high-sounding sentiment provides a sort of doctrinaire or ideological canopy to cover my work. Although rooted in an appealing common sense, it is a woefully inadequate sociological explanation for my work on at least two counts. First, because I conveniently ignore what is to be explained or how such explanations might be forthcoming, my research (and fieldwork) is being used only rhetorically, to establish my credibility and moral authority. The logic of the statement is Olympian and can be read as an inverted Pogo-like aphorism: "I have found the solution and the solution is me." It is, in brief, a gate-opening ploy designed to persuade, not to establish purpose. Second, research canopies such as my formal statement carefully play down the fact that research is both a social and personal act. It is subject to the same biographically and situationally specific understandings by which any individual act is made sensible.

In my case, I began thinking of the police for a research topic in the late 1960s. Whether damned or praised, the police were then prominently fixed in the public imagination as crucial actors in the dramas of the day. I found the police intriguing in that cultural moment for no doubt the same reasons that had occurred to other intellectual types—journalists, novelists, and historians (e.g., Mailer, 1968; Rubinstein, 1973; Wambaugh, 1970). Nor were

the police being ignored by my sociological kin (e.g., Bittner, 1970; Manning, 1972; Reiss, 1971; Skolnick, 1966). The police were, in the vernacular, happening and hot and, therefore, dramaturgically attractive to me. Closer to home, however, I also had grown up subject to what I regarded as more than my share of police attention and hence viewed the police with a little loathing, some fear, and considerable curiosity. Nor were such feelings devoid of analytic supposition. I did not go to the field out of affection for the police. In many ways, I had it in for them as I packed my bags.

The general point here is that despite the conversions sure to occur with field experience, it is important for the would-be (and wanna-be) fieldworker to recognize as legitimate the personal matters that lead one into a project. Moreover, I suspect staying with a lengthy project may have more to do with the emotional pull and attraction of a given setting on the field-worker than with any abstracted notions of disciplinary aims such as the conventional one of "making a contribution to the field." There is always a person standing behind the research project, but the standard vocabularies of motive associated with the social research trades often preclude the public appearance of such a person.

Also at play during the early phases of fieldwork is the emergence of methodological ideals and a heightened self-consciousness. Method textbooks are of some comfort, but perhaps the most helpful advice to be found in print comes from carefully combing the prefaces and personal asides written (occasionally) by those who have field experience in the setting of interest. In my own work, the words of police researcher William Westley (1970) were particularly striking:

There was a terrible tension in the flow of this semi-participant research, for to understand, he had to sympathize; but, in attempting to sympathize, he wanted to be liked. To be liked, he had to play by their rules and not ask too many questions. Thus, the work went in waves of carefully building up confidences and inevitably becoming involved in their regard, then asking questions, sharp probing questions that soon caused rejection. This proved to be personally painful, in the sense that thereafter he had to push himself on men who he felt disliked and were afraid of

him and, practically disastrous, since if the men refused to talk to him, the research would stop. (p. vii)

The practical significance of such accounts are, I hasten to add, rather slight. Westley's words were riveting only after some of my perhaps overly eager fieldwork gestures failed to open up conversations (or, conversely, worked to close them down). Cautionary tales may alert one to a few of the situational demands of fieldwork, but they hardly offer much guidance as to how one will personally answer and remain alive to such demands. Thus, although Howard Becker's (1965b) classic query, "whose side are you on" (p. 239) went with me to the field, what it meant when I arrived there was entirely another matter.

Two concrete and apparently common problems cast shadows over the early stages of fieldwork in organizational settings. First, because fieldworkers typically force themselves through a third party—in my case, the high officials of the studied police agency—into the life situations of others, they must first disassociate themselves as best they can from the interest and control the third party may have over those who are studied. Second, field-workers must recognize that they cannot offer very much of obvious value to those who are studied. As such, there are few, if any, compelling reasons for people to participate in their studies. I could not reasonably claim to be able to cure police problems, teach the police very much, or influence their respective careers. The problem at both levels is to find people for whom one's practiced cover story for the research makes sense and for whom one's presence is not too great a burden.

To move into the flow of events that characterize the work and social situations of those studied requires the assistance of a few reasonably knowledgeable and reliable guides. They run interference for the fieldworker, provide testimony as to the field-worker's aims and character, and, in general, offer member interpretations for the passing scene such that the field-worker can assume lines of conduct that are more or less acceptable to others in the setting. Securing such assistance is a delicate and never-ending task. It is not a single, immutable

role a field-worker builds, but an emergent and many-sided one. With many patrolmen, for example, I wanted to appear as a humble, helpful sort, the proverbial "good guy" who would not be likely to do anyone harm. I did little favors for people, provided a sympathetic ear, and when they discussed the topics to which the men of the police culture invariably turned when filling up their day—sex, sports, cars—I joined in eagerly with my own two cents worth.

I tried also to display a good deal of circumspection in relation to what I heard and saw. I wanted to learn the ordinary standards of performance, not establish, recite, or mock them. In a sense, I sought to be accepted by others in the role of an appreciative student or worthy apprentice and sought explicitly to disclaim the judgmental prerogatives commonly associated with a research or expert role (Van Maanen & Kolb, 1984). Yet any form of sustained inquiry implies an evaluative framework—even if one is no more than a reluctant witness. Distrust, suspicion, and guarded conduct cannot be dispelled simply by assuming a sort of "good guy" stance.

The obvious point here is that fieldwork turns not on claims, candor, or mutual regard per se, but on trust. Conventional theories of trust locate its origins in the person toward whom it is directed rather than in the particular occasions of its appearance. This view is, I think, quite misleading not only because it glosses over the ebb and flow of trust over time, but also because it reduces the field-worker or confidant to something of a doofus or cipher, an altogether accommodating sort of nonperson, totally embraced by a research role. Trust underlies all social interaction. In the field, it is built slowly and comes forth only in particular situations with particular people as the field-worker displays a practical understanding, a partisan stance, and a visible conformance to the forms of conduct followed by those studied.

To demonstrate competence in the performances appropriate to a specific social setting does not mean that the field-worker must engage in some sort of echolalia, imitating gesture for gesture and thought for thought the actions of others on the scene. Nor does it mean that one should take a servile stance toward others. In the police world, both orientations would be inappropriate. The first would be detected quickly

as phony and resented because no one likes to be mimicked. The second would jar the refined sense of propriety among the police, who in general interpret weakness or lack of opinion and judgment on the part of another as a sure sign of moral decay. Competence consists of hanging on to a part of one's own identity and style while staying within the boundaries of tolerable behavior as established by those on the scene. Strategy, however, can go only so far.

Disagreeable and unapproachable people are sure to be among those with whom the field-worker must deal. Not everyone is equally open or receptive to the field-worker's presence. Nor is it the case that relationships in the field should be—even in the ideal—random, representative, or equal. Members of the studied world are hardly equivalent in the knowledge they possess. Field-workers do not want to become close to just anyone, but rather want to count among their associates the more open, knowledgeable, comfortable, good-natured, well-placed, and articulate members of the organization. The fact is, however, that informants probably select the researcher as much as the researcher selects them. There is a rather impenetrable barrier between what a grizzled 58-year old street cop will tell a green pea regardless of whether the green pea is a rookie patrolman or a merry field-worker. Glimpses of these boundaries are provided by some snippets of unambiguous rejection recorded in my fieldnotes:

What do you expect to learn from me? I'm another cabbage around here just trying to lay low and keep outta trouble. Go talk to the blue-light-and-siren boys, they've got the corner on the action. Me? I don't do any police work anymore, haven't for twenty years I'd say.

Stay outta my life, Van Maanen. I don't have nothing to say to you and you don't have nothing to say to me. I'm putting in my time.... I don't know what you want and I wouldn't give a shit even if I did. You mind your business and I'll mind mine.

Sociologists? Shit. You're supposed to know what's going on around here. Christ, you come on asking questions like we're the fucking problem. Why don't you go study the goddamn niggers and find out what's wrong with them? They're the fucking problem, not us. I haven't met a sociologist yet who'd make a pimple on a street cop's ass.

## TESTING THE FIELD-WORKER

The field-worker's biographical particulars (both fixed and variable) and the situationally specific suppositions (including the unarticulated sort) carried by those in the setting interact, of course, in uncountable ways. Moreover, the biographical particulars and situationally specific suppositions that matter most to others are precisely what the fieldworker has gone into the field to locate. Understanding why and where one's presence is likely to bring forth an "oh fuck, here he comes again" response on the part of others is not merely a tactical consideration. A good part of fieldwork is simply paying attention to the impressions one's vocation, words, and activities cast off. Being out of line or, more crudely, making an ass of oneself is an operational indicator of subjecting oneself to the life situation of others. From this perspective, field-workers are concerned not only with what is revealed explicitly by others but also with the conditional properties that appear to lubricate (or jam) such revelations. Sharpening one's character in the field is both a means of inquiry and, when recognized, an end. Consider now some setting-specific features of my fieldwork with the police.

My entrance into the police world was intended to be similar to that of any recruit. I made no effort to conceal my identity or the general purposes behind my work—although the meaning of this work for those who knew me or of me was no doubt highly variable. In the beginning, I was provided a uniform, a reservist badge and number, a departmental-issue .32-caliber revolver, and a slot in the police academy training class. From an insider's perspective, passage through the academy represents the first common and fundamental test of membership. Few fail, although reputations can be earned in the academy that live long lives. For a field-worker as for a recruit, academy life provided an instant set of cohorts, a source and sense of identification with the agency, and a few but precious friends.

Following graduation, I moved to the street and assumed a less participative role, though on my body I still carried a badge and gun. These symbols of membership signified to others my public commitment to share the risks of the police life. Aside from a few special events,

parades, and civic ceremonies where uniformed bodies were in short supply, I was, as the police said, out of the bag. I dressed for the street as I thought plainclothes officers might—heavy and hard-toed shoes, slit or clip-on ties, and loose-fitting jackets that would not make conspicuous the bulge of my revolver. I carried with me chemical Mace, handcuffs, assorted keys, extra bullets, and sometimes a two-way portable radio and a concealed two-inch revolver loaned to me by co-workers who felt that I should be properly prepared.

My plainclothes but altogether coplike appearance created some status confusion for citizens who took me for another officer, perhaps a ranking one. On the streets, citizens would often direct their comments to me. I usually deflected these comments back toward my police companions. On occasion, however, there was no one to deflect such comments back to because my companions were busy elsewhere. At such moments, I more or less bumbled through the encounter by doing what I thought would be approved by my workmates. Mistakes were common.

Crucial to the matter of gaining some acceptance within the agency is what both the police and I have labeled a "balls test"—an assessment made by veteran police officers as to the willingness of a rookie, gender notwithstanding, to support a fellow officer physically. Although all policemen accept colleagues *whom they criticize for their odd views, dishonesty, personal habits, or character, they will not tolerate a colleague in their midst whom they consider dangerous to their health and safety.*

For a field-worker alongside the police, this test was, without doubt, far less extreme than it was for the fully committed. There were instances, however, where I felt it necessary to assist—in police parlance, to back up—the patrolmen whom I was ostensibly observing. At such moments, I was hardly making the rational, reasoned choice in light of the instrumental research objectives I had set. I was reacting as the police react to the unavoidable contingencies of unfolding events. Whether or not I passed these tests with colors flying or dragging is a matter of retrospective opinion. I can say that after a time, most men seemed to accept my presence in the department and appeared at ease when I worked a shift with them.

It is also worth noting that the height of moral duplicity would be to create this sort of partnership impression among the people one studies and then refuse to act in line with the implicit bargain such an impression conveys. For me to pose as a friend of the police and then not back them up on a potentially risky encounter, an encounter they may well have undertaken only because of the additional safety they believed my presence provided, would be to violate the very premises of field research and the importance that human relationships play in its enactment.

Prudence is another tested aspect of the research role. Virtually all policemen have engaged in activities that, if known to some, could get them fired, or, worse, land them in jail. A field-worker who spends more than a trivial amount of time among the police quickly discovers this. A glib statement attesting to one's (confidential intents) will not be taken at face value. Polite acceptance or even deep friendship is not sufficient to get one into the back regions of police departments. Only practical tests will demonstrate one's trustworthiness; liking a person is no guarantee that one can also trust them.

I was party to much discrediting information regarding the legality and propriety of police action. On occasion, I was present when illegal acts took place and, as such, I was as culpable legally as any witness to such actions. One tactic of neutralizing the power of observation is to involve the faultless in potentially embarrassing acts, thus making the faultless as vulnerable to sanction as others. Debts and obligations are, therefore, equalized and discretion becomes almost a structural and taken-for-granted matter. On and following these troublesome incidents, the choices I made followed police custom: *I kept my mouth shut.*

Less crucial perhaps were other rather individually tailored forms of character testing. Early in my police academy days, for example, I was given a series of "gigs"—punitive assignments—for what I took to be fabricated offenses: jogging, not running, from the parking lot to the academy classroom; yawning, stretching, and not paying attention in class; whispering to others; and presenting a dirty weapon at morning inspection. In a short time, had amassed enough gigs relative to others

in the class to convince myself that the academy staff was pushing to find out just how attached I was to my studies. Privately bitching, I plodded through without great clamor and, by so doing, rediscovered the universal irony of direct social control. By serving as the target for discipline administered by one group, I became entrenched more firmly within the protective circle of another group, thus making control, in the end, far more problematic.

As one might surmise, I think neutrality in fieldwork is an illusion. Neutrality is itself a role enactment and the meaning of such a role to people will, most assuredly, not be neutral. Only by entering into the webs of local associations does the field-worker begin to understand the distinctive nature of what lies within and without these webs. The field-worker's initial tasks involve finding out what classes of people are present on the scene and trying to figure out the cleavages that operate within these classes. There is unlikely to be much of a honeymoon period in fieldwork, for in short order the field-worker will have to decide which of the inner circles and classes to accept as his or her own.

By staking out a particular research patch, a field-worker soon learns that much of the concern and information in one segment of the organization is about another segment. Even among my confidants, talk was more readily forthcoming about someone else's patrol unit, squad, shift, or division. People apparently are far more willing to hold forth on the alleged secrets of others than they are their own. By collecting such tales and noting the regions within which they fell, I was, of course, far more worried about marking the boundaries than with assessing the truth of any given story. Truth in fieldwork, as in life, lies in the eyes of the beholder. The beholders of my work have been, by and large, street cops for whom the adage "there ain't that much truth around" represents the human condition.

In sum, the majority of my time in the police field has been spent within the patrol division and, in particular, with specific squads and shifts within the division. Moreover, I have spent far more time with some squad members than others. These officers were my guides in both the sponsorship and informational senses of the term. They positioned me in the department and



suggested to others where precisely my loyalties and sentiments lay. The ecological rights to be close to them, in a sense, were gained early on but had to be sustained continually. A good part of this proximity was attributable to a novice's willingness to live with all the good and bad things that took place within this distinct work circle. Understanding, from this perspective, is not mysterious or analytic but rather pragmatic and empathetic. It comes largely from being caught up in the same life situation and circumstances as those one studies. One knows how others feel because one feels it, too.

### THE FIELD-WORKER'S CONCEIT

This last point is, alas, a conceit. Although field-workers attempt to get as close to others as possible and then stay there for awhile, it is the case that they can pick up and go whenever they choose. Though they may act as though this is impossible, such restraint is always an act. This reflects a basic distinction between the member's "native understanding" and the field-worker's "specimen understanding" of the social world they both share for a time (Bittner, 1973). Although I believe I have learned to think like a cop, I still can stand back and critique that particular frame of mind from another—safe—position. This is a curious and privileged state of mind, not at all characteristic of many men and women I know in the police world who, of practical necessity, take for granted as fact much of what I regard as relative matters. To suggest that I have come to understand the police world as the police themselves do would be a grave error. I do not have to live with the results of police action in the same way as those I study must. The result is that field-workers, by moving in and out of distinct social worlds, come to regard the factual validity of the studied worlds as far more subjective and conjured than many members do.

Not all members fit this rather vulgar characterization. Certainly some are tuned as finely, if not more so, to the stranger's perspective as the field-worker. Double agents, immigrants, marginal members, skeptical tourists, spies, missionaries out to make over the organization, inside theorists and critics, court jesters, and

even fellow sociologists (in and out of uniform) often are not hard to locate within a studied scene. In many respects, they all share a common project with the field-worker—spoken or not—which is to question and thus undermine the reality claims made by other more central, self-satisfied, and powerful organizational members, both high caste and low. Fieldwork as practiced at home in familiar institutions is almost inevitably a subversive and, to a degree, collective project.

There is a final irony worth noting in this respect because I have come to believe that successful fieldwork depends on being able for a time to forget (or, at least, overcome) this standard fieldwork plot. Indeed, one implication to be drawn from the body of this chapter is that field-workers should cut their lives down to the bone on entrance to a field setting by removing themselves from resources—physical, social, and intellectual—outside the studied scene. Every social world provides something of a distinctive life for people and the best way to gain access to such a life is to need it by not importing a life of one's own (Goffman, 1989). Cutting one's self off for a time and looking to build a life with one's new colleagues means that penetration is achieved when the field-worker puts down the subversive project, the notebook and pen, the decentered attitude carried into the scene and begins to anticipate as unremarkable and welcome the daily sights and sounds, to appreciate, if not enjoy, life among the studied, to joke back and forth across the membership, to move at the same tempo as his or her companions, to find comfort in work routines established by others, and to not be sought out by would-be donors of trade secrets or critical tales.

All of this unfolds as a highly personal, contingent, temporal process. If one were to wind the tape back to the early days of my fieldwork and let it play again from an identical starting point, I think the chances are astonishingly low that anything like the same study would grace the replay. Obviously, with the luxury of hindsight, sweet reason and rule can be marshaled out to frame much of my actions in the field. Yet reader beware: Self-justification and surely self-parody lurk just beneath the surface in confessional tales. When called on to scrutinize our past, we quite naturally merge the question of

what we did with the question of what we should have done, and the answer to one becomes the answer to the other. There is no way to duck this matter and no way to calibrate just how self-serving we have been until perhaps our written-about natives decide to start writing about us and putting on display some of our own odd and exotic ways. At that point, the subjective and conjured features of our own research world and work can come to be appreciated.

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