When returning to the site of prior research, ethnographers may find themselves embroiled in emotional and ethical quandaries with the people about whom they have written. This article details the conversations and emotional conflicts that erupted suddenly when I returned to a community about which I had published a previous ethnographic account. Writing the story gave me an opportunity to examine orthodox ethnographic research practices, such as omitting the autobiographical self and emotional responses from ethnographic texts. The return visit helped clarify connections between my personal life and the way I conducted fieldwork in this community, and it led me to recommend that ethnographic practices include an examination of how our experiences connect us with those we study rather than emphasize only how they set us apart.

EMOTIONAL AND ETHICAL
QUAGMIRES IN RETURNING TO THE FIELD

CAROLYN ELLIS

FEW ETHNOGRAPHERS HAVE WRITTEN about the emotional quagmires they find when they return to the field, although we know from the studies of Frazier (1964), Punch (1986), Vidich and Bensman (1958), Warren (1980), and Whyte (1943) that community members respond emotionally to what is written about them. Although sociologists often discuss leaving the field and disengaging from subjects (Adler and Adler 1989; Altheide 1980; Glaser and Strauss 1968; Junker 1960; Maines, Shaffir, and Turowetz 1980; Roadburg 1980; Snow 1980; Stebbins 1991), we rarely talk about returning and maintaining engagement when our subjects are no longer of interest as "data."[1] When we show concern about returning, often it is for the purpose of gathering new data (Adler 1992; Gallmeier 1991; Miller and Humphreys 1980) or to seek members' validations of our findings (Bloor 1983; Emerson and Pollner 1988;

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Rochford 1992). Our emphasis is not normally on the emotional and ethical quandaries we find ourselves in as friends qua researchers with the people left in our publishing wake.

This article explores the emotionality that erupted between me and community members on a return visit in 1989 to Fishneck,[2] one of two isolated fishing communities in which I did fieldwork from 1972 to 1984. During this visit, various Fishneck residents reacted angrily to the work I published as *Fisher Folk: Two Communities on Chesapeake Bay* (Ellis 1986). Although I immediately recorded these events in hopes of gaining insight into what had happened, I did not actively consider their meanings until provoked by Laurel Richardson's article in the special issue of *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* (April 1992).

Richardson (1992, 108) raised the question of "how to do sociological research and how to write it so that the people who teach me about their lives are honored and empowered, even if they and I see their worlds differently." When we study a "particular place with particular people" who have "real ongoing lives and relationships," it becomes possible for them to identify themselves in the work we publish and thus for them and the researcher to be hurt (pp. 116-7; also, Becker 1964, 267). Thus, Richardson concluded, we must address the ethical issue of writing "right" but doing wrong to those who host us (p. 119).

Richardson's incisive analysis gave me pause to consider that although I thought of myself as a caring person emotionally involved in the community I had studied, I may at the same time have insensitively appropriated residents' lives "in the name of science" to advance my career. Thus my return to Fishneck appeared to be a good place to investigate these issues.

I write now with the intent of participating in what Michelle Fine (1994, 72) has referred to as "working the hyphen." By this phrase, she means to suggest that "researchers probe how we are in relation with the contexts we study and with our informants." When we work the hyphen, we reveal "far more about ourselves, and far more about the structures of Othering. Eroding the fixedness of categories, we and they enter and play with

the blurred boundaries that proliferate." My article seeks to *show* the working of the hyphen through a narrative story that uses dialogue to detail the events and emotionality that took place during this particular return visit (see Fabian 1990, 4). After the narrative story, I reflect on ethnographic practices in general and on the intersection of the ethnographer and the community in particular. I strive to work against orthodox practices of inscribing the "Other," whiting out self, and ignoring the "contradictions that litter our texts" (Fine 1994, 72).

THE ORIGINAL STUDY

Geographically, Fishneck is not far from mainstream America. It is located approximately 10 miles from the nearest town and 25 miles from a metropolitan region. Yet, as I drive through the low marshland that locals call Fishneck, I always feel like I have entered another world: one replete with oyster shells, fish plants, trailers, one-room stores, and post offices; small skiffs, crab pots, nets, and oyster tongs; high-water boots, extended families, reported violence, and speech that combines a rural dialect and old English provincialisms.

In 1972, while an undergraduate, I began fieldwork in Fishneck. Introduced to the Fishneckers by a professor as "a friend from the college," I spent much of my time with one large extended family—the two parents, their thirteen children, and their immediate families and in-laws. Members of this group offered homes where I could go for a nap, get a good lunch, spend the night, or just listen quietly. It is primarily this family I went to visit on my yearly return visit to Fishneck after my fieldwork was completed.

My upbringing in a small town in the middle of the Blue Ridge mountains undoubtedly increased the intrigue I felt regarding the isolated lifestyle of the fisher folk and their abbreviated relationship with the rest of the world. How did Fishneckers manage to maintain their isolation? What did they think and feel when they confronted how different they were from people in the surrounding areas or those they saw on television? What

did they hope for or dream about? How did they make their lives feel meaningful?

I had some of the same questions about my own world. It had been a rude awakening to move from a small, rural, and homogeneous town in Virginia where higher education was not a priority to the college town of Williamsburg to attend William and Mary, and then to the ethnically diverse wilds of the urban northeast, where I received a Ph.D. at Stony Brook. Fishneck provided a safe place to explore adaptation to changes that were similar to those occurring in my own life.

I didn't reveal these personal interests to the Fishneckers and I had only a hint, at first, of the connection of this study to my own experience. Initially, I told a number of the Fishneckers who knew I was a college student that I was writing a paper on fishing.[3] I stuck to this nonthreatening and acceptable partial story whenever I met new people because it justified my many requests to accompany men on boats and my endless questions about crab pots and gill nets.

Soon, however, at least to members of this extended family, I was just Carolyn coming to visit. Even those who knew my initial purpose forgot I was doing research because "writing a paper" had no relevance to their everyday lives. Who thought about research when there were funerals to go to, floods to escape, killings to be straightened out, sick babies to tend, welfare checks that didn't arrive on time, and doctors (always doctors) to visit?

I thought it best for my research purposes that the Fishneckers not be constantly reminded. After all, sometimes I did feel like family. Other times, though, I felt guilty about my dual role as friend and researcher, and occasionally I felt like an intruding outsider. Always, I remembered that I was a researcher (an awareness I had been taught was important) and, without this role, I doubted I would have gotten as involved with the Fishneckers as I did.

I saw myself as a "realist" ethnographer (Van Maanen 1988) whose goal was to describe the community as I saw it (meaning "as it was"). My methodology involved developing elaborate coding schemes that would "allow the data to speak objectively."

I did not distinguish between what should and should not be told in my book from the point of view of the Fishneckers. I assumed that because the Fishneckers were "illiterate," meaning that many of them did not read or write more than a few words, they would never read my book (see also Linden 1993, 161; Marcus and Fischer 1986, 36-7).

I did, however, omit details from *Fisher Folk* that might reflect badly on *me*, especially practices that allowed me to get the "scoop" while pretending to maintain distance (Johnson 1983, 214-5). For example, I didn't tell of the messy interpersonal situations I didn't handle well or my habit of sidestepping details when Fishneckers asked about my personal life while I coaxed them to tell me details of theirs; nor did I reveal that I listened in on conversations when they thought I was paying no attention and taped conversations they didn't know I was recording.

I made several trips to Fishneck after *Fisher Folk* was published in 1986, but I did not take copies of the book. In fact, I didn't acknowledge to Fishneckers that there *was* a book. By 1989, I assumed that the story I had written was finished and I gave little, if any, thought to the possibility of Fishneckers responding to it. I was wrong.

THE STUDY REVEALED

Two other researchers had been involved in Fishneck before I arrived. Although Mike no longer was practicing as an anthropologist, he continued to be viewed as a friend by Fishneckers, and he and I shared mutual interest in and concern for the community. The second researcher, a sociologist from a nearby college, had done research in Fishneck for some time, planned to write a book, and was a close friend with many residents. Professor Jack readily shared with me his wealth of information about Fishneck. After I left the area for graduate school in New York, I continued work on isolated fishing villages, comparing Fishneck to a second community. When I occasionally ran into Professor Jack in Fishneck, our relationship was cordial, al-

though he did not respond to drafts of articles or the published book and acknowledgment I sent him.

As I planned a trip to Fishneck in 1989, Mike called to tell me he had just been in Fishneck—he rarely visited now—and warned that some of the people were upset because of my book. When I asked how they knew about it, Mike explained that Professor Jack had read portions of it to Fishneckers. His description of Professor Jack made me think of a Pentecostal minister, with a moral mission, waving his constant companion, the Bible (although, in this case, my book represented the devil's rendition), at whomever would listen. Those who paid no attention he attempted to convert on the spot, as he read to them the "sinful" things I had written about sexual practices and the horrible mistakes I had made, such as in estimating the length of oyster scrapes.

Why was this happening now, when the book's publication had been followed by silence for three years? I thought Professor Jack cared deeply about the Fishneckers and, more than any of us, had "gone native," even buying land in Fishneck. Didn't he realize he was hurting the Fishneckers? For the moment, expressing moral indignation made me feel better about my role in Fishneck. Had Professor Jack only now gotten around to reading my book? Was he envious because he never finished his manuscript? Was any of his outrage justified? Or had he gone mad?

Soon I turned my attention from Professor Jack to the Fishneckers, wondering how negative their reaction would be. Because interaction with Fishneckers always had gone smoothly, I assumed the anthropologist's story was exaggerated and that Professor Jack had calmed down by now. Surely Fishneckers would have forgotten all about this while they went about dealing with their daily lives. The visit I already had planned now took on greater importance.

Little did I realize the degree of Professor Jack's wrath. Little did I understand the extent to which he thought of the Fishneckers as, in his words and emphasis, "My PEOPLE." Thus I was unprepared for what happened.

THE RETURN VISIT: APRIL 1989

When I arrive at Michael Paul's trailer, I slowly get out of my car and glance around at the usual array of hound dogs guarding the entryway. Michael Paul, in his seventies now, had been my main informant. I remember with fondness his wife who had died, and one of his children who had been shot and killed. I think of the many days I have spent at his house, eating meals, holding infants, planning activities, and conversing in many directions at once from the middle of crossfire conversations.

Knocking loudly on the door, I yell, "Michael Paul, it's Carolyn." The whole neighborhood seems unusually quiet. I guess nobody is home at any of the trailers huddled at the end of this oystershell road that looks too narrow and rutted to lead anywhere, except further into the marsh. I dismiss the thought that the Fishneckers might be treating me now as they do strangers—by disappearing from view and remaining silent.

Because nobody is around, I take pictures. Fishneckers never understand why I want photographs of old buildings; they think all pictures should be of people—preferably, them. I intend to capture change from what this area was like many years ago, although the scene's familiarity disputes the time passing. Exploring the litter-strewn yard, I note the new built-on room attached to the middle trailer and walk toward the hastily constructed and jury-rigged pig pens out back. I feel surprisingly uncomfortable, like I'm sneaking around and don't belong here. Not knowing how people feel about me now makes me nervous. Hoping that nobody has seen me "snooping" around, I put away my camera and sit on my car hood. My feelings provide a vivid reminder of my dual roles of researcher and friend. That I would risk taking pictures now, after what has happened, saddens me as it reminds me of which role was, and apparently is, most important.

Suddenly Michael Paul's daughter-in-law, Mimi, a twenty-five-year-old woman I have known since she was a child, appears. Apprehensively, I watch her approach from an old trailer I hadn't noticed hidden by the tall grass behind Michael

Paul's. "Cawl, I'll take you to see Michael Paul. He's at the trailer park," Mimi greets me warmly.

"Mimi, great to see you."

"You too, Cawl," she says shyly, pronouncing my name in the Fishneck dialect. Once in my car, she says, "You wrote a book, didn't you?"

"Yeah, why?" I hold my breath.

"Some people don't like it."

"You?"

"Not me child. I don't care what's in no book." Feeling let off the hook, I release my breath, then ask her about her three daughters. When she says proudly that one is in high school, I congratulate her.

We drive down the familiar road to the trailer park, where one of Michael Paul's sons lives. As soon as I blow the horn, Michael Paul opens the door to the trailer to greet me. Others follow him out.

"It's Cawl," I hear someone say excitedly.

"Hi, Cawl. Where ya' been? How long ya' gonna' stay? I told them you was a comin' today." The questions come all at once.

"How'd you know it was today?" I ask.

"I felt it in my bones," Michael Paul answers.

"Gal, you married yet?" I smile at the question that Michael Paul always asks, and then give my usual reply, "You know better than that. I'm not the marrying kind." It's too complicated to explain that I was married for a short while until my husband died. They wouldn't understand why I married a fatally ill man. Why bring it up now? Still I feel a twinge at blatantly lying.

"I'm still runnin' women," Michael Paul announces proudly.

"That's good, you keep it up," I say, again giving a well-practiced reply.

When Michael Paul's daughter-in-law, whom I don't know well, immediately asks, "Did you write a book?" I realize that my book probably is being talked about by the larger community, not just in isolated pockets. Knowing that she has a sixth-grade education stimulates me to think about how many people here *are* able to read.

Taking a deep breath, I ask, "Yes, what do you think about it?" I hope I'm ready for the answer.

"Don't know. Ain't seen it yet."

"I'll send you a copy," I say, not knowing how else to respond. Thinking about her reading it makes me feel anxious as I recall some of the personal topics I discuss.

Seeing no reason to avoid the issue, in the car I ask Michael Paul, "What do you think about the book?"

"Write anything you want, child," he says lovingly. Yet, I detect a little distance. Is this because I haven't seen him for so long? Or is he upset too?

"Make it as common as you want," Michael Paul continues. I am jolted by the word "common," which to the Fishneckers always means vulgar. I can't help smiling when I think that common is also the way my mother would describe the passages I wrote on sex, which she refused to read.

Softly, Michael Paul continues, "I'll tell you even more things to put in. It don't matter. Professor Jack is doing all this, keeping it all stirred up. He brung some of the book to Minnie and Betty and gave some pages of it to a many others."

"Could they read it?"

"He marked parts, then read it to them over and over, and said how mad he was about it."

"What did you think of what he read?"

"I laughed and he told me it weren't nothing to laugh at. I said I thought it was. I told him that what you wrote was true. I'd heard those stories too."

Wondering what he had read, I try to explain. "Michael Paul, he's only reading a small part of the book. I don't use real names, and I call the place Fishneck."

"That's right," he replies. "Don't you mind now, gal."

"Are people mad at me?"

"I don't know. But I ain't. I told Professor Jack you'd almost finished another book. Just to get him mad." I smile in spite of my confusion and agony about what's happening.

"Let's stop and visit Mary Jane," I suggest, as I turn into her driveway. Mary Jane is another of Michael Paul's daughters, about my age, who has been a close friend. Leaning out the

trailer door and waving me in, she seems glad to see me. "Come on in, gal. You're always welcome here. Where you been? Watch the puddles, and the steps. One's broke." I maneuver around the rain-filled puddles and, supporting my weight with both hands on the door frame, hoist myself to the high trailer step. We give Michael Paul a hand as he does the same.

I say almost immediately, "I hear everybody's mad about my book." The fieldworker in me is curious about community response; the friend in me wants to know the reaction to make amends if needed.

"I don't care what you wrote," she says, as she pours hot water into a glass and stirs in an overflowing tablespoon of instant Maxwell House. I shake my head no in response to the tablespoon of sugar about to be added. She nods, swats gently at her kids to move aside, and passes the drink to me. "What you wrote was true. I told Minnie (her twin sister), 'It was true, wasn't it' and that really made her mad. Minnie's pissed, but I wouldn't bother with her anyways. I ain't spoke to her in four months." Because I always think of Mary Jane and Minnie as close, I am shocked.

Mary Jane continues, "They think you made money off the book. I told them if I could make a million, I would write anything. Professor Jack told them you married a millionaire." So they know I got married. How must they feel about my concealing this information? A millionaire? Where did that idea come from?

"I told them you and Mike was a gettin' married. I said that just to get 'em goin'." Now that I am the object of their "inventive stories" (Liguori 1983), I wonder how many others they made up for me, just for the sake of banter or attention, or to elicit a particular brand of emotionality.

Ada, a younger sister who lives next door with Minnie, comes in. Although she says hello, she stands against the wall away from the center of activity, seeming more aloof than our seventeen-year close relationship warrants. "You wrote all kinds of things in that book," she suddenly blurts out angrily.

I am shocked at the confrontation. "Yes, but I didn't identify anybody or the community," I say, feeling like an impostor who has been caught.

"I know all those names though," she replies. My strategy of inventing pseudonyms starting with the same letters as the double names of the Fishneckers and having other similarities in sound had made it easy to keep names straight, but at the cost of making it convenient for Fishneckers to figure out the characters in my story.

"Is Minnie mad?"

"She don't like what you wrote," Ada replies.

"I guess I better go see her," I say to Mary Jane, who busies herself with her children as I reluctantly head out the door to the small house in back. I don't want to avoid Minnie, a common practice in Fishneck when you are upset at someone. I want to know how much emotional damage has been done to her and to our relationship.

Minnie tells me to come in, but she doesn't get up to greet me. She looks down at her photocopied pages of my book on the table, as she says, "That was a lot of nonsense you wrote. I know you was a writin' 'bout me."

I sit down and pick up the manuscript, eager to see what is outlined in yellow marker. My quick breathing reveals my anxiety as I read silently a passage I have quoted in *Fisher Folk*:

> Two strange boys carried us home and were going to do it to us. I was on the back with one. He unzipped my pants and tried to put what he had in my hand. I screamed and was scared. (Ellis 1986, 25)

I flip through a few pages and the highlighted text glares at me:

> As late as 1978, I asked a woman how she kept from getting pregnant since she said the pill made her sick and gave her a headache. She replied, "I's goes to the bathroom right after I have been with a man. Piss the baby out. Doctor said that's the best thing to do." (Ellis 1986, 28)

I stop reading. Having no idea what to say, I revert to rationality. "How do you know this is about you?"

"Cause you're the only one who could a known that story about us goin' out with boys. Now everybody will know it was us. And it weren't even true. I just told you that mess of stuff."

I wonder now what is the truth and why they would only have told the story to me. I ask, "But if I didn't use your names and it's not true, how will they know it's you I'm writing about?"

"They'll know," she says confidently. "And I didn't say the doctor said to piss the baby out either. I said the doctor told me to piss after I have sex. I thought we was friends, you and me, just talkin'. I didn't think you would put it in no book."

"But I told people down here I was writing a book," I reply feebly.

"But I still thought we was just talkin'. And you said we're dirty and don't know how to dress."

I turn the pages and see:

> Most Fishneck women wore pants and often knee-length rubber boots and layers of unmatched clothing. . . . By age eighteen, many of them weighed two hundred pounds or more. (Ellis 1986, 14)

> Scarcity of plumbing meant baths were infrequent. That combined with everyday work with fish produced a characteristic fishy body odor, identified by outsiders as the "fishneck smell." (Ellis 1986, 14)

The contradiction of caring about these people and knowing they are aware of my descriptions makes me feel sick to my stomach. Understanding now that I have no defense that makes sense in Fishneck, I close the pages. My God, what else did I say? I wonder, as I view these words now through Minnie's eyes.

"You said ten-year-olds were having sex," Minnie continues, answering my unspoken question, now in full gear. "The Island people, you said. Made us sound like whores. I never did it 'til I was 21. I'm not a whore."

"I'm sorry," I reply sadly, head hanging. No longer do I have the desire to defend what I have written. "I understand what you're saying. I shouldn't have said some of those things. If I could do it over, I wouldn't say them. Can I make it up to you?" My words sound as hollow as I feel.

"No, it's already here now," she says, banging on the page.

"Burn the book," someone quietly suggests from the background. For a second, I think that might be a solution. We would burn the book together. Good riddance, be done with it.

"But then there are still others," Minnie says, and I imagine that she has had this conversation already with Professor Jack. Then I reprimand myself for assuming Minnie wouldn't be able to figure this out for herself.

"You're the only one who knows who I'm writing about," I try again, anything to get out of this psychological space, where I am caught in the trap I have created.

"But that's the point. We know. People say things."

"I care about you," I say, tired of rational argument.

"Well, I did you too. Still do, but you shouldn't a done this." The "did" resonates through my head.

Minnie's husband, Manny, walks through the room. "Hi, Manny. Sorry about everything," I say quietly.

He slows down only long enough to say, "People here's angry, not me, but the public. You shouldn't a done what you did."

Minnie says, "Professor Jack said you only said something nice about Manny, no one else. But he said you shouldn't a talked about how much money Manny makes."

"I said many good things about a lot of people, but Professor Jack didn't read you those."

She continues, "Professor Jack said he was gonna' publish a book and get us all to sign it and say it was right. I ain't gonna' do that. I told him he better not publish anything. I'll get my lawyer if my name is in his book. It's my life, not anybody else's business. Weren't yours, neither."

"I'm sorry," I say, as I get up to go, feeling unwelcome for the first time in the seventeen years I have been coming to Fishneck.

When I glance from face to face, no one meets my eyes. I walk quietly out the screen door, being careful to return it to its proper place on broken hinges.

"Come back, anytime," Minnie suddenly yells out the door.

"Thanks," I say, and look back to see her for the first time looking at me. I am relieved that she still wants to see me, but I doubt if our relationship will ever be the same.

I walk to Mary Jane's, tell her good-bye, and drive back to Michael Paul's. I am too shaken up to observe as a fieldworker.

With the lack of dual roles comes an unfamiliar feeling of authenticity. My compartmentalization of roles finally has broken down and I am "myself" in this community, simultaneously experiencing self and relationships in all the complexity and ambiguity that authenticity is supposed to entail. I wonder if I have ever felt that way in this community before. Did I feel it when I attended funerals or helped with disasters? Or was I more the distant observer than active participant even then? I start to doubt how much I really was a member of this community after all; at the same time, I feel an authentic part for the first time.

At Michael Paul's, a number of Fishneckers come to visit. I realize how far things have gone when one young man covers his face as I try to take his picture, until his brother reassures, "No, Cawl ain't writin' no book now."

After a few minutes, I say to Michael Paul, "Well, I guess I have to go see Betty." Michael Paul's daughter-in-law, Betty, is often angry, given to yelling and holding grudges, but she and I have known each other for seventeen years and I have never been the object of her anger before.

"Do what you have to, child," Michael Paul says softly, resignedly shaking his head. He often *has* been the object of her wrath.

Although I want to leave Fishneck now, I feel obligated to face Betty, with whom I have shared meals and friendship. Betty is hanging up clothes in her backyard next door. Instead of returning my hello as I approach, she shouts at the top of her voice, "You wrote that damn mess. I don't want anything to do with you."

Although I expect anger, the fury in her words is mind-boggling. "You've only seen part of it," I say, still determined to make amends.

"I've seen enough. Forty-foot scrapes? Whoever heard tell?"

"Well, I don't know everything. I'd like you to read the book and tell me where I was wrong." My heart pounds, but I feel I have given a good response. It is easier to react to factual errors than emotionally painful descriptions.

"You wrote the book. You're supposed to know. Six hundred people in Fishneck. Where do you think Fishneck starts?"

"Where *are* the boundaries, Betty? That's a good question," I say, thinking about my discussion of that issue in the book.

"At Benton."

"That's not where I placed the boundaries."

"Then you're wrong."

"Betty, you know if you ask ten people here, you'll get ten different answers to that question."

"*You* should know the right one," she says bitterly. "You wrote the book. A hundred and fifty houses? You said you was in 150 houses. You ain't been in no 150 houses."

"That's not what I said. I said there were 150 households in Fishneck." I think that Betty still may be right—that I probably did overestimate the number of people I knew in Fishneck.

"You snuck around writin' this book and didn't tell us."

"I did tell many of you."

"Well, not me."

"I'm sorry. I thought you knew." Did I really?

"You just saw the chance to make money off us and you took it."

"Hum," I chuckle, grunt, and sigh at the same time, rolling my eyes back and tossing my head. "Betty, that's not true. I haven't made a cent and I never will." But she's right in that I used them as an opportunity to advance my career.

"You said all ten-year-olds had screwed."

"No, I didn't," I reply adamantly.

"Such common talk. I didn't know you was like that. Did you screw at ten?" When I don't reply, she demands, "Answer me, did you?"

When I say no, she continues, "Okay, see. Would you want someone writin' this about you?"

"No. But I didn't say everybody had sex at age ten."

"I can show you where you wrote it," she shouts.

"Okay show me." Now I am yelling as loudly as Betty. I follow her as she marches ferociously to her trailer. I *didn't* write that, did I?

Betty picks up a photocopy similar to the one Minnie had and gestures toward a marked paragraph, "There."

I read the paragraph out loud, triumphantly. It is a description of the geography of the community. "What's wrong with that?" I ask, wondering why this passage is highlighted.

"Plenty," she says. "And you also said everybody screwed at ten."

"Show me," I demand.

She hesitates, flips through the pages. I wait, ready to pounce. "Well, I would if my daughter Amy were at home," she says, now looking embarrassed. Through my anger, I realize— *Betty can't read*. This simple fact sadly takes away my desire to win the battle, as I think of the advantage I have.

"I might not have the education of you," Betty continues, throwing the manuscript on the table, "but I got common sense."

"I know you do, Betty," I say softly. "I would never say you weren't bright. You know a lot more about many things than I do."

"And I always treated you right. And my daughter is graduating from high school."

"I know. I'm proud of her," I respond. Our mutual celebration is short-lived.

"I don't want you steppin' foot in my trailer again." Betty's voice is still loud and shrill. "You can come see Michael Paul, I have nothin' to do with that. But not here."

When I see tears gather in her eyes, I feel there is still hope. At that moment, I understand that I have caused her pain. "I thought we were friends. Can't we still be friends?" I ask. "I care about you."

"I thought we was friends too, but that's over." Both voices are quiet now.

"You won't reconsider?" She shakes her head no. "So there's nothing I can do? You're going to throw a seventeen-year relationship down the drain?" I feel tears form in my eyes. I try to stop them, because I don't want Betty to feel she has gotten the best of me. Being emotional also is not part of my perceived role of researcher. Then deciding that I want her to know I care, that this is a real relationship, a personal one, and that it's okay if she brags later about how she won, I let a few tears fall before blinking them back. I am not surprised when it doesn't work.

"It's over."

"Does your husband feel this way too?"

"I don't control him." Of course, you don't, I think as I recall how he rarely does anything without her approval. I walk out of the trailer, head down; Betty doesn't call me back. I say hello to her husband, Bob, who gives me a half-wave, hoping, I'm sure, that Betty doesn't notice.

"She was really mad, Michael Paul," I say, as I enter his trailer. My tears start to flow and this time I can't stop them. "I never meant to hurt anyone," I say.

"I know child," he says, and then sits quietly. I realize he has never seen me upset and doesn't know what to do. Our relationship has always been positive, upbeat, and bantering.

I work to stop crying, just as a young boy arrives to tell me that his mother, Sandy Jill, another of Michael Paul's daughters, wants me to come over. I am careful to go around the back way so that I do not walk across Betty's property. I'm feeling too fragile to deal with her now. "Are you mad at me, too?" I ask as I enter Sandy Jill's trailer.

"Shit, I don't care what you wrote. They told you that stuff—I've heard those stories too—and then they got pissed because you wrote it. I'll tell you worse stories than that and you can write them. Anything that gets them mad, especially Betty, makes me happy. I haven't spoken to her for a year and if I ever see her alone, I'm gonna' beat the shit out of her. I called her a whore. And then Bob called me a whore."

She turns to her husband and says proudly, "You should a seen Cawl. She was a yellin' just as loud as Betty. And pointin' her finger at her and shakin' it just like Betty was." Sandy Jill demonstrates. "I loved it. She really stood up to her."

I puff up and feel brave. A moment later, I want to cry again because I have hurt people I care about, and now I hurt as well. . . .

A few months later, I received several letters from Minnie, written by her daughter. One read in part:

> I am sorry for the way I acted that day you come to my home. I hope you can forgive me. I also hope we can remain friends. Prof. Jack keep telling me to take you to court but I did not

consider it because were [*sic*] are friends. I hope that you will write me back and forgive me for what I said. . . . I have decided that Prof. Jack was the one that wanted all this to happen. I do not like what he did. . . . Please consider my words I have written I am sorry. Your friend, Minnie

These letters gave me back my "face" (Goffman 1967) and provided an opportunity for me to give them back theirs—the face of loyal and deserving close friends. I responded immediately with a letter expressing my apologies and several gifts for the families of Mary Jane and Minnie. Mary Jane and other Fishneckers continued to write occasionally. I never heard from Betty again.

I returned to Fishneck in 1991, that time taking my mother and my partner, Art, with me. Betty and her family had moved, and I was glad not to have to see her. Her eighteen-year-old daughter was cordial. Mary Jane and Michael Paul welcomed me as usual. So did Minnie, and I went out of my way to make sure I had some time with her. The quick contact—we stayed only a few hours—and being in Fishneck with my mother and Art reminded me of how much an outsider I was. I lived in a radically different world from the Fishneckers, although theirs continued to have a haunting familiarity.

After we left Fishneck, Art asked if I had noticed the only picture in Michael Paul's trailer. The photograph that had hung on his wall since 1972 immediately came to mind—a picture of Michael Paul and me riding in the back of an old skiff. His arm is draped around me, and we are both laughing. Recalling this picture reminded me of how much I *had* been a part of the Fishneck community.

In July 1993, while working on this article, I called Minnie and Mary Jane, whom I had not talked to for two years. After many wrong numbers, I feared I had lost contact for good. When I finally reached Mary Jane, the excitement I heard in her voice was matched only by my glee at connecting with her. Minnie immediately took the phone to tell me about a personal trauma in her life. She was still suffering, she said, and she really wanted me to know what happened. I hurt for her, and wanted to be with her, to comfort her as she told me about her pain. As

Minnie and Mary Jane shared the joys—new babies and marriages—and sorrows—poverty, sickness, and death—in their lives, I wondered how much more authentic relationships get. I made sure to tell them some of the intimate details of my life—that I was living with someone, that we might get married. Perhaps that had always been where their feelings of deception and my feelings of inauthenticity lay—in the one-sided revelations. I became excited as I made plans to visit them, thinking that I would ask questions about mothering, loss, and creating meaning—they certainly had enough experience in these areas. This time I would have these conversations because I cared about their lives, to feel close to them, and to relate their answers to my own personal life, not so I could write a book.

REFLECTIONS ON FIELDWORK

During the four years since this visit, I have given considerable thought to my return to the field. Even now, I feel unsettled about this project, which continues to raise many questions: Is doing significant research still more important to me than respecting the lives of the Fishneckers? Does another publication prospect outweigh the possibility of more feelings of deceit and betrayal? Does this article make amends or merely reiterate what bothered Fishneckers in the first place? Will my revelations of personal vulnerability and apology serve as "corrective facework" or will the reminder of my (and their) lost face (Goffman 1967) embarrass and strain our relationships further? Is there any way to be a fieldworker and not be a "fink" (Goffman 1989, 125), "who by definition is operating against the interests of the observed group" (Fine 1993, 272; also, see Johnson 1975)? I have not resolved these complicated issues, but I have begun to sift through my "own garbage" (Richardson 1992, 118) and to "work the hyphen" (Fine 1994) so as to sensitize myself and other fieldworkers to the dangers of writing about subjects as "Others" (see also Brown 1992; Lincoln and Denzin 1994; Sampson 1993).

Returning to the field forced me to reflect on my "training" as an ethnographer and to decode practices of orthodox social science as well as my own. In the early 1970s, I learned to observe from a distance and keep my personal life to myself. My mission was to "get 'them' right." While writing *Fisher Folk*, I remember only once questioning whether I should talk so openly about sexuality and other personal details of the fisher folks' lives and how such disclosures might make them feel. After my Ph.D. committee members praised me for obtaining information on birth control, sex, and other usually hidden matters, I feared that omitting this material might result in a bland, unpublished work. I also liked the praise—it assured me I was a "good ethnographer." So I dismissed my fears, quickly telling myself: "Well, they did say and do these things. So I have to report them" (see Vidich 1958, 2).

My fears are not so quickly dismissed now. Writing this article has encouraged me to think about how I will do future projects. To start, I would try to read my texts through the eyes of my subjects. I would be willing to give up my "pretensions to a supraempirical position" by making myself an "experimental subject" and treating my experiences as "primary data" (Jackson 1989, 4). I might ask community members to reflect on me, talk about how I didn't fit into the community or what they found strange about me (see Rosaldo 1987, 206). Perhaps we could laugh at my naiveté and some of my strange habits, instead of, as before, examining just their "strange" experiences and ideas. I would put more of myself into my research, show myself in interaction and dialogue with residents, and tell more stories directly about my experiences in Fishneck. This strategy would counter the tendency of social science to "privilege what we have to say about them and what they can learn about themselves from us, over what they have to say about us and what we can learn about ourselves from them" (Bochner 1994, 34). This might serve, as Rosaldo (1987, 206) says, to make my upper-middle-class professional persona more culturally visible.

Second, I would pay more attention to emotional responses— my own and those of community members—while in field settings and as I write (see Ellis 1991; Kleinman and Copp

1993). At the least, I would follow Betty's mandate to ask how I would feel if my descriptions of others were applied to me (see also Rosaldo 1987, 49) and how I might learn from others' descriptions of myself (p. 64). I would try to anticipate how I would feel in response to the reactions of my informants about my research.

I will not assume that the people about whom I write won't have access to my materials or that they won't be interested in them (including this piece), no matter how many fieldwork textbooks imply that "scholars often have to go out of their way just to get a reaction out of the people they have studied" (Lofland and Lofland 1984, 158). I know now that pseudonyms hide little, because, similar to my study, researchers often choose sites near their universities and use references that give away the real location. Insiders often can identify, or think they can identify, the individuals concerned (Punch 1986, 46; 1994).

Third, whenever possible, I would consider the people in my research settings as an audience (Adler, Adler, and Johnson 1992; Blackman 1992; Bochner and Waugh 1995; Rochford 1992). I would talk more with community members about what I was doing. Even though it might mean leaving out some of the "juicy" material, or at least writing it in a way that was less offensive to my subjects, I would, when appropriate, ask them to read what I had written and challenge my interpretations, and consider negotiating with them the ultimate decision about whether to include sensitive information (Adler and Adler 1993).

Yet, given the "complexities of the human practices that constitute research," I do not want to proclaim that "sharing authorship" with our subjects should be a universal standard (Richardson 1992, 108). I realize we must consider the pitfalls of overgeneralization; for example, following this dictum blindly would mean we would be unable to reveal practices of those in powerful or elite positions (Johnson and Douglas 1978; Punch 1986; Rollins 1985) or in highly illegal ones (Adler 1985), and that our studies might not get published at all (Punch 1986).

I am not naive about how difficult it is in practice to make community members into coresearchers. I have not yet shown

this article to the fisher folk. When I imagine reading it to them, I laugh at the image it creates. Fishneckers won't sit still for my reading—not when we have so little time together, not when it would be more fun crabbing, kissing the babies, or just bantering.[4] Sometimes I think I'll just tell them about this article, or at least that I did it—and let it go at that. Other times I feel it's better to say nothing.

To be honest, I'm scared—scared of hurting them and myself once more, scared that they won't want me to come back again. I'm overwhelmed by how much time and effort, especially considering the geographic distance between us, it will take to redevelop the kind of relationships that will make me (and them) feel comfortable sharing my work. When I experience these feelings, I rationalize that this article is more about me and the interpersonal processes of fieldwork than about Fishneckers, and that my work will have some greater good—it will generate discussion about how ethnographers treat subjects in general.[5] Yet doubts linger, doubts that lead me to examine more closely the connections of my life to practices in Fishneck.[6] I am guided by Jackson's (1989, 17) premise that "our understanding of others can only proceed from within our own experience." This understanding involves our own personalities, histories, and relationships in the field, as much as our field research (see also Abu-Lughod 1993, 40; Clarke 1975, 118; Krieger 1991, 183).

SELF AND COMMUNITY CONNECTED

When my students in qualitative methods classes ask me how to make ethical decisions in their fieldwork projects, I answer, "Make decisions the same way you make them in your everyday lives." My sense is that people often do make decisions in fieldwork similarly to the way they choose among options in the rest of their lives, although they also are constrained by current ethnographic practices and social science training. In the same way we decide how to conduct fieldwork by thinking about how we conduct the rest of our lives, we can

learn about the rest of our lives by examining how we act and think in fieldwork settings. Reflexivity, as Richardson (1992, 108) says, can "help us shape 'better' ethnographies and better lives for ourselves and those who teach us about their lives."

In my case, it is interesting to note the parallels between my personal relationships, in which I often played the role of counselor, and the relationships I had with people in the fishing community. "They" talked and revealed; I listened and asked questions. Often, this was the role demanded of me and often I felt I was helpful to others, but our roles were not symmetrical.

My relationships in Fishneck were an extreme version of this pattern. I didn't tell stories about my life or my friends. I talked only about "safe," noncontroversial subjects when I talked. I didn't want to have to explain myself or allow the Fishneckers to judge me. No matter what they revealed to me, I didn't tell them about the intimate practices or feelings in my life, not that I had sex outside of marriage or even that I had gotten married. I didn't talk about my experience with drugs, not when the adults were so cautious and watchful about marijuana and alcohol. Nor did I mention that many of my friends had had abortions and, later, that I had one myself. I didn't ask Fishneckers how they would feel about all these activities, but I assume they would have considered most of them, especially abortion, as sinful. From their point of view, it was inconceivable for a woman to decide not to have her child, or, like me, not to have any children. In many ways, my moral code was not as stringent as theirs, yet "they" get portrayed in my book as having few moral controls; the insinuation is that "we" have many more.

Maybe I pretended to be pure and innocent to protect myself from the frequent sexual advances of men on Fishneck, or to keep my scientific distance, or because I thought they wouldn't "understand" the "political" reasons for my behavior (for which I credited the liberal 1960s) as if I fully "understood" the reasons for theirs (for which I charged poverty, lower-class socialization, and lack of education). Perhaps I held back because if I had not, I would have been forced to operate on a more equal footing (Rosaldo 1987, 64), which would have asked too much of me, possibly as much conversational "give" as "take." Or maybe I

thought they weren't really concerned, or I assumed they wouldn't give interesting responses to my stories.

But there was more. During my stay in Fishneck, I also was working my way toward a Ph.D. and moving away from my small town upbringing. I consciously tried to become "unlike" my parents—they became "the Other," whom I saw as uneducated and provincial; "the Other," from whom I hid all details of my newly developing self. To consider my split successful, I had to be able to see myself also as unlike fisher folk, who represented the extreme of my parents' situation. At the same time, I was attracted to them precisely because of the similarities in our circumstances and the marginality of our relationships with mainstream society.

In my book, I concentrated on finding how "they" were *different* from me, because difference is what the orthodox sociology community normally celebrates (and publishes); on institutions and interactional patterns that "order the lives of the people" (Abrahams 1986, 46), because that's how a "good" sociologist is supposed to construct the world. I wanted the Fishneckers to be different from me but like one another, so that I could describe them parsimoniously with sociologically relevant concepts. Often, however, I saw as many exceptions and variations as I saw evidence for patterns. Nevertheless, my grounded theory approach forced me to concentrate on patterned responses such as the "tight" family unit I described in Fishneck, in which family loyalty and personal attachment were emphasized above all else. When some detail didn't fit into a pattern, I explained it away as an "exception" or defined it as an indicator of social change, although I never fully reconciled the difference. I convinced myself of the accuracy of what I said by pushing and squeezing all the details into my emerging categories. Although these categories had explanatory value, they presented life as lived much more categorically than actual day-to-day experiences warranted.

For example, I wrote that: "Brothers and sisters did not have long-standing or violent arguments" (p. 16) and "Fishneck families were always loyal to family members" (p. 137). What about the scene I entered on my return visit, in which two sisters

claimed not to have spoken for four months, a sister and brother exchanged insults and their two families weren't speaking, and a woman was totally alienated from her sisters-in-law?

I had to wonder now whether I had been right about "tight" families. Was the breakdown of loyalty within this family that I experienced in 1989 a product of Fishneckers having more contact with mainstream society and needing each other less, as I had predicted? Or had I been wrong about this phenomenon all along because I had not been privy to deep emotion? I had known people had quarrels and took "sides," but I never witnessed the extreme arguments I heard about, and I didn't "know" them from the inside as I did now after being intimately involved in one of my own. Now my understanding came from more than observation and detachment (Jackson 1989, 11); it came through emotional sensitivity and involvement (see also Collins 1990, 215-7; Rosaldo 1987).

As I became someone whom community members got mad at in the same way they got angry at relatives, I also became someone whose trustworthiness was questioned because I violated a code of Fishneckers—family members stick up for each other to the rest of the world. I knew they hated strangers who came snooping around. "Fishneckers don't care who's watching, unless it is a stranger" (Ellis 1986, 140), I had written in my book. I knew how unhappy they were when others wrote articles about them in local newspapers (see Ellis 1986, 172). No wonder they felt ambivalent about me now. How could Carolyn, as one of us, snoop on us to the outside world? Ironically, this contradiction contributed to my conflicting feelings of being seen both as more of an outsider *and* more of an insider simultaneously.

I think I know more about the Fishneckers now than I did when I wrote *Fisher Folk*, but I also claim to know less now than I claimed to know when I wrote the book. I'm not sure now if they treated me as one of them or an outsider they liked or both. I wonder now what the Fishneckers were like when I wasn't around and what impact I had on how they acted or what they said. At the same time, I am sympathetic to Henry's (1971) position that people aren't able to make themselves act very

different for very long, because they are limited by culture, custom, natural impulses, habits, and longstanding patterns of interaction.

I don't know if the stories they told me happened or not. I don't know if I understood their expressive, creative speech (Liguori 1983) or if I took what they said too literally, limited by my own sense of "truth" and storytelling. In a population in which tall tales are the norm, how would I know when I was getting the "truth"? And didn't I egg them on, wanting more stories of the bizarre? Sometimes I think they deceived me—told me tall tales as truth—while I deceived them—pretended to be just talking when I was recording (Punch 1986). They thought I was coming to "sit and talk a spell"; I thought I was coming for data. They thought they were entertaining me with tales; I thought they were telling me what really went on.

REFLECTIONS ON REFLECTIONS

[I]f we get rid of traditional notions of "objectivity" and "scientific method" we shall be able to see the social sciences as continuous with literature—as interpreting other people to us, and thus enlarging and deepening our sense of community. We shall see the anthropologists and historians as having made it possible for us—educated, leisured policy-makers of the West—to see any exotic specimen of humanity as also "one of us." We shall see the sociologists as having done the same for the poor (and various other sorts of nearby outsiders), and the psychologists as having done the same for the eccentric and the insane. (Rorty 1982, 203)

I feel better now, cleansed almost, because I'm writing to understand a community of human beings trying to create meaning and make sense of the world, and in this regard, I feel connected to the Fishneckers. This commonality often is masked by reified concepts of social science (Jackson 1989, 11), such as those of tight and loose communities I used in *Fisher Folk*; the illusion of difference is unveiled in my narrative story—in the breaking of genre (Richardson 1992, 119)— through detailed conversations, descriptions of them, and rede-

scriptions of me that emphasize how "they" are also "one of us" (Rorty 1989, xvi; see also Collins 1990, 212-4). Writing from a perspective of commonality does not mean that I am unaware of my ultimate authority as narrator of this story, of the ultimate separation as well as connection indicated by the hyphen (Fine 1994, 70), or of class differences (especially educational) between Fishneckers and me; it does mean including a point of view usually neglected by social science, one that emphasizes how our "experiences conjoin or connect us with others, rather than the ways they set us apart" (Jackson 1989, 4). In fact, this very emphasis on connectiveness, as Jackson (1989, 5) continues, "goes against the grain of traditional empiricism, which assumes that the knower and the known inhabit disconnected worlds."

Like Rosaldo (1987), I now feel more at home exploring cultural borderlands—where they and I intersect—that are always in motion, instead of cultural patterning frozen for inspection (Rosaldo 1987, 64, 216). Next time I do research I'll be looking to interact with "complex sites of cultural production" (Rosaldo 1987, 216), not to discover self-contained, homogeneous culture that exists apart from me. Maybe then I can be more authentic from the beginning, by which I mean being more consciously open to the ambiguity, complexity, and relatedness of experience (Berger 1988), more willing to integrate my multiple roles in fieldwork in the same way I do in my everyday life (Adler and Adler 1987, 86), and more likely to call on the ethics of care, empathy, personal relationships, community, and personal accountability to assess my knowledge claims (Collins 1990, 212-19).

After writing this, I'm glad I went to Fishneck and "sat a spell"; I'm even happier I paid a return visit and learned more about the Fishneckers, myself, and ethnographic practices. It's hard to imagine now not returning to share this story and my life with them.

NOTES

1. But see Daniels (1983), Letkemann (1980), and Taylor (1991), who deal briefly with this topic.

2. All the names in this article are pseudonyms.

3. Several authors remind us that there is a fuzzy line between informing and lying to our subjects (Fine 1993, 276-7; Thorne 1980, 287). For example, Fine (1980, 123-4) refers to the strategy I used as "shallow cover," in which the ethnographer admits to doing research but is vague about what it is that he or she is doing. Because we can never tell subjects everything (Roth 1962, 283) or reveal the total character of our research goals (Hilbert 1980), perhaps all research is secretive to some extent.

4. Rochford (1992, 102) discusses the mixed results of taking written materials back to a community; see also Bloor (1983) and Emerson and Pollner (1988).

5. See Abu-Lughod (1993, 38) for a discussion of the claim of writing for the "higher" good of critical ethnography.

6. See Bruner (1993, 6) who warns about the danger of "putting the personal self so deeply back into the text that it completely dominates, so that the work becomes narcissistic and egotistical." Although this is a danger that must be considered, I suggest that narcissism and egotism also are exemplified in our orthodox practice of omitting self from our texts.

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