

Chapter 2

Ethnography as Collective Research Endeavor

Abstract Collaboration in ethnography can describe vastly different relationships between individual researchers, research team members, the people they study, and those on whom they rely for background information, support and fieldwork data. This chapter traces a number of historical trajectories of collaboration in ethnography through two terms that consistently appear in the literature: collaborative ethnography and team ethnography. It first defines each term through the work of key authors, outlines how collaboration is understood and practiced according to these definitions, and references sample publications associated with each in tabulated form. It then locates the authors' approach to doing ethnography in teams within this literature, explicating the similarities and differences to these documented understandings. The chapter can be used as a reading guide to the chapters that follow as well as the suggested readings in the appendices.

Keywords Collaborative ethnography • Team ethnography • Team research • Collaboration in teams

The origins and emergence of ethnography as an approach to qualitative research have been well documented. We therefore assume a degree of ethnographic literacy from readers who come to this book with an interest in collaboration or asymmetry. This chapter therefore focuses on what is less well documented, namely, asymmetries in the teamwork approach to ethnographic research we adopted.

Collaboration in ethnography more broadly is neither new nor noteworthy in and of itself, although what constitutes collaboration and indeed ethnography is subject to debate (Mills and Ratcliffe 2012). Examinations of the supervisor-supervisee relationship in the doctoral education space, for example Cerwonka and Malkki (2007) and Cuncliffe and Karunanayake (2013), evidence recent interest in detailed discussion of collaboration in, albeit differently conceived, teams. Appendix 3 contains a list of further reading for those interested in these debates.

Indeed, while reviewing the ethnographic literature for this study, we found relatively quickly some specific definitions of collaboration in ethnography, such as collaborative ethnography and team ethnography, which the following discussion

shows. Rather than grapple with fine-grained distinctions between terms and methodological and disciplinary categories, we acknowledge that what follows is a selection of the ethnographic literature which uses the terms collaboration and team; the multiple forms and instances of ethnography involving more than one researcher are not all covered here. In considering how to name our own approach in this book, we arrived at ‘doing ethnography in teams’ as a better way of working with the slippage in the meaning of collaboration in ethnographic research. By fully accounting for the nature of our working relationship and extrapolating the asymmetries we identified, we set a new standard for what it means to talk about and describe team ethnography. What makes this book distinctive is its detailed documentation and illustration of how ethnography unfolded through our collaboration.

Thus, to background the team approach we adopted, in this chapter we first outline the differences between what is known as collaborative ethnography and team ethnography, informed by the ethnographic literature emanating primarily from the United States. What is meant by the terms ‘collaborative’ and ‘team’ appears to vary significantly in this literature, although what they share are ethnographic methods and writing.

To conclude the chapter, we locate our team approach to collaboration in ethnography as distinctive within this literature.

2.1 Collaborative Ethnography and Team Ethnography

While ethnographic teams have conducted research internationally for many decades, two main approaches to research collaboration emerge from our reading of the literature that explicitly addresses these concepts—collaborative ethnography and team ethnography. The literature reviewed is dominantly from the USA, and both strands focus on collective fieldwork and co-writing as research strategies, although these are discussed differently. The following sections briefly outline each approach, its influences and key protagonists.

We acknowledge that there are forms of ethnography involving multiple researchers that are documented outside of these literatures and from other parts of the world (indeed we make brief reference to French approaches, for example). This brief and focused review aims to show how the terms that appear most closely related to the focus of this report have been used, and are, in fact, quite different in their meaning. This is not to say that all forms of collaboration or teamwork in ethnography are covered in what follows.

To balance the limited focus of the review that follows, in Appendix 3 we provide a more extensive list of references exemplifying a range of ethnographic studies conducted and written by more than one person, including examples from education, health, and medical anthropology (reflecting the location of our study at the intersection of education and health). Furthermore, in Appendix 2, we provide a list of references to texts that explicitly address methodological issues in ethnographic studies conducted by research teams.

2.1.1 *Collaborative Ethnography*

The term ‘collaborative ethnography’ is often associated with Luke Eric Lassiter’s doctoral dissertation (1998) which he developed in subsequent publications (Campbell and Lassiter 2010; Lassiter and Campbell 2010; Lassiter 2004, 2005). From this perspective, collaboration refers to the relationship between a researcher and those being researched. Lassiter’s (2005) guide to collaborative ethnography represents a comprehensive overview of this approach. The first of two sections in the guide traces a shift in this historical relationship through the terms anthropologist and ‘informants’, to researcher/s and ‘consultants’. This move stems, Lassiter argues, from the 1960s crisis of representation challenging Western hegemony, which brings ethics and politics to the fore, and relocates responsibility to consultants as central to the collaborative research endeavor. Lassiter defines collaborative ethnography as:

...an approach to ethnography that deliberately and explicitly emphasizes collaboration at every point in the ethnographic process, without veiling it—from project conceptualization, to fieldwork, and, especially, through the writing process...yields texts that are co-conceived or cowritten with local communities of collaborators and consider multiple audiences outside the confines of academic discourses, including local constituencies... is both a theoretical and methodological approach for doing and writing ethnography... [which] implies constant mutual engagement at every step of the process (pp. 16–17).

Collaboration is seen here as the interactions between researcher and local communities of consultants, the purpose of which is to co-produce insider knowledge about these communities. The emphasis is on equity in collaboration ‘at every step of the process’ (p. 17), but most particularly on co-writing.

The second section of Lassiter’s guide identifies four commitments central to collaborative ethnography and describes how to approach, negotiate and manage collaborative ethnography with consultants. Again, the focus is on co-writing, the outcome of which is the production of an ethical and authentic representation of the group central to the study. Co-writing counters historical practices through which, at best, consultants might be invited to respond to the ethnographic text, although their commentary always appeared after production, and occasionally as footnotes or a postscript to the text. Lassiter warns however, that co-writing poses a threat to the reputations of anthropologists in a disciplinary arena which values single authored ‘official’ publications that speak to a scholarly audience over romantic ‘unofficial’ representations that speak to popular audiences.

The relevance of collaborative ethnography to our book is its problematisation of ‘truth’ in researchers’ experiences:

...ethnographers are much more cognizant of how experience, their own and those of their interlocutors, shapes both the ethnographic process and the ethnographic text, and of how this coexperience, in turn, shapes both intersubjective fieldwork co-understandings and, potentially, collaborative textual co-interpretations... (p. 104).

Lassiter suggests that what is desirable about coexperience is the shaping of intersubjective interpretations and texts, although he warns against taking up

what he calls ‘adoption narratives’. Adoption narratives are statements about the ethnographer’s degree of inclusion within a community, which researchers use to authorize their ethnographic descriptions of that community without regard to how co-interpretations, often conflicting, emerge in the process of fieldwork and writing (p. 106). Conflict arises here however, between researcher and consultant.

In sum, collaborative ethnography as discussed in this literature is presented as a holistic methodological approach that draws attention to the ethics of researcher-researched coexperiences that shape fieldwork co-understandings, co-interpretations and co-written texts. It has been taken up to a lesser or greater extent in a number of contemporary and historical accounts of ethnographic projects (Buford May and Pattilo-McCoy 2000; Gillespie 2007; Gordon et al. 2006; Kleinknecht 2006; Leary 2007; Liska Belgrave and Smith 2002; Marjukka Collin et al. 2008; Obermeyer 2007; Pigliasco and Lipp 2011). Lassiter’s guide however, does not specifically address research collaboration between members of research teams comprising more than one researcher, which team ethnography does.

2.1.2 Team Ethnography

Erickson and Stull (1998) describe team ethnography as a cooperative and collaborative ‘joint venture’ (p. 15). Theirs is an anthropological approach, shaped largely by ‘American ethnographers studying other Americans’ (p. 53). This account of team ethnography focuses on the team-based conduct of ethnography teams. This challenges the anthropological archetype of the ‘lone ranger ethnographer’ in British ‘expedition ethnography’ and American ‘reservation ethnography’ (p. vi), and is also distinct from the archival research of French ‘multifaceted documentary teams’ (p. 54). (Here is an example of other forms of ethnography pursued by multiple researchers).

In contemporary guides to collective ethnographic fieldwork and writing, for Erickson and Stull, ‘[w]ords such as “polyphony” and “polyvocality” are much in vogue these days’ (p. 45). The authors see polyvocality as a mixed blessing however, as it presents ‘partial truths’ sometimes written alone and sometimes written collectively by team members, and often not spoken with one voice (p. 49). They argue there is a tendency for ‘top-down’ (p. 47) texts, through which the author’s interpretation becomes the team’s interpretation. To counter this tendency, they draw on Clifford and Marcus (1986) to argue that collaboration in teams must become an explicit and deliberate part of both fieldwork and broader processes of research, interpretation and writing.

Team ethnography, Erickson and Stull (1998) suggest, reduces the loneliness, anxiety and self-doubt that can accompany the lone research endeavour by enabling the team to act ‘as a buffer against the outside, and often very strange, world of the field’ (p. 55). Teams are generally loosely organized and comprise multidisciplinary members, which allows for a range of disciplinary and personal differences such as ‘age, sex, ethnicity, class, training, experience, inclination and circumstance’ (p. 6) to influence fieldwork. In other words, diversity

in membership both enriches the research and its outcomes. Yet the question for ethnography, Erickson and Stull argue, is:

...not whether to team or not to team; ethnography is by its very nature a team enterprise. The question becomes, What do we want our ethnographic team to look like? Whose understandings shall we include? (p. 59).

The question of how and what constitutes the 'team' in team ethnography is addressed in the first of what the authors identify as four stages in the process and production of research. 'Getting started' deals with team selection and management structure (hierarchical or egalitarian); generation and setting of the research focus, goals and field tactics; and developing the organisational framework of the team (intra-team meetings, attendance and communication; data collection, management, storage, analysis and ownership; research ethics; writing and publishing; and project deadlines and outcomes). A 'team compact' is recommended to formalise agreement about the management of the project as well as the team.

Stage two, 'Getting there', begins with Margaret Mead's idea that successful teams are those in which members' skills, capacities, interests and temperaments are complementary, asymmetrical and noncompetitive (p. 18). These somewhat dissonant features of teams however, constitute risks such as: slipping into solitary ways, project self-destruction and the creation of fissures in professional relationships. To offset the potential for professional jealousies, factionalism, differential relations to and ownership of participants, and poor leadership that is common in teams, the authors recommend that teams should regularly and systematically collectively debrief by sharing fieldwork observations and interpretations.

The third and fourth stages deal respectively with 'Fieldwork' methods and practices, and 'Writing up', which acknowledges the impossibility of devising a definitive guide to co-writing practices. Like Lassiter, Erickson and Stull focus on recasting the researcher's power to give those being researched greater voice and authority through democratisation of authorial responsibility. Yet they warn:

...transforming the different voices of a team's members, not to mention those of their hosts, into a polyphonic fugue, much less a symphony, is quite something else again... [yet] no one is saying too much about the production line itself...how are teams to transform their many voices into one? Or should they?...Nobody tells us how to write with others...The joint writing project died aborning [while being born] amid squabbles... (p. 46).

Like collaborative ethnography, this excerpt suggests that team ethnography challenges the 'religion of academic individualism' (p. 54) that exists in the custom and structure of single-authored research texts. Teams combat academic individualism, the 'cult of individualism' (p. 26), by enabling researchers to 'talk through what they think they are beginning to understand with others of similar professional training but different histories...[to] come to a fuller, richer understanding' (p. 58). The authors cite Foster et al. to argue that the key question is:

...[does the team] produce results not so readily obtained, if not at all, from more traditional research? Are these results of such significance and importance as to justify the expenditure of money and professional time? (p. 60).

To justify the expenditure of professional time, team ethnography therefore must produce results of significance that could not otherwise be obtained from

more traditional research. Yet just what is produced and how teams manage this is not elaborated. This is our major motivation for producing this book.

There are however, multiple benefits of this approach to team research. The authors' instructions for successful team ethnography are: maximising fieldwork coverage of people and events; clarifying understandings about fieldwork and its meanings; and collegial support during the research project itself. Erickson and Stull provide a useful and instructive series of steps for team management: conscious planning for sharing fieldnotes; warming up; and devising an explicit 'team compact' for fieldwork, ownership of data, publication policy, duration of the agreement, definition of roles, jobs and work, and each member's 'niche' (p. 61).

To summarise, we have identified two categories of texts that consistently appear in the ethnographic literature. The first present the conceptual, interpretive and practical challenges of ethnography as a collaborative endeavour, albeit multiply conceived. Table 2.1 represents a selection of these texts, including a brief synopsis (full citations in Appendix 2).

The second focus is on reflexive accounts of team fieldwork processes which discuss how individual knowledge practices influence perception and interpretation of fieldwork, a selection of which are depicted in Table 2.2

While no means exhaustive, the selections in these tables provide a brief glimpse at the range of texts concerned with collaboration in ethnography. Note the multiplicity of descriptive terms in the titles, which exemplifies the slippage between categories in both tables.

While protagonists of both collaborative ethnography and team ethnography agree that all research is collaborative, we point out what is seemingly obvious, that all teamwork is asymmetrical. What Erickson and Stull do not address are the specificities of how asymmetries in teams are negotiated; how teamwork processes are navigated amongst diversely constituted teams; and what might the possible outcomes of exploiting, rather than merely offsetting, the asymmetries in ethnographic team research be. This brings us to asymmetries in ethnographic research teams.

2.1.3 Asymmetries in Collaboration

The previous section briefly outlined the differences between collaborative ethnography (ethnographies co-produced by researcher and researched) and team ethnography (research teams comprising multiple interdisciplinary members). Our approach is distinct from collaborative ethnography in that we do not see the participants in our study as members of the research team per se. That is, while they collaborated in data generation, they were not involved in the team processes of the study, nor the research processes of analysis and writing.

Our approach follows some of the lines of thought discussed previously in the section on team ethnography, but stresses the issue of asymmetry much more explicitly. It differs in some key aspects. The excerpt that follows is co-written by two members of a paired team, who were co-present at a single research site as

Table 2.1 Collaborative ethnography texts

| Author, date | Publication title | Nature of collaboration |
|---------------------------------|--|---|
| Gordon et al. (2006) | Collective ethnography, joint experiences and individual pathways | A six-person team of long-term colleagues and friends studying gender construction in primary and secondary schools in Norway. Analyses distance and proximity, pleasure and struggle, in a longitudinal account of the study generated from memory, field diaries and team meeting notes |
| Liska Belgrave and Smith (2002) | Negotiated validity in collaborative ethnography | Reconstruction and analysis of the process of conducting a collaborative, interpretive study of two experiences of Hurricane Andrew. Addresses bias and validity in different but richly complementary stories generated through interviews infected by the impact of researchers' biographies and theoretical orientations |
| Paulsen (2009) | Ethnography of the ephemeral: studying temporary scenes through individual and collective approaches | Comparison between depth and breadth in two short-term ethnographies: one a multi-year study of Californian fairs conducted by a single researcher and the other a 'swarm' study of a single trade show conducted by an inter-disciplinary team of 15 |
| Rappaport (2008) | Beyond participant observation: collaborative ethnography as theoretical innovation | Argues for more socially accessible 'public anthropology' and politically engaged 'activist anthropology' through collaboration between academics and Latin American indigenous and African American communities |
| Reid et al. (1996) | "Do you see what I see?" Reading a different classroom scene | Post-structural feminist examination of multi-faceted and contradictory representations of classroom life. A four-person, month-long phenomenological study drawing on fieldnotes and video |
| Sherry (2006) | Fielding ethnographic teams: strategy, implementation and evaluation | Reflection and description of team ethnography based on 30-years' experience selecting, building and maintaining research teams; orchestrating interpretation; and negotiating writing, representation and voice. Written from a team leader perspective, collaboration is characterized as a 'rhizomatic, synergistic impulse', requiring a 'multidimensional coping mechanism' and 'resilience' |

(continued)

Table 2.1 (continued)

| Author, date | Publication title | Nature of collaboration |
|-----------------------------|---|---|
| Silva et al. (2006) | Collaborative ethnography: an approach to the elicitation of cognitive requirements of teams | 'Fast ethnography' of groups of people using technology by teams of researchers, comprising joint short-term observations, debriefing meetings and groupware software to collate, coordinate and manage data and teams. Defines collaboration as 'performed by many agents who can interact with each other' in order to maximise data collection and minimise its descriptive representation |
| Tiainen and Koivunen (2006) | Exploring forms of triangulation to facilitate collaborative research practice: reflections from a multidisciplinary research group | Multi-disciplinary research group studying electronic services in rural Finland. Examination of multiple forms of triangulation in relation to multiple data sources, methods, theories and researchers, highlighting the importance of creating a collaborative environment for individual and collective writing |
| Wasser and Bresler (1996) | Working in the interpretive zone: conceptualizing collaboration in qualitative research teams | Explication of the 'interpretive zone' as an historically and socially situated space of dynamic interaction through which researchers negotiate joint methodological inquiry and group identity. Conceptualises collaboration as the critical interpretive function, generating productive possibilities through conflict, challenge, alliances, gossip and overlap |
| Whitt and Kuh (1989) | Qualitative methods in higher education research: a team approach to multiple site investigation | Multi-sited team of nine studying 14 institutions. Argues that qualitative interview-based and focus group study is time consuming and expensive, yet produces rich and accurate descriptions. Composition of the research team is critical |

Table 2.2 Ethnographic team fieldwork literature

| Author, date | Publication title | Nature of collaboration |
|--------------------------------------|--|---|
| Allen Collinson (2006) | Running-together: some ethnomethodological considerations | Joint auto-ethnographies conducted by two long-distance running mates in USA. Phenomenological study involving personal logs, a joint log, daily audio recordings and detailed field notes |
| Buford May and Pattilo-McCoy (2000) | Do you see what I see? examining a collaborative ethnography | Team of two researchers, part of a larger multi-sited study. Systematic juxtaposition of jointly collected but individually recorded observations in a Chicago neighbourhood recreation centre examining points of similarity and difference |
| Creese et al. (2008) | Fieldnotes in team ethnography: researching complementary schools | Four-member research team studying Gujarati complementary schools in an English city. Examination of how shared fieldnotes are used by researchers to constitute a team, contest interpretations and produce nuanced accounts of research |
| Gerstl-Pepin and Gunzenhauser (2002) | Collaborative team ethnography and the paradoxes of interpretation | Collaborative team evaluation of a North American Schools Program. Examination of interpretive differences, representation of diverse voices in the research process, and conflicting roles as evaluators and critical researchers leading to both greater understanding but also fragmentation and uncertainty |

part of a larger study of several teams simultaneously exploring other settings. It illustrates how others have, perhaps implicitly, signaled the relevance of asymmetry in ethnographic research:

We agreed to complete our visits to the fieldhouse with very little conversation about what we had observed. We then returned to our separate residences to write fieldnotes. In essence, we shared our perceptions of Groveland with each other by writing those perceptions directly into the fieldnotes and reading them after this separate recording (Buford May and Pattilo-McCoy 2000, p. 68).

Buford May and Pattilo-McCoy go on to say that their approach was mediated by the fact they were not involved in writing the report for the study. Like these authors, our team comprised two people who generated individual data sets through complementary, overlapping, but different methodological practices. Coloured by vastly different professional and personal biographies, unlike these authors, our joint analysis and writing processes were informed by our different insights and experiences in the field. As Buford May and Pattilo-McCoy state, biographical difference:

...influences the content and type of data collected...provides an example of minimal distance between Self (the researcher) and Other (the researched) and how such closeness can be both facilitative and oppressive. Our likeness—to each other and to the people we studied—are the basis for our suggestion for more diversity among collaborating ethnographers (p. 66).

Like Erickson and Stull (1998), these authors argue for diversity in ethnographic teams. They examine gender and marital status, highlight how their background differences coloured their perceptions of what was going on, and even question what might be gained from being seen as ‘insiders’ in the research setting, as they were researching their own neighbourhoods. Yet they also argue that their similarities outweighed their differences, which minimised ‘moments of disagreement’ in the research process. In addition to being collaborative, they were also cooperative, ‘in that there was very little conflict or competition between us as field-workers’ (p. 69). In contrast, Buford May and Pattilo-McCoy cite studies in which researchers felt pressure to distinguish themselves from each other or negotiated a narrative to account for the personal and intellectual differences between team members (p. 69).

What is relevant to this book is the authors’ conscious decision to distance themselves from each other during fieldwork, as they ‘did not want to be seen as a pair or dependent on one another’ (p. 71). So it was with us.

2.2 Our Approach to Collaboration

This section draws attention to the asymmetries in our teamwork and research approaches and practices, which, we will argue, enriched the outcomes. The following ‘writing-in-progress’ excerpt from Teena’s notes when writing this book provides a sense of how we considered how to name our approach:

Perhaps **co-ethnography**: the ‘co’ references collaboration in the broad ethnographic sense (Lassiter 2004) and research as always collaborative (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995);

capturing ‘co-presence’ to describe our independent site visits (while not literally being there at the same time and place, although our paths occasionally crossed); and co-location as researchers in one site across a six month period of time. Co-ethnography (co-presence and co-production, but does not fit the idea of co-production with participants).

Perhaps start from what it is not: it is distinct from the anthropologically-based ‘collaborative ethnography’ of Lassiter, driven by the desire to effect social change through research and the production of the ethnographic text by focusing on the ethically responsible practice of co-writing ethnographic texts with ‘consultants’. Team ethnography (Erickson and Stull 1998) focuses on teams of ethnographers, often involving researchers of different status and time commitments working in multiple settings (Austin 2003), or larger projects across multiple research sites comprising pairs of researchers working in one site (Buford May and Pattilo-McCoy 2000).

This excerpt shows how we began to distinguish our approach as different to both collaborative ethnography and team ethnography. The composition of our team is not best captured through notions of inter-disciplinarity, despite the differences in our personal and professional backgrounds (see Chap. 1). Yet our epistemological positions were aligned, so there was no need to negotiate issues of ‘validity’ and ‘variability’ (Liska Belgrave and Smith 2002). We did not put in place a formal team compact (Erickson and Stull 1998), nor regularly debrief (Gerstl-Pepin and Gunzenhauser 2002). We did not co-produce or share fieldnotes, nor were our fieldnotes the site from which our team emerged (Creese et al. 2008). Our team was established before fieldwork began, although we commenced fieldwork at different times. And our team processes developed organically, while our methodological practices diverged in a number of ways as the study progressed (see Chap. 3). Yet, we will argue, the asymmetries in our teamwork inform and enrich the depth and breadth of our research and its outcomes, as well as our individual research practices (see Chap. 4).

It is perhaps useful to first state in concrete terms what collaborative team ethnography as we practised it is **not**:

- **Multi-sited**—the study was conducted at one site, the Karitane Residential Unit at Carramar;
- **Full immersion**—our site visits represent variable attendance patterns over different periods of time on different days and months;
- **Consistent site visit patterns**—each of us had different starting and end dates (for administrative reasons), and different patterns of attendances (for time reasons);
- **Identical fieldwork practices**—while we both engaged in the same research methods, such as, observation, document collection and multiple modes of visual data generation, our methodological practices diverged in various ways;
- **Regular planned debriefings**—we debriefed sporadically and often in unplanned ways, such as talking in the car while driving home from a site visit or discussions through email. Most of these unplanned debriefings were not recorded, although Nick took notes of some;
- **Cross-reading fieldnotes**—our observations proceeded independently and ‘naturally’, with almost no data sharing during fieldwork itself—this was a deliberate decision in order to allow our fieldwork practices and initial

impressions to unfold in relative independence, thus exploiting asymmetry rather than trying to flatten it out;

- **Equal roles and task allocation**—due to different employment status.

We expect that asymmetries may exist along different dimensions in other studies, or that some of these may not apply in approaches that still have properties of asymmetry at their core.

Having established what our approach was *not* we now outline how it addresses what appears to be absent from the ethnographic team literature. That is, detailed documentation of how multiply constituted teams negotiate the day-to-day project management of research. This includes: scheduling, budgeting, communicating, accessing information, organising holidays and absences, illness, individual responsibilities, and so on. Little is known therefore, about how decisions are made in relation to task allocation in the team, and how this impacts on data generation and interpretation, analysis and writing. Our focus here is a detailed description and illustration of the ways in which research teamwork is achieved and *how* teamwork enhances the production of research and researcher. The following excerpt of Teena's writing-in-progress for this book exemplifies the latter:

... 'ethnographers are much more cognizant of how experience, their own and those of their interlocutors, shapes both the ethnographic process and the ethnographic text, and of how this coexperience, in turn, shapes both intersubjective fieldwork co-understandings and, potentially, collaborative textual co-interpretations' (Lassiter 2005, p. 104). Be mindful of taking up an 'adoption narrative' that attests to my experience as mother and Tresillian client as a guide for interpreting fieldwork and written texts that negate co-interpretations, often conflicting ones (p. 106). Be mindful of overtly 'confessional reporting' (p. 107), yet be honest about my shortcomings: not having read a great deal about ethnography, and being new to the ethnographic process, fieldnotes, and working in a research team, that coloured my experience, directed my early fieldwork (attending four Thursdays in a row).

This excerpt illustrates how Teena worked her way through a common challenge for neophyte researchers (issues that were less acute and experienced differently by Nick, given his different prior experience): how to separate herself sufficiently from the data as she made sense of it, while also grappling with accounting for how the differences in our professional and research backgrounds represents a richly productive dimension of teamwork that contrasts with the notion of offsetting risks. While the process of generating data through independent fieldwork is common in research teams, the process of navigating individual insights and understandings and negotiating different methodological, project management and writing practices in asymmetrical research teams is less well understood. These practices are rarely explicitly described and almost never illustrated in the ethnographic literature.

This book therefore explicitly accounts for how we navigated asymmetrical knowledge practices in teamwork on a daily basis. It provides descriptions and illustrations of: how data sets were stored and managed, accessed and analysed by team members at different times; negotiations about who did what, when and where; what and how much of what unfolded as fieldwork was planned as well as what and how much was unplanned; what the process of negotiation produced; which points of disagreement arose and how and if they were resolved; and what

was learned about the practical, everyday processes of doing research in teams. The next two chapters address the following questions: how are differences in team members' backgrounds and methodological practices negotiated; how are data management, reading, analysis and writing jointly accomplished within this asymmetry; and how can asymmetry be productively and ethically exploited in research teams?

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