Outlining a practical, emotional and reflexive approach to Organisational Ethnography

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First and foremost we want this book to be a practical guide. We want to show readers the real experiences of ethnographers conducting this type of research, particularly as a vast majority of contemporary texts centred on ethnographic work still present it as much 'cleaner' than our experiences would suggest. Elements such as gaining access, gathering data or exiting the field are spoken about as straightforward once-and-for-all events, and it is rare to read of the complexities and dilemmas behind building relationships within communities. Rarer still are insights into feelings of vulnerability and anxiety from ethnographers, which at best obscures an important discussion, and at worst creates the image of ethnographers being all-knowing connoisseurs in the field; and emotionally grounded 'ideal-type' individuals. This, for newcomers and experienced fieldworkers alike, is problematic and provides the counterpoint for this text.

We hope to give a raw insight into *doing* ethnography, but we do not give any objective answers or claim to have solved the illusive mysteries of ethnographic work. We instead offer a rare glimpse behind the curtain. What are the stories that ethnographers do not tell about their process? What about their experiences that were written 'out' of their official articles, books and thesis' in favour of a cleaner narrative? What is their advice for those embarking into the field for the first time? What about the tales that we fear would expose us as imposters? Did they have specific strategies or did they simply make it up as they went along? How did they cope with the inherent uncertainty of fieldwork? These are the conversations that we have found ourselves having in recent years that have really got to the heart of the experience of *doing* ethnographic work. Interestingly, whilst there has been a long history of ethnography within the social sciences, particularly anthropology and sociology, the same appetite for this method has not been as strong in Organisation Studies (Cunliffe, 2010). Indeed, many Organisation Studies Ph.D. programs do not cover ethnography in the curriculum. We believe that because of this lack of exposure to this approach, some have shied away from ethnography or have felt they needed to conform to (some) institutional views that more 'objective' methodological approaches are more rigorous, valid and thus superior. But we have been lucky to have been exposed to forums, research groups, conferences and networks that champion ethnographic approaches and celebrate the emotional, experiential, subjective and reflexive practices that go hand-in-hand with ethnography.

In reading the chapters in this book we hope to provide you with:

- An honest look into what it is like to *do* ethnographic work, written from a range of colleagues, from early career researchers to seasoned ethnographers
- Informal, conversational and friendly writing that guides you through the internal issues that contemporary ethnographers have contended with
- An understanding into the unfolding, messy and chaotic ethnographic *process,* rather than just the sanitised outcome of the research project
- Advice on how to approach tricky situations – from covert research, to difficult conversations, to keeping level-headed and analytical in the heat of the field
- Reassurance that as long as you are paying due consideration to your approach, you are probably not doing it 'wrong', and that a plurality of appropriate approaches exist

In this introductory chapter we set about outlining the core philosophy of this book, particularly focussing on the several key intersectional points that are weaved throughout each chapter. First we discuss the importance of providing practical, real-life insight into undertaking ethnography, and moving beyond only theoretical understandings. Second, we introduce the concept of reflexivity and its central role in ethnography, as well as placing emphasis on the centrality of emotions. Finally, using examples from our chapters, we show how ethical questions are inherent in ethnography, and look to the future and what could be done in creating brave spaces to discuss our experiences of ethnography. Let us start on our adventure. First stop? Defining that elusive term.

DEFINING ETHNOGRAPHY

In writing this introduction, we always knew that we would be forced to undertake the unenviable task of 'defining' ethnographic work. Ask any ethnographer to tell you what they do, and you will have a different answer. During our many editorial meetings, where the task was to discuss our esteemed colleagues projects, we found ourselves exploring the similar and contrasting ways each author framed and understood the concept of ethnography. Interestingly, the main consistency came from the idea that ethnography is inherently pluralistic, and in this book you will not read about a 'one best way'; no magic recipe; no bureaucratic steps to follow; no tick-list to complete. Instead, you will hear about a variety of different styles and forms that are inherently influenced by the context surrounding the project, by the community, by the researcher and by the overall aims. The joy of ethnographic work comes from the idiosyncratic and hyper-specific approaches that individuals have taken, but despite this delightful mixture, there is nevertheless still *some* value in us attempting to put our fingers on the similarities that underpin these approaches.

Let us start with some words that summarise the Greatest Hits of ethnography definitions – of it being understood as the "study of social interactions, behaviours and perceptions that occur within groups, teams and organisational communities" (Reeves et al, 2008: 512). Whilst this doesn't quite capture the grit and peculiarity that you will be presented with in this book, it at least gives us a starting point in helping us understand that the task of ethnography is to longitudinally investigate some aspects of the lives of people within a particular community, regarding how they think, act, understand themselves and understand the world (Atkinson and Hammersley, 2007). To do this, ethnographers act as cartographers in creating interpretations and descriptions of human experience within that community – studying events, language, ritual, institutions, behaviours, artefacts and interactions. Cunliffe underscores the importance of context, culture, temporality and meaning-making here by noting:

> "*It differs from other approaches to research in that it requires immersion and translation. Ethnography is not a quick dip into a research site using surveys and interviews, but an extended period time in which the ethnographer immerses herself in the community she is studying: interacting with community members, observing, building relationships, and participating in community life"* (Cunliffe, 2010: 230)

Anthropologists, who are credited for the creation of ethnography as an indissoluble from participant observation, point toward its etymological root (*ἔθνος* (ethnos), people, nations, group of people; and *-graphy*, "writing"). Possibly the contemporary anthropologist who most reflected on ethnography as a writing practice has been Clifford Geertz, who asked and answered himself: "What's does the ethnographer do?.... […] writes" (Geertz, 1974: 19). The analogy to considering ethnography as a literary genre, such as the novel or poetry, could be used to suggest that therefore, there is no single way of doing ethnography, just as there is no single way of writing poems or

novels. In fact, classical anthropological research has always recognized the production of two outputs: on the one hand, the ethnographies themselves, that is, the writings, testimonies, observations and all kinds of material produced in the field, classified or displayed as the ethnographer wants; on the other, the analysis of this material, based on the reflections of the ethnographer. The researcher becomes an ethnographer when they are in the field, and the literature on organizational ethnography emphasises that what is experienced in the field must be translated into a coherent text. We quote in extension here to illustrate the point:

> "*The primary and most complex feature of ethnographic writing is to translate ethnographic material (field notes and supplementary data) into an ethnographic text. In order to achieve this translation, ethnographers usually carry out a form of indexing. First, ethnographers need to organize their material into a coherent form. This might involve going through their field diaries of observations to make sure they make senses, transcribing interviews (if they have carried out interviews) and organizing any documents they have collected so that they make sense (that is, the ethnographer understands where they came from and what organizational role they played)"* (Neyland, 2008: 126)

As we can see from these early points, we cannot define ethnography as a data collection *method* (as it is often confused for/as), but rather ethnography is itself the *methodology*; conceived of as an *approach*; a *way* of imagining the social; our *relationship* with others practices and the way we inquire about it (Gaggiotti et al, 2017), but also the artifact that we produce when experiencing the filed. The most common 'method' within ethnographic work would be participant observation, which involves "being there" in organisations, hanging out in order to "observe, to ask seemingly stupid yet insightful questions, and to write down what is seen and heard" (Fetterman, 2010: 9). Throughout this, ethnographers "attempt to understand phenomena through accessing the meanings participants assign to them" (Orlikowski and Baroudi 1991: 98-99). All in all, the intention of participant observation is to get a much richer picture than other approaches might allow for, and throughout this book you will read about the varied experiences of the authors and their encounters, observations, triumphs and challenges when engaged in participant observation settings.

Through this move toward the ethnographic methodology, we see an epistemological and ontological shift. In the case of the former, researchers eschew the search for 'objectivity' and instead "practice a reflexive way of knowing the world [they] inhabit in relation to […] others" (Hussey, 2002: 45). Emphasis is placed on relativism and subjectivity, where knowledge (from participants and researchers) is understood as socially organised and constructed, and as a product of specific social, cultural and political environments (Doucet and Mauthner, 2004). Regarding the ontological shift, rather than understanding reality through abstract, generalised and universalistic explanations, researchers instead turn to the "concrete, sensuous world of peoples' actual practices and activities" (Hussey, 2002: 634) and attempt to understand these specific experiences. In this book, we do not intend to show how ethnography creates generalisable, valid or 'true' knowledge, instead, we embrace the subjectivity. We appreciate Gherardi's (2018) thoughtful insight into ethnographic research that she describes as 'affective ethnography'; ethnography that is performative in style and relies on the researcher's capacity to affect and be affected in order to produce interpretations that may transform the things that they interpret. This understanding of ethnography moves beyond only understanding what it is that people *do* but acknowledges a vast array of experiences in the field of both the researcher and the researched. This approach stresses that elements such as texts, actors, materialities, language and agencies are already entangled in complex ways and that they should be read in their intra-actions, through one another, as data in motion/data that move.

Whilst not wishing to enter the murky realm of generating our own quick two-sentence definition, this section has helped to clarify some of the key elements of ethnographic work as you will read about in this book: it being an approach rather than a method; as a way of doing *and* writing; focused on understanding people; and as something that is inherently subjective that the ethnographer is inexorably weaved within. Putting the magnifying glass on this final point is important, because what you will discover in this book are tales from several ethnographers about their experiences of doing ethnographic work - how they planned their projects, how they experienced fieldwork and how they approached the task of leaving, writing up and discussing their discoveries. Whilst there are a plurality of different voices, perspectives and experiences on display, there are a number of intersectional discussion points that are raised throughout which are essential for our contemporary framing and understanding of ethnographic projects, and will offer *you* an opportunity to reflect on your own experience. In the remainder of this chapter we will outline some key discussion points that will regularly returned to throughout the chapters.

DISCUSSION POINTS

What can I *do* with this advice in this book? How will it help me prepare for an ethnographic project?

Above all, this text functions as a *practical* guide. However, it is not the typical compendium of recipes and steps you need to follow to conduct a 'proper' ethnography. In our experiences of preparing for the field we found that whilst other ethnographic texts offered us considerable knowledge and pointers, there was a lack of real, lived, honest experiences from the writers – almost like the grit, imperfections and nuances had been written out or forgotten. It made 'doing' an ethnographic project sound like a relatively straightforward and linear process, whereas the reality felt quite different: feeling our way along; navigating through the dark and making often unidentifiable steps. What we all wished for was a guide that would make the tacit explicit, and seek to offer actionable, operationalisable and practical guidance for those dealing with fieldwork. Throughout this book you will hear from many authors who align with Browne's take that:

> "*Despite the relatively uncomfortable aspect of exposing one's personal limitations, I maintain that making visible the invisible processes of fieldwork would undoubtedly assist inexperienced fieldworkers, especially those who are hoping to collect data in places considered unstable or insecure*" (2013: 424).

Indeed, fieldworkers always benefit greatly from learning from other peoples' triumphs and mistakes, and may feel better equipped and empowered to deal with the challenges they may personally encounter. You will not read sanitised approaches to doing fieldwork, but instead hear about the more intuitive, chaotic, messy and inductive perspectives. The ethnography encourages the investigation of unforeseen findings as they arise, allowing the researcher to adapt the research and its aims to what develops in the field. For example, according to Atkinson and Hammersely: "It is expected that the initial interests and questions that motivated the research will be refined and perhaps even transformed, over the course of the research" (2007: 3). Thus, an insight into the non-

linear will prepare the reader for the messiness that they are likely to experience.

If you are reading this, the likelihood is that you have been, or soon will be, in the field and trying to not only make sense of the phenomena that you are researching, but also about your own place within the research. Whilst the stories that you hear from the authors will tell you of very particular and idiosyncratic settings (from prisons to hotels to mountain rescues), the insight that you will gain is how these ethnographers have made sense of their situation and worked with uncertainty in their projects. In creating a practical guide then, one of our key aims when initially approaching authors was to ask for an open and honest account where *they* were front and centre, to really accentuate the experience of what it feels like to *do* an ethnography. That is, we have asked for *reflexive* accounts…

What part does reflexivity have in an ethnographic project? What part does the researcher play?

The necessity for reflexive practice is magnified in areas of research that require self-scrutiny and the careful theorising of claims made (Howe, 2009), hence its importance within ethnography. In simple terms, reflexivity involves considering "the way in which research is carried out and understanding how the process of doing research shapes its outcomes" (Hardy, et al. 2001: 533) but it can often be more complicated than this. For Bourdieu, a truly reflexive sociology must make transparent how ethnographers produce 'truth' claims and facts (Foley, 2002; Townsend and Cushion, 2021), highlighting the social and intellectual conditions that shape research practice. Throughout this text, you will read about the central place of the *ethnographer* in an ethnographic project. Primarily this is because, like all researchers, ethnographers bring their 'intellectual baggage' with them into the field, in that they are "making sense and completing their research with their own community traditions, assumptions, language, and expectations in mind. Their research accounts are therefore influenced as much by these traditions as by the ''data'' from ''natives'' (Cunliffe, 2010: 78). Therefore, an ethnographic approach means that, for better or worse, the outcomes will be shaped by the ethnographer. With this in mind, this text therefore moves away from seeking out 'realist tales' (considered to be dispassionate and 'factual' accounts that minimise the presence of the researcher), and instead toward 'confessional tales' where the ethnographer is written 'in' as intimately present, reflecting on their role in the research process. Liebling (1999) argues that the researcher is vitally important to the research end result, and that their experiences should be situated inside the research findings and analysis. Rather than seeing this as something to be decried, we argue that researchers should not be afraid of 'contaminating' the data with subjective interpretations as it is the subjectivity of the interactions that makes this approach stand out from other techniques:

> *'"The researcher's lived experiences, including her or his situated emotions and feelings, are the central methodological tools available to ethnographers. This should be acknowledged and used to the fullest both while in the field and when writing up the research afterward*" (Ugelvik, 2014: 476)

Reflexive methodologies have gained increasing attention in previous years (Duncan, 2001; Park-Fuller, 2000), and have been praised for "opening up new ways of writing about social life" (Reed-Danahay, 1997: 2-3); bestowing a certain legitimacy to findings (Spry, 2001); breaking down the boundaries between academic and non-academic spheres (Connelly and Clandinin, 1994); and encouraging the researcher to open up reflective lines of thought, impacting on analyses of personal experience, as well what *others* go through in their day-to-day lives (Ellis and Bochner, 2000). Furthermore, Hibbert and Cunliffe suggest that reflexive accounts allow us to "engage[e] with the world around us and recognis[e] that feelings of discomfort and anxiety can offer opportunities to

open up actions and behaviours to reflexive examination" (2015: 8). It is hoped that by writing ourselves into the world that we have investigated and introducing our emotional and experiential accounts then ethnographic analysis can be deepened. It is also important to explore our roles within the research environment so that we can present problems, issues and advantages that can offer guidance to future ethnographers, or help others to make sense of their experiences. This is most evident throughout this text with the role that *emotions* play in the written text…

Should we read and write about the emotions of ethnographers? Is that relevant?

Despite our interest in reflexivity and bringing 'in' emotion to ethnographic work, critiques of ethnographers becoming overly emotionally involved have a long history in methodological debates. Indeed, although recent years have seen an upturn in auto-ethnographic and reflexive writing, some have rallied against the overwhelming presence of the researcher within data, noting such reflexivity as 'navel-gazing' (Maddison, 2006), and self-absorbed narcissism (Anderson, 2006). Elsewhere, ethnographer's confessions are belittled under the tag-lines of 'going native'; failing to abide by rigorous social scientific standards; resulting in a potential distortion, dilution or weakness of research findings (Punch, 2012). Consequently, at risk of critique, we may self-censor our accounts in order to portray the image of not only the all-knowing connoisseur in the field, but of the wholly emotionally grounded 'ideal type' ethnographer. Anxieties, concerns and fears of failure may be written out in favour of a cleaner narrative.

Others argue that ethnographers should not only keep themselves 'out' of their writing, but also adopt a less emotionally invested approach whilst conducting fieldwork. Various theorists note that we run the risk of getting too "close" and being "unable to see the wood from the trees" (Nandhakumar and Jones, 2002: 334), and that perhaps "it is better to investigate a setting where the researcher is not [emotionally invested]" as they inevitably "bring their own preconceptions" and skew data (Bouma and Atkinson, 1995: 78). Similarly (although somewhat less pointedly) Kanuha highlights that "for each of the ways that being an [ethnographer] enhances the depth and breadth of understanding a population […], questions about objectivity, reflexivity, and authenticity of a research project are raised because perhaps one is too emotionally attached" (2000: 444).

Despite researchers often being expected to side-line their personal feelings and experiences in the name of 'objectivity' (Punch, 2012), we agree with those who call for a greater recognition of emotions during the research process. We firmly argue that, far from making research illegitimate and flawed, emotional reactions are a significant part of the process that should not be 'hidden' for fears of weakness and failure in academic spheres. More importantly, "ignoring or hiding [...] emotions" can "have a negative effect on the research and the researcher" (Warden, 2013: 45). Nilan (2002) emphasizes that it is not just necessary to talk about our experience of field work, it is important to discuss the emotions that generate, particularly feelings of assuming you have not managed the situation 'correctly'. Already the field is flooded with 'how-to' texts that pay little to no attention to the mental and physical well-being of researchers, but instead treat them as an abstract tool for data collection. In doing so, there is a risk that ethnographers will enter the field under the assumption that it is (or should be) a neutral and value-free environment, and not one that can be the source of much emotional upheaval. Kleinman and Kopp (1993) argue, just like any other occupational group, fieldworkers learn how they are supposed to feel in and about their work.

Within the coming chapters you will find the theme of reflexivity and emotions weaved throughout. Ilaria Boncori outlines the auto-ethnographic approach, whereby the researcher places themselves at the centre of the research project – demanding a great deal of self-reflection and critical analysis. In an exploration of her work as a compassionate advocate, Joanne Vincett examines how we may

come to understand our emotional ties in the field, and methods for dealing with this. Elsewhere, chapters on fieldnote writing from Neil Sutherland, and rapid ethnography from Cecilia Vindrola-Padrous and Stephanie Kumpunen, note the value of understanding the self in *any* ethnographic project. Finally, Christian Schmid and Paul Eisewicht provide us with a 'self-assessment guide' for understanding the emotional impact of ethnographic work – asking the question: Is ethnography right for you?

We will learn that researchers accepting the deeply emotional aspect of ethnographic work does not happen overnight, in fact, this process can be a gruelling experience where we may find ourselves worried that our emotions are not the 'right' ones or that to have any emotions or feeling during field work is 'unprofessional'. Thus, the proposition that there are ways that we 'should' and 'should not' feel only serves to exacerbate the difficulty of discussing our emotions in the field. So, although there may exist a general disdain for such personal narratives and reflexivity (Kulick, 1995), we position ourselves against this in the hope that more confessional tales will help to raise awareness amongst ethnographers of the emotional consequences of research and how important it is that reflexivity be included within the overall project. In doing so, however, we also open the door for wider discussions around ethics and ethnographic work – and the dilemmas, challenges and tricky situations that ethnographers may find themselves emotionally grappling with. However, in acknowledging the deeply personal nature of ethnographic work, questions around *ethics* are never too far behind…

Is ethnographic research inexplicably linked with ethical dilemmas?

Ethical regulation has been largely inspired by biomedical research which has meant that when it comes to ethnographic research, the ethics process is most often not fit for purpose. Atkinson (2009) explains that, given their nature, the social sciences are involved in ethical review and approval more than any other field of research outside of biomedicine. Yet the models and their implicit assumptions about the nature of research are themselves sociologically or anthropologically deficient, and they rarely apply in any satisfactory way to the conduct of ethnographic research. The strict, explicit procedures demanded by University Ethics Committees do not work well with the fluid, emergent, people-focused nature of ethnography:

> "*The nature of the research itself is so profoundly an emergent property of the processes of data collection and research design, that are themselves emergent, unfolding processes, that it becomes all but impossible to solicit consent to the research that is 'informed' in the sense of being predictable and explicable before the research itself is carried out at all. If the outcomes of an ethnography were entirely predictable, then there would be virtually no point in conducting the research at all*" (Atkinson, 2009: 21).

Any research that involves human participant raises alarm bells for reviewers on ethics panels so it is unsurprising that ethnographic research is put under close scrutiny, given its inherently people-centred approach. Whilst it might seem practical in some research scenarios (when administering interviews or a questionnaire, for example) to obtain formal, written participant consent this is not always straightforward in ethnographic research. The cracks begin to appear in terms of black and white ethical scenarios that we often learn about in research methods training. As it will become clear within the chapters in this book, the ethical dimension of the ethnographic practice is not limited to obtaining consent forms, communicating clearly the nature of the research or defining clearly how the data will be stored. Most of the chapters suggest other dimensions that needs to be taken into consideration when discussing an ethical dimension that transcend the limits of the research itself.

Throughout each chapter within this book, each author, in some way or another, draws attention to an ethical problem (or most likely problems) that arose as a result of their ethnographic approach. Chloe Tarrabain tackles the issue of covert research and the moral conundrums that the researcher faces with regard to secrecy and power. Miguel and Hugo Gaggiotti raise issues related to the involvement of participants in the sense-making process of data analysis. Jenna Pandeli and Rafael Alcadipani discuss the risk that the ethnographer takes in the process of fieldwork. Bruna Alvarez, Estal Malgosa and Diana Marre draw our attention to the ethical considerations needed when undertaking research on sensitive topics, particularly with participants considered to be vulnerable. In separate chapters, both Sarah-Louise Weller and Vanessa Monties pick up on our relationship with participants and the ethical decision making in managing these relationships in and out of the field. And ethics is even discussed by Monika Kostera, Anna Modzelewska and Tomasz Ludwicki when considering how supervisors and teachers can support their students to undertake ethnography. These are just some brief examples of how prominent ethical considerations are throughout the ethnographic process. The ethical dilemmas encountered in ethnography are multivarious, complex and require thoughtful (sometimes in-the-moment) consideration. In bringing many of these ethical dilemmas to light, we hope to engage in the debate regarding the purpose of ethical approval procedures at our universities. Illustrating the experiences of researchers should demonstrate the difficulty in our current systems. As Atkinson (2009) argues:

> "*We are in danger of allowing the quite proper concerns for research ethics in general to transform the entire research process into a formulaic one, such that there are only a very limited number of permissible research designs, determined not by their general epistemology, nor by their validity, but by their capacity to yield simple research protocols that can be checked against a set of simple (but often inappropriate) criteria. Anticipatory audit is the tail that wags the research dog*" (Atkinson, 2009: 24)

We hope that making visible the complex decision making involved in the ethnographic studies within each chapter will demonstrate the need to create procedures that accommodate and support this. The process of ethnographic education is needed amongst our university ethics colleagues and committees emphasising issues such as access are processual and dialogic and this spirit needs to extend to the ethics committees themselves to ensure that the models that are created and developed are no longer 'wholesale' and inadequate (Atkinson, 2009). These are difficult discussions to have, and are grateful to the authors for their honesty and transparency, which highlights the importance of having an appropriate '*safe' space* to discuss such difficult conversations…

How can we create spaces to discuss these tensions?

Within our emotional and practical focus it has been our intention to encourage the creation of spaces for ethnographers to discuss their own complexities around emotion, immersion, risk and ethical dilemmas. This book itself functions as one such space for the discussion of the realities of ethnographic research: an encouragement to embrace uncertainty and question the rigidity often found in other methodologies. In considering the type of spaces we want to encourage for discussing ethnographic experiences, we initially felt the need to articulate 'safe' spaces. A 'safe' space refers to an environment which we create that allow us to engage with others over controversial issues with honesty, sensitivity and respect (Arao & Clemens, 2013). In our search for safe spaces, we are looking to open up areas to allow us to be 'fully human', to provide freedom to be ourselves, "to speak and be heard, to learn and develop cognitively, to be emotionally expressive" and invoke safety in terms of cognitive freedom or 'intellectual safety' typified by dialogue and debate (Lewis et

al, 2015: 7). Through doing this, individuals can experience cognitive and emotional freedom that enables exploration of our potential as human beings. It has the potential to provide us with freedom to speak and to debate in a supportive, yet challenging environment which is often in marked contrast to mainstream spaces which can at times be destructive or simply overlook these types of conversations, views and ideas.

However, upon reading the work of Arao and Clemens (2013) our understanding of 'safe spaces' has shifted slightly. The word *safe* is defined as being free from harm or risk and perhaps it seems naïve that we might explore emotion-heavy, creative and affective styles of ethnography with no controversy, contradiction or risk. As such, 'safe' spaces may lure us into a false sense of security that our discussions will be filled with rainbows, sunshine with no critique and debate. Instead, as Arao and Clemens suggest, we will move towards talking about '*Brave* Spaces': "by revising our framework to emphasize the need for courage rather than the illusion of safety, we better position ourselves… to more accurately reflect the nature of genuine dialogue regarding these challenging and controversial topics" (2013: 141-142). Thus, we hope this book itself is considered a brave space that will encourage others to feel not just safer but *braver* to discuss the backstage processes of ethnographic research. We hope that this might then also become a catapult for building further, tangible brave spaces for ethnographers.

We can begin by building brave spaces amongst our friends and colleagues informally – developing an unofficial community with those individuals that we meet along the way during our research journeys, who share our attitudes towards ethnographic research. We are blessed with a kind, burgeoning, and agile ethnographic community – full of individuals wanting to share, converse and help others -and you only have to look to the increasing number of ethnographic streams and conferences to find this, with other opportunities awaiting within our places of work, in online communities, and creating our own debates within research papers, chapters, books, videos and blogs to encourage the creation of a 'new normal', where a deep, honest and transparent look at this complicated methodological approach is appreciated.

A final note

We hope you enjoy reading this book as much as we have enjoyed editing it. As with so many projects, it began as a seemingly innocuous chat about our experiences of doing ethnographic work, and then blossomed into the text you are currently holding. We are so grateful to all of the authors for their time, patience and writing skills, but most of all we are grateful for their honesty. Each chapter is chocked full of personal anecdotes, real-life reflections and rich stories. None of the chapters present an image of being an 'ideal-type' ethnographer, but instead bring you backstage to understand the questions that they asked themselves, the ethical debates they encountered, the playful and experimental approaches, and the practical steps that they took. So, whoever you are – a seasoned pro; somebody taking their first tentative steps 'into' the field, or just with a passing interest – we hope that through this book you will find something interesting, useful, funny and insightful. As you will see, these chapters represent the start of discussions, and we are excited to hear them continue.

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