the disciplinary context and theoretical grounding of ethnographic methodology, which makes it an attractive textbook for teaching undergraduates. Its diversity of voice and perspectives makes it engaging and dynamic, and the numerous examples of fascinating anthropological fieldwork bring the research process to life." –SUSAN FROHLICK, UBC OKANAGAN

"*Practicing Ethnography* is an excellent introductory text for undergraduate students who are embarking on ethnographic research for the first time. This engaging and accessible book succinctly covers aspects of the research process that are often belabored or overlooked in other methods textbooks. It encourages students to think critically about the opportunities and issues inherent in ethnographic fieldwork." –MELANIE MEDEIROS, SUNY GENESEO

Building on the "studying up" trend in anthropology, this book offers a theoretically informed guide to ethnographic methods that is also practical in approach, and reflects the challenges and concerns of contemporary ethnography. Students draw from vignettes situated within North America to learn how various methods work in the real world, and how ethnography informs contemporary anthropological theory. Exercises and assignments encourage students to practice these methods in a familiar context, and a sustained focus on visual methodologies offers coverage not found in other books. The result is a text that discusses both practical and theoretical issues in contemporary ethnography while equipping students with a set of transferable skills.

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Notes

1 Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban first begins talking about this in 1991 (see *Ethics and the Profession of Anthropology: Dialogue for a New Era*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Philadelphia Press).

2 Project Camelot, a counterinsurgency study in 1964 that involved the US Army, was responsible for hiring anthropologists (among other academics) to analyze certain countries (in particular, Latin America) with the goal of enhancing the government's ability to influence social processes and social orders. For an in-depth discussion see Mark Solovey (2001) "Project Camelot and the 1960s Epistemological Revolution: Rethinking the Politics-Patronage-Social Science Nexus." *Social Studies of Science* 31 (2): 171–206.

3 There is a famous, satirical critique of anthropologists worth reading by Indigenous author Vine Deloria, Jr. (Standing Rock Sioux) in his 1969 book *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto*. See Chapter 4, "Anthropologists and Other Friends." Some Indigenous peoples have critiqued anthropologists and research in general for extracting information from Indigenous communities and providing no benefit to them, nor even copies of the research; for publishing ceremonial knowledge that is not appropriate to share with the general public; for digging up burials to study them and place them in museums; and for conducting salvage anthropology. This last critique stems from the sort of anthropology done from the mid-nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century; anthropologists assumed that Indigenous peoples would disappear due to genocide or ethnocide—namely, assimilation—so they gathered up and archived as much knowledge and as many artifacts as possible in the name of preservation. Of course, Indigenous peoples in North America did not die off, and they have since helped shape more ethical research practices, particularly in the field of anthropology.

4 An IRB, or institutional review board, is the department on a university campus that reviews a student or professor's research plan when research involves people. If you are in a discipline that collects data about people, then you must submit your research to the IRB for approval. This oversight originally started with biomedical experiments but is now applied to any research with human subjects, including anthropology. Also referred to as the "human subjects protocol," this ethical review is designed to maintain ethical practice and ensure the protection of human subjects in research.

CHAPTER 4

CONNECTING WITH OTHERS: INTERVIEWING, CONVERSATIONS, AND LIFE HISTORIES

Introduction

Many would say that we are living in an interview society. We are interviewed or see others being interviewed in a multitude of venues. One example would be celebrity talk shows on which interviewers such as Anderson Cooper, Oprah Winfrey, Jon Stewart, and even Jerry Springer interview movie stars and ordinary people to make us feel as if we know them on a personal level (Briggs 2007). The interview process in media venues has also become a form of therapy, both medical and emotional. Take Dr. Phil, for example. On his show very private experiences are aired and discussed on national television in the style of a personal confessional, intended to lead those being interviewed toward an authentic revelation and life-altering experience (Atkinson and Silverman 1997). Other, more everyday interview venues would include doctor's offices, hospitals, online opinion polls, and job interviews.

Anthropologists have been practicing various forms of the interview process since the mid-1800s. The following comments were published in 1874 by the British Association for the Advancement of Science, and they refer to the relationship between an anthropologist and "Native" interviewees.

> It is almost impossible to make a savage in the lower stages of culture understand *why* the questions are asked, and from the limited range of his vocabulary or ideas it is often nearly as difficult to put the question before him in such a way that he can comprehended it. The result often is that from timidity, or the desire to please, or from weariness of the questioning, he will give an answer that he thinks will satisfy the inquirer. (Quoted in Skinner 2012, 25; see also Read [1874] 1892, 87–88)

Interview styles and the theories surrounding their use have shifted and changed over time, and obviously contemporary anthropologists would never assume a staunch, ethnocentric position of authority as suggested above. These days, the focus is on the participatory nature of interviewing and on how interviewers and interviewees build relationships and cocreate narratives. According to Kvale (1996), the interview is literally an *inter view* or exchange of views between two people, and not a one-way conversation.

In cultural anthropology, the value of the texts that are produced from oral interviews lies in their ability to let others voice their beliefs, opinions, perspectives, and memories—to tell their stories. Interviews can become part of a research project in two ways. First, they can be a way of gaining in-depth information in a "positivist vein"; the information gained, in other words, is viewed primarily as objective data. An example of an interview question yielding objective data might be, "Can you tell me the ages, genders, and current careers of all of your siblings?" This question can allow for the sharing of intimate details of an individual's lives that are articulated through cultural meanings. Interviews can be one way of exposing others' perspectives and ideas "of democratizing in a broad sense" (Wodak as seen in Briggs 2007, 573). Second, the ideal aim is centered on helping people connect their feelings and memories with their real-life circumstances by telling stories. This follows in the "interpretivist tradition"; interviews are less structured and are used in conjunction with other methods, such as participant observation, in an attempt to understand meaningfulness broadly speaking. In this way, active and engaged listening is as important as reflecting on the authority assumed as an interviewer.

How to Approach People

Choosing your interview participants is a very important component of the process and can take time in terms of gaining access and permission. If you are involved in a long-term research project, generally you will have already spent many hours practicing participant observation with the group of people you are working with, and you have gotten to know many of them on an intimate level. In this case, whom you choose to ask about interviews will generally be based on the **rapport** you have gained. You could, for example, ask those you know best and feel most comfortable with first. Once word gets around that your interviewees have had a positive experience, then others will agree more easily and will often contact you to ask to be interviewed.

If your research project is based on interview sessions only, then you will need to find people in the communities you are working with. For example, if you were working with recent Syrian refugees at a local church, you might send out fliers, post notices on the bulletin boards, or make presentations at church meetings. Anthropologists have also been known to simply place ads in newspapers or online, asking for potential participants to contact them. Once you find a few interviewees, you can then work through word of mouth to contact others. This is called the **snowball method**. It works like this: contact is made with one or two key informants, and then you ask them for a list of people that they think might be interested in being interviewed. If you follow this protocol at the end of each interview, your list of new names keeps growing exponentially—it snowballs (Russell 2006). Dianna Shandy used this method in her work and talks about how snowball sampling can allow for networking in a large city. In this instance, she welcomed the diversity of ethnic contacts that was gleaned from developing multiple snowball samples, starting from multiple entry points, because doing so meant her final list of interviewees mimicked larger populations from other cultures and ethnicities that lived in the same urban setting. For smaller projects, such as the ones you will be conducting, the single snowball method is best because it allows for networking within a small demographic, which helps you stay focused on your topic. If the network you create becomes too diluted, it can be problematic, though. For example, you planned on talking to single mothers living within the poverty line, and you end up with the names of their friends of friends who are more wealthy and not single; deciding not to interview some members of your newly created network might create hard feelings within the wider group.

When? Where to Meet?

Contact well in advance the people you are planning on interviewing and decide on a place and time to meet. Make sure from the onset that they are very clear about what will transpire (e.g., how long the interview will be, what types of questions you will discuss, whether you will use recording devices). Scheduling is usually dependent on what is convenient for the interviewees, as most have busy schedules. Timing can affect an individual's mood and therefore the type of conversations that will take place. Also, make sure you pick a place that is quiet and comfortable for both of you. The noise level is obviously very important if you are using a recording device or if you want to create a flow in the conversation. Interviews generally last between one and three hours, with some running even longer, so you want to make sure you will not be distracted for this length of time. It is also important to remember that types of places can color the types of things people talk about. For example, if your research project is focused on a certain business, your participants

might want to meet with you in their offices because it is more convenient. They may feel free talking about certain information in this location and not as comfortable talking about other types of information in close proximity to colleagues and their boss. In this case, it might be better to meet in a more neutral space. Also, if, for example, you are planning on talking about an emotional topic, or a topic that has the potential to be emotional, it might make more sense to meet in someone's home rather than in a busy coffee shop. Ultimately, it often boils down to what it most comfortable for the interviewee. Talking with you should not make interviewees feel nervous or uncomfortable for any reason.

How to Develop Questions

There are three things to think about when writing and organizing your questions:

1) What types of questions you will ask and why?
2) What order should they be in?
3) How should they be worded?

Language is very important in terms of making interviewees feel comfortable and in encouraging conversation. Question order is important for gaining rapport and for maintaining the flow of the conversation, which allows for deeper thinking and continuity. For example, if you were asking questions about someone's political beliefs, it would be best to start with more neutral questions about their lifestyle, background, or career. Sensitive questions or questions that you feel might reveal emotions or controversy should be asked in the middle of an interview or toward the end, so the interviewee has time to feel relaxed and not threatened in any way. Nonjudgmental wording is also critical in this instance. Questions that presume something about the interview should be avoided, and these are the types of questions that participants will avoid (Leech 2002).

An interview can be built on a variety of types of questions and each has its own specific purpose. Generally, anthropologists talk about **open-ended questions** versus **closed questions** and direct questions versus indirect questions. Because there is a focus placed on thinking like an ethnographer, opened-ended questions are usually the most popular, especially in starting off an interview. Opened-ended questions may be focused on a certain topic but are designed to leave the answer open—to let the interviewee decide how she or he would like to answer. James Spradley coined the term "Grand Tour questions" to describe questions that impose few boundaries but rather allow participants to talk about, or give a spoken tour of, a topic (1979, 88–89). He argues that this is one of the best ways to learn about cultural practices, meanings, and themes that are important to the person being interviewed. One easy example would be, "Tell me about your family life."

Closed questions are designed with the opposite intention, to gain specific answers or pieces of information that are important to your research project. Direct questions often happen spontaneously during an interview, as a way to clarify something that was said. For example, after a lengthy conversation about childcare, an interviewer might ask, "What are the ages of the children and how does this impact your daily schedule?" An indirect question is less interrogative and might be worded this way: "I was just wondering if the ages of your children affected your daily schedule in any way?" These types of questions require a less obligatory response. Anthropologists try not to use leading questions that put words into an interviewee's mouth or assume a correct answer because doing so can damage the rapport you have created. A good example of a leading question is one that starts with "Most people"—such as, "Most people like to shop in supermarkets as opposed to outdoor markets. Do you prefer to shop in supermarkets?" These types of questions suggest that there is a right answer.

The Structure of Interviews

In basic terms, interview styles range from informal to formal; the terms used in cultural anthropology are **unstructured interviews** and **structured interviews**. At one end of the scale are informal interviews. As Russell (2006) suggests, in some ways we all conduct informal interviewing throughout our daily lives when we ask questions and talk to people we meet. One example might be a conversation you start up with a stranger in the dentists' office, where you talk randomly about your lives while you wait. For an anthropologist, informal interviewing might take place during participant observation or while the researcher is casually taking part in a community event. This informal interview involves a very different type of talking than would happen in an unstructured, semi-structured, or structured interview because, once you meet with another person with the intention of conducting an interview, at the least, there is a shared understanding that your meeting is purposeful.

The structure of an interview follows from the type of information required. Ethnographers commonly choose to engage in unstructured interviews because they allow people to express themselves more freely. This type of interview, similar to the Grand Tour question, gives control to the interviewee. You can

still use a set of questions, but they are all open ended and the interviewee is given free rein to talk for as long as he or she wishes about each topic, and to express personal opinions and emotions. Structured interviews are similar to a survey: the questions are very specific, the interviewer sticks to a script, and the interviewees are not allowed to change the topic. In this case, you would generally have more questions and each would necessitate less time to answer. They are designed for projects that required standardized data. Generally speaking, most anthropologists work within a semi-structured model, using both styles to their advantage but usually beginning with an unstructured atmosphere and interjecting more structured questions when specific information is needed.

Handwritten Notes versus Audio Recordings

Whether or not you decide to use a voice recorder or just take notes during your interviews will depend on the amount of detailed information you need, how many interviews you are undertaking, and the potential effects on your participants. Some people feel more comfortable with one method or the other, but not both. Some people do not mind being recorded; others hate it. Very small digital voice recorders can be hidden under something close by after you have started, such as a few papers. That way, the interviewees know they are being recorded but forget about it as time passes. This allows them to feel comfortable and focused on your conversation as opposed to the lights of the recorder. One tip for organizing your recordings is to tape comments before each interview and to include the time, date, place, and interviewee's name. After the interview, it is also a good idea to tape some quick reflections on the experience from your point of view, noting body language, changes in speech, facial expressions, or anything else unique or significant. Also, make sure to check your batteries before you start. There is nothing worse than imagining you have recorded a few hours of conversation only to realize later that your recorder was not working. Transcribe each interview shortly afterwards, so you do not forget details, body language, and the overall experience. Without a doubt, computers can speed up some aspects of the interview process. For example, some researchers contact interviewees through email. Computers can also assist in recording and organizing data as well as in transcribing field notes and interviews. However, conducting interviews while taking notes on your laptop is generally frowned upon. Many people feel intimidated by someone sitting in front of them writing handwritten notes about what they are saying, and typing on a laptop exacerbates this feeling and can create a technological wedge that destroys intimacy and may enhance the feeling of being objectified.

Life Histories Are Different

The first **life history** interviews were collected by anthropologists in the early 1900s and focused on the autobiographies of First Nations North American chiefs. Its popularity as a method has shifted over time, depending on the theoretical imperatives in the social sciences concerning the acquisition, or definition, of definitive data (Goodson 2001). Life history interviews differ from standard interviews in that you are asking someone to narrate her or his life. In this way, the narration becomes more of a performance that is linked closely with identity and influenced by the ambiguous nature of memory. Life history interviews are very open, often having no structure other than a few questions or prompts throughout. Your primary responsibility is to listen actively, which we will elaborate on later. Therefore, it is more appropriate in this instance to jot down a few notes during the interview about certain things you might like to clarify later. Also, you both need to be clear about where you left off in the life history narrative so that subsequent interviews can continue in a consistent manner. It can take numerous interviews to complete a full life history. In contemporary anthropology, a reliance on the importance of linear, chronological narratives has been replaced by an interest in how people perform their identities and how they express multiple subjectivities. Remember, life narratives often require several meetings and many hours of transcribing. It takes approximately six hours to transcribe every hour of recorded oral narrative.

Focus Groups or Group Interviewing

Focus group interviewing is a very popular method used by marketing, media, and health researchers. It is less popular in cultural anthropology, but it does provide certain types of information that can add to your research study. Professional marketing researchers conduct focus groups with small groups of strangers (2–12) to glean in-depth data and a range of opinions and responses to a certain product. Most often in anthropology, the members of the group know each other and the anthropologist, and their conversation is a follow-up to previous meetings or interviews. Finding a time and place that suits everyone is sometimes difficult, but once a focus group interview is organized, the actual meeting is conducted in a manner similar to that of a standard interview, except that when the anthropologist asks a question, all interviewees respond, which leads to spin-off conversations among group members. For this reason, group interviews are more difficult to mediate and transcribe. Lynda Mannik conducted small group sessions of three to four people who knew

each other and who had already been interviewed separately. Her purpose was to explore their opinions and perspectives on a museum display that depicted their experiences as refugees in 1948. The focus group interview was beneficial for her study, in comparative terms, because they had all talked about the photographs taken during this experience in private, individual sessions, and then, as a group, they talked about how the same photographs were used in the museum's public display.

The Qualities of a Good Interview

In our current "interview society," we have come to think of the interview as a natural way to reveal the truth, and we tend to view the truth in an objective manner and to think that it can be gleaned by listening to what other people say. Cultural anthropologists have a very different way of thinking about this practice, and this difference is one of the hurdles for novice interviewers. For anthropologists, the focus is on **dialogic anthropology**. In other words, anthropologists view the production of knowledge as always taking place within an interaction, so meaning is relational. It is the interactive, human communication that takes place during an interview that is seen to provide the most important information, which is why these dialogues are considered to be "meaning-making occasions" (Holstein and Gubrium 1995, 4; Skinner 2012). Of course, as a researcher, you are responsible for choosing a topic, finding people to talk to, writing up the questions, and conducting a professional interview, but it is what happens during the interview between you and the interviewee that should be the meat of your analysis. You are the creator of the interview itself, but then you must let go and see yourself as an equal partner in the process. Norman Denzin asks us to think about interviews as reflexive exercises and as performative. As he says, "Interviews are part of the dialogic conversation that connects all of us"; therefore, he reminds us, words matter and affect people (Denzin 2001, 24). This is what makes interviews ethnographic: they are a part of participant observation, not outside of it, and they are collaborative (Skinner 2012).

Be Aware of Everything

Ethnographic-styled interviews are so much more than just face-to-face conversations. As a competent researcher, you obviously need to be paying attention to what people are saying, but you also must consider how they say it (which is often more important), their facial expression, body language, physical movements, and any other sensory information related to the interview, such as outside noise or movement that might be distracting your interviewee. In the vignette below, Dianna Shandy talks about noticing the books that her interviewees brought with them and how important these books became in her conversations with the people she interviewed. You also need to be self-conscious about your own input, your own self-expression, both physically and verbally. This sounds like a daunting task and definitely takes practice. Martin Forsey (2010) uses the term "**engaged listening**" to describe the intention of an ethnographic researcher, for whom listening is as important as observing and the interviewer "listens deeply" to understand the "cultural context of individual lives" (561, 567). The visual experience you have as an interviewer is key to understanding the meaning of what your participants are saying. You need to think of yourself as an observer, a participant, and an interviewer all rolled into one.

It Is Good When the Interviewees Get Something Out of It!

An ethical anthropologist always keeps the welfare of the people he or she is talking to in mind, and considers this welfare an important aspect of any research. Ultimately, the goal is to create a project that in some way positively enhances the lives of the people you are working with. When someone asks to interview you, that person is already attesting to the value of your opinions and perspectives, which is very self-affirming. Being interviewed lets people talk about aspects of their lives more openly and often leads to novel and enlightening conversations. The interview as an experience can be therapeutic. Simply listening to someone talk about his or her life is the basis of a therapeutic relationship. Interviewees have also claimed that life history interviews have added meaning to their lives (Mannik 2013). When people from certain demographics are interviewed about important social issues, the resulting analysis and research reports concerning the group's opinions, feelings, and perspectives can offer solutions to problems, policy initiatives, and social change. Interviews can be powerful tools for social change as well.

VIGNETTE

Dianna Shandy is the associate dean of the Institute for Global Citizenship and a professor of anthropology at Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota. Her work spans US and international settings, and she has broad research and teaching interests in gender, migration, political conflict and violence, and research methods. Her specific research projects

have explored college-educated women negotiating work and family in the United States, African asylum seekers in Ireland, and the South Sudanese and Somali diasporas in Europe, North America, and Africa.

ON THE MOVE: REFLECTIONS ON FIELDWORK WITH THE NUER IN AMERICA

Anthropologists are known for traveling to their field site, often to far-away locales. My work complicates this idea by describing research at home concerning a population that was on the move. I describe the research's inception, making contact, developing relationships, and how my positionality shaped the interviews. I work with the Nuer who are the focus of one of anthropology's most famous case studies. My research illustrates how their lives in the United States intersect with their ethnographic past and the implications this dynamic has for fieldwork.

I first learned about Nuer people living in the United States when I was visiting Minnesota from New York, where I was a graduate student at Columbia University in the 1990s. The man I was visiting (and later married) invited me to his friend's house to participate in what I thought at the time was a rather bizarre practice—an outdoor barbeque, with snow on the ground and temperatures below freezing.

FIGURE 4.1: Portrait of Dianna Shandy, 2009, Minnesota, USA. Photograph by Claire Kayser.

It was there that I noticed, in the pile of newspapers for the fire, a full-page color photojournalistic spread describing Nuer people from southern Sudan as recently resettled refugees living in Minnesota. At the time, I was writing grant applications and preparing to return to Namibia for doctoral research on issues of gender, race, and post-conflict reconstruction. I had lived and taught school in Namibia after completing my undergraduate degree and had subsequently returned to do my master's thesis research there.

All of that changed when I encountered the Nuer. Of course, it wasn't a first encounter. Most anthropologists have been introduced to "the Nuer" at some stage of their training. Sir Edward E. Evans-Pritchard, whom I fondly thought of by his initials EEEP, launched the Nuer people into the global scholarly consciousness with his famous trilogy: *The Nuer: A Description of the Modes of Livelihood of a Nilotic People* (1940), *Kinship and Marriage among the Nuer* (1951), and *Nuer Religion* (1956).

This unsolicited distinction has not translated, however, into any discernible benefit for this iconic people. In the decades since Evans-Pritchard conducted his research in Sudan, the Nuer people who live there have undergone many changes. Ongoing civil war, destruction, and disruption of the most fundamental aspects of life have characterized some of the most tragic shifts. Yet, more often than not, in anthropological discourse, the Nuer persist in the ethnographic present of the 1930s (Shandy 2008). Even as I am writing this, I am aware that I am in some ways perpetuating this dynamic by writing about "Sudan," because in 2011, South Sudan became its own nation and the world's newest country. At the time I began doing this work, however, the Nuer people's home country was still called Sudan—the larger entity from which South Sudan later seceded.

I first made contact with Nuer people by phoning a social service agency and a church listed in the newspaper article. These contacts connected me with several people, including a Nuer man, whom I will call Nyang, who agreed to tutor me in the Nuer language. When I arrived at Nyang's apartment, it was simultaneously very strange and very familiar. It was strange because, quite frankly, telling someone you want to "study" them or the group to which they belong feels odd. People, understandably, wonder why, how, and what your agenda is. Yet, as a transplant to Minnesota, I found Nyang's apartment comfortingly reminiscent of places I had lived in Africa. At this stage, I hadn't changed my plans to return to Namibia, but I wanted to know more about this population which, until that point, most anthropologists associated with Evans-Pritchard's Sudan.

When I started working with Nuer people, I largely tried to ignore EEEP. I was determined not to let his preconceived categories influence me. One of Evans-Pritchard's most notable contributions regarding Nuer people was that they had a "segmentary" system of political organization. If the lineages were going to segment, I wanted to hear it from the Nuer people I interviewed. After all, he was the late Evans-Pritchard. It wasn't like he was around and I could ask his permission to work with "his" people. And, even though the Nuer were a famous group, no one, at that point, had written about them outside of Africa.

Though I didn't label it as such at the time, I developed my questions using an ethnographic method that derives from ethnosemantics (McCurdy et al. 2004): I asked general open-ended questions about people's experiences, letting their responses shape my follow-up questions and my additional probes for examples or stories. I let the people I interviewed lead the conversations and strove to get information on what people *did*, not just their opinions. I found that kind of information much more useful. I took handwritten notes throughout, and I sometimes, with permission, used an audio recorder. Likewise, I was always doing participant observation during most of my interactions, taking time to jot down my notes each day—even if I didn't know whether the information was important or where it all would lead. I typed up most of my notes, and they have, therefore, survived many a move, and are "searchable" in a way they would not be if they were not digitized. Many of the photographs that I took were portrait-like shots that people asked me to take. I also printed and shared copies with them. In hindsight, I wish I had taken more candid shots—not to reproduce for publications but to serve as an aide-mémoire for my own work. Like many anthropologists, I was doing a sort of "discovery" anthropology that wasn't necessarily driven by a hypothesis or a problem I was trying to solve. It is only now, in rereading and reflecting on this experience, that I appreciate how early in the fieldwork process I identified what would later become a central theme in my work: the geographic dispersal of Sudanese, both in the United States and globally, and how they create and maintain relationships across spatial divides. This idea later formed the foundation of my book on this work, *Nuer-American Passages: Globalizing Sudanese Migration*.

I kept meeting with Nyang in his apartment, which the refugee resettlement agency had helped him secure in an impoverished part of town with a high crime rate. In 1995, the *New York Times* dubbed Minneapolis "Murderapolis." I had moved to Minnesota from New York City, so I didn't find the neighborhood that different from places I knew. Yet, when I look back at my field notes from this time, I did feel some level of unease at first, taking the bus to this neighborhood and walking to Nyang's apartment. I would hold my breath as I entered the building, as the smell of urine in the carpeting in the corridor was overwhelming. The challenges of being a recent immigrant in America crystallized for me when Nyang asked the landlord to replace the filthy carpet in his apartment before his wife and young child joined him: I was dismayed to see the workmen take up the carpet only to unroll and install a used and slightly less filthy version of the same carpet that they were replacing.

One way I made additional contacts was through Nyang and his wife. Their friends would drop by their apartment, and these contacts led to other contacts. I tried to always call ahead before coming, because sometimes Nyang's work schedule shifted. One day I forgot and arrived to find no one home. I had the phone number of another Nuer man I had met the week before who lived nearby. I phoned him, and he invited me over. There, I met another set of people—both those who lived there and others who were visiting. At some point, Nyang changed jobs, making it more difficult to meet. I learned of a Nuer pastor beginning to offer informal Nuer language classes to interested community members and began attending. I also broadened my ties with social service providers, sitting in on meetings and collecting documents. These service provider interactions prompted new questions to ask my Nuer contacts.

I am a mixed-methods researcher. I'm not afraid of numbers, but qualitative research is my strong suit. One issue that qualitative researchers encounter, particularly among refugee populations, is the issue of a "sample." It is difficult to study refugee populations using larger data sets in the United States because refugees are not tracked there. The refugee apparatus makes it difficult to discern that refugees are living in our midst. In the United States, we call this the scatter approach. If the larger population is unknown, drawing a "representative sample" is problematic. Anthropologists can address this problem by being intentional in looking for multiple nodes of contact within the population. One can start with one individual and "snowball" out from there. One can, instead, use several points of entry, developing multiple "snowball" samples. The goal is to keep looking for things you haven't yet heard. If I had "snowballed" out from my tutor, I might have limited my sample to one particular lineage, Sudanese town, Kenyan refugee camp, or only people with higher education levels (an anomaly among early Sudanese refugees). By using multiple nodes,

I diversified the sample—doing life history, ethnographic, and survey interviews with over 700 people.

At this point, influenced by the postmodernism sweeping through academia and a healthy dose of pragmatism, I began to appreciate that learning Nuer in a non-immersive context and visiting people in their apartments wasn't like living in a small village, as I had done in Namibia, or even when I studied for a year in Ivory Coast. I'm not a fan of the term "commuter anthropology" because it implies a sort of less-authentic anthropology. Rather, I was doing "urban anthropology" and both the study population and I were geographically dispersed. I came to appreciate that I was not a chronicler of "the Nuer"—EEEP had already done that. (And I fully expected that Nuer people would be far more effective in telling their own story from their own point of view.) Rather, I was documenting a process of interaction and engagement between Nuer people and the spaces, places, people, and institutions involved in refugee resettlement and integration.

The first time I fully comprehended the power and enduring legacy of EEEP, though, was the time I went on a cross-country journey to visit Nuer people in another state. Bizarrely, we traveled in a 40-foot recreational vehicle.

I was dismayed when people began filing into the RV with jaunty greetings and books tucked under their arms. "*Ehhh, Maale.*" "*Malpondu.*" "*Eh ... Maale. Jinatin.*" Pal had a dog-eared copy of *The Nuer* with its unmistakable gold cover that hadn't changed in decades. Jal had *Nuer Religion*. Buom had a copy of *Nuer Dilemmas*, a book by anthropologist Sharon Hutchinson (1996) about life in Sudan. Although I thought the 50-hour or so round-trip drive to Nashville would be ideal to engage people in informal interviews about many topics, instead, we resembled a literature review on wheels:

ME: "So, Pal, what was life like for you in Sudan?"

PAL: "I raised cows. See. . . " gesturing at Evans-Pritchard's *The Nuer.*

ME: "I see. But, I'm interested in *your* life."

PAL: "Have you read *Nuer Dilemmas*?"

Fortunately, not all of my conversations with this group rehashed the existing ethnographic literature, particularly when we talked about their lives in the United States. I learned, however, that a people's anthropological past can become entwined with identity in the present. As we traveled through the night, the men stayed up late playing dominoes, shouting, and singing. While they taught me to play, I learned that dominoes were a huge event in the refugee camps in East Africa. People would sign up days in advance to play in tournaments. While playing and chatting, I learned a good deal about what quotidian camp life was like—the deprivations and hardships but also the incredible creativity and resourcefulness of the refugees who lived there. I learned from this experience of playing dominoes the deep value of letting interviews take the shape of conversations and letting the people you are interviewing guide the direction the sharing of information takes.

Making Connections

What would be a good set of open-ended questions that you think will work for your project, according to the ethnographic method that derives from ethnosemantics (McCurdy et al. 2004), research during which participant's responses are allowed to flow naturally?

In what sort of places do you see yourself conducting research? How do these places enhance your research project?

Taking Shandy's lead, how would you describe yourself as a "mixed-method researcher?"

What are some of the strategies you will use to create rapport with the people you are working with? (It is probably best to develop a "Plan A" and a "Plan B" when thinking about this question.)

Possible Projects

1. ***Life History Skills***: Over the course of the term, you will be responsible for conducting life history interviews with one family member. This extended set of interviews should follow the specific practices of life history methods: namely, you should focus on listening and encouraging the informant's own story in every way, on emphasizing what he or she thinks is important to tell rather than what you think is important to ask about, and on making sure you remain objective. You will need to spend many hours and multiple sessions with this person, and during this time you will record and then transcribe her or his life story. It is also important to write down any questions you have during the interview, which can be asked at the end. Near the end of the term, you will return the life history to your interviewee and ask for feedback.

2. ***Engaged Listening***: For this project, you will compare individual interviews with a focus group interview, and then you will analyze your experiences and perceptions as an interviewer. Choose one topic (that relates to your research) and write a set of ten questions linked to exploring that topic. Some of the questions should be fairly neutral and some should be more politically motivated. Ask four friends or family members to participate. Plan individual interviews that will last about an hour, and include a set of approximately five of the questions. After transcribing all of these individual interviews, think about and compare them with a focus on "engaged listening," as outlined by Michael Forsey. Next, ask all four participants to meet for a focus group interview. Mediate a discussion with this group that focuses on the other five questions. Take notes during this experience and then write a short paper that compares your experience as an interviewee in these very different types of interviews.

Recommended Readings

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PART II

Notes, Data, and Representation