Title
An International Student's Perspective: Navigating Identities and Conducting Ethnographic Fieldwork in the U.S.

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In this paper, I describe the fieldwork that I conducted as an international student in the U.S. and examine some of the challenges experienced in the process. I do not propose to re-create existing methodologies or suggest new fieldwork methods, but draw upon previously established guidelines outlined in college text books and ethnographic works by eminent researchers[1] to frame my narrative. Thus, my goal is to add an international perspective to the process of doing fieldwork. Throughout the narrative, I also describe the ways in which I negotiated between my Indian identity and the American one that I began to develop during the research process.[2] I argue that my experiences as a university student need to be expressed because an insider's perspective is bound to resonate with other international students aspiring to do fieldwork outside of their home country.

Relatedly, I am aware that ethnographic literature speaks to the dichotomy between the privileged identity of researchers and that of participants. However, as a non-native ethnographer in the U.S., I am also aware of my own marginalized identity in relation to the dominant discourse (Villenas, 1996, p. 912). Similar to other ethnographers who seek to interrogate these assumptions (i.e., Villenas, 1996), I am a "native" ethnographer within the field of education, but I am not studying the colonized within my own community. My university training has bestowed upon me a "university cloak" (Villenas, 1996, p. 912) that grants me much privilege and empowers me to study others. At the same time, I would be remiss if I failed to acknowledge and explain my biases. In the process of being reflexive, I made conscious attempts to question my own assumptions, cross examine issues that appeared to conflict with my own beliefs and that of my co-actors, and intersperse my narrative with that of my participants wherever possible so as to clearly articulate how I influenced my own narrative (Agar, 1986; LeCompte, 1987; Vandenberg, 2011; Wolcott, 1973).

I was among the participants of my study for nearly a year, and the divide between us was obvious—a reality that became apparent from the outset. Admittedly, I entered their territory laden with my own set of presumptions, preconceived notions and experiences. I frequently struggled, however, with a sense of ambivalence that became more apparent in hindsight. This culminated in a feeling of satisfaction in knowing that some of the things I had done instinctively were right, but also that I could have done other things differently. I want to share my experience because I am an outsider from India who crossed paths with a small group of people in the U.S. during my doctoral program and

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[1]Researchers such as: Sharan B. Merriam (2009), James H. McMillan and Sally Schumacher (2009), Francis Phil Carspecken (1996), and Harry F. Wolcott (1987).

[2]Perhaps there was a subconscious need to adapt successfully and belong to the local environment that may explain why I changed some of my Indian customs.

fieldwork. This narrative contains elements of storytelling, ethnography and research poetry. True to Mead's (1973) recommendation and in order to be inclusive of readers across disciplines, the writing is formulated in a colloquial, narrative style with minimal use of terminology familiar to anthropologists and ethnographers. Moreover, in accordance with established ethnographic skillsets — my narrative is derived from fieldnotes and insights gathered during the reflective process. Creating such reflexive journals is an essential and valuable part of fieldwork in qualitative research (Ortlipp, 2008), and it is my hope that this narrative exemplifies how narratives can be created from the reflexivity that is integral to ethnography. I will begin by introducing myself as a student and then outline what I learned while conducting fieldwork.

About Me

When I wrote this narrative, I was a doctoral student from India, studying in a premier, research one American university. I had worked as a special education teacher in India for nearly two decades prior to my arrival in the United States. Before being admitted to the university, I had worked as a special education teacher in a public school in the South. Although I initially, and perhaps naively, denied the possibility of having experienced culture shock, mainly because language was not a barrier, cultural differences-both subtle and overt-soon became apparent. I am Indian, and more precisely a female born to Hindu parents, brought up in a large South Indian city, with different cultural, social, religious and linguistic experiences than those evident in mainstream American culture. The middle school where I worked was housed in a prosperous, predominantly white neighborhood in the South and had an enrollment of about 3,000 children. Nearly 98 percent of the teachers were women from white, middle class backgrounds. Being the only teacher of Indian origin in the large public school in the U.S. and having been quite distanced from my country of origin, I began to develop a new sense of pride in who I was and in my cultural values. When my colleagues expressed a desire to know more about India, I felt a renewed and stronger sense of in-group association with people from my own country. This compelled me to represent my country to others in a positive manner.

As I was quite knowledgeable about current best practices in special education both in India and in the West, I did not find classroom management challenging, but realized a need to assimilate a different set of social cues and behaviors with colleagues and students. For example, I learned about the concept of maintaining personal space, to reduce the rapid pace of my speech, to incorporate the local accent into it and to avoid speaking at the same time as others during a conversation. The problem, however, lay in the extent of autonomy that educators enjoyed over classroom management, curriculum design and in their dealings with families of students. I could not understand why my

supervisors were not more direct and authoritative like those back home. They were readily available to answer my questions and to guide me, but they would not 'tell' me what to do. I continued to struggle with this during my fieldwork as a researcher. I had to recognize, understand and deal with the differences in the socialization process on my own, in order to conduct my fieldwork. I became increasingly conscious of being an outsider, both as an international student and as a university researcher. But then, I had consciously chosen to be here and was alone responsible for my conduct with my participants. I fervently hoped to be accepted and was quite unsure of alternative plans in case of rejection and/or failure.

My dissertation was an ethnographic case study within an ongoing, larger study in an elementary school that was being conducted by music education faculty from the university. I sought to examine how learning to play the violin affected children with disabilities (Cousik, 2011a). I preferred qualitative research because it allowed me to express my observations in greater detail and, most importantly, facilitated creative forms of expression. I also briefly contemplated employing single subject design,[3] the most widely used methodology in special education research, and interspersed my research report with qualitative and quantitative data. However, I eventually decided to use a methodology that highlighted my strengths in the areas of music, storytelling and poetry. I followed my committee's recommendations to have a few possible research questions, so that the data was more manageable and not too voluminous.[4] My research questions were as follows: How does learning to play the violin influence the emotional, social, communicative, motor, academic, and behavioral skills of children with disabilities? What are the views of teachers, regarding the effect of learning to play the violin on children with disabilities? What are the views of families on how learning to play the violin has influenced their children?

Ethnography

I prefer to employ ethnographic forms of description in my writing because it facilitates use of reflexivity and participant observation; I also like qualitative research because it allows me to employ various creative art forms such as fiction, storytelling, poetry and drawing to enrich, collect, analyze and explain data. Supporting my fieldnotes and data with figures, graphic organizers and poetry enabled me to capture and preserve the emotions experienced during particular times and spaces in the context. My interest in ethnography emerged

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[3]Horner, et al (2005) provides an excellent overview about the use of single subject design in special education research.

[4]Having a general idea of what one wants to understand helps researchers focus on particular aspects of the phenomenon at hand.

during my second semester in the program when I began taking courses in ethnomusicology for my minor. The most memorable works that influenced my research were by Fadiman (1997), Liebow (2003) and Wolcott (1973)[5]. Harry Beth (1992) and Lisa Delpit (2006) had written about cross-cultural perspectives in special education, but I did not find any literature on the topic of Special Education that spoke to the experience of being Indian in the U.S. Such a narrative from someone in the field of special education from my own country could possibly have provided some insight on the intricacies involved in conducting fieldwork in the U.S. and most importantly, enlightened prospective Indian researchers about the resulting transformation and acculturation process.

Ethnography facilitated the need to transform and the process of transformation. This continuous and nuanced process intersected with many aspects of my student life and research. Thus, throughout my stay in the U.S. and during fieldwork, I found myself changing, transforming and absorbing certain aspects of the local culture to facilitate that process, thus fulfilling a need to belong and be accepted as an equal, especially as a professional. For example, I learned to participate effectively in class by sharing the individual perspective, as opposed to a more passive absorption of knowledge. I learned to condense my research agenda to refine my research questions until they reflected my intent to study a single phenomenon in an in-depth manner.

An important aspect of ethnographic research involves developing and maintaining relationships with informants (Erickson 1985) that manifest as "genuine exchange of views" (Heyl, 2001, p. 369). This relationship building is a nuanced process and is reciprocal with the quality of research. For the relationships to be strong, enduring and cordial, during the research period, both the researcher and the researched must be willing to invest time and resources equally (Ortiz 2003, p. 36). Heavy investment of time in the field cost precious time with my family, but then, this was what I wanted to accomplish, regardless of the challenges experienced. However, having worked with children and families for more than two decades, I had accumulated a fair amount of knowledge in the area of teaching children with disabilities and was glad to share my knowledge with my participants. Many participants reciprocated by giving me their time, attention and resources that helped my study progress, and to establish a fruitful and continuous cycle of give and take.

The Social Experience of Recruiting Participants as an Outsider

Fieldwork can be an emotionally exhausting experience. One begins by exploring unfamiliar terrain, taking in hallways, staircases, room numbers, elevators and offices. Some of the people walking by are likely to be future

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[5]I would highly recommend reading Wolcott (1973)'s 'The Man in the Principal's Office' for those aspiring to conduct research in schools.

participants. Despite knowing this it was challenging for me to look at them directly and even more to smile in greeting, as I had noticed some of my American friends do during school visits. The nature of eye contact has some universal qualities, but there are many aspects of it that are culture specific (Argyle, 1978, p. 77). I belonged to a noncontact culture, groomed to avert my gaze from 'strangers'. Although I knew that people I met in the field were members who belonged to the context, they were strangers to me because I had not officially met them yet. However, I hoped that my body language and pleasant countenance silently communicated that I was approachable and I also hoped that my nametag would ease the process of initiating a conversation and help them pronounce my name correctly.

It was easy to get permission to nest my study within a larger study, thanks to one of my committee members, but it was my responsibility to recruit participants. Fortunately, the principal had been a former special education student at my university and seemed to understand the objective of my research study. However, I had not met the other administrators in the school. As I lingered in the hallway outside the Assistant Principal's (AP) office, trying to mentally rehearse what I was going to say, I felt a terrible sense of being alone.[6] What if the AP had never encountered a brown researcher in her life? Although Wolcott (1987) argues for the necessity and benefits of doing educational ethnography in a culture other than your own, I wished for a moment that I was white. I would have perhaps been more empowered, confident and assertive when I approached people because I was one among *them* and not an outsider.

Furthermore, there is a wealth of information on the insider/outsider effects of the majority studying the minority[7] and even some about the minority studying their own (i.e., Altorki, & El-Solh, 1988*;* Field, 1991; Parameswaran, 2001; Villenas, 1996) and 'other' minority groups (Egharevba, 2001). However, what happens when a foreigner attempts to recruit persons from the majority culture to talk about people marginalized within their own culture due to economic and social reasons? Was my 'university cloak' enough to impress upon them my competency and ability to conduct the research? Was I intruding upon their personal space? For me, the metaphor of 'personal space' represents the space in the context occupied by the dominant culture (whites) in which I

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[6]I remembered experiencing a similar feeling when I left my family for the first time on my journey to the U.S. from India. After I bid goodbye to family and friends and crossed the security gate at the Hyderabad airport, I felt completely alone, even though there were hundreds of people around me.

[7] I use these terms to denote the socially constructed distance between groups, where one group assumes power over the others due to social, economic, cultural and ethnic reasons (Smith, 1991).

perceive myself as an intruder. My brown skin, traces of my accent, my tendency to pronounce every letter in certain words, my body language and the expressions that I used in my speech—some literal translations into English from my mother tongue—everything seemed to be overwhelmingly on the surface and advertise my outsiderness.

Had I been white, I would have easily blended with the school staff members or easily passed as a college student doing her practicum. Instead, I was an outsider twice over, first because I was not American and secondly I was not a school employee but a university student. All teachers and school staff members were white, a reflection of the larger phenomenon in public schools across the U.S. (Cochran-Smith 2004, p. 2). There was no one to tell me what I should say or do if the Assistant Principal and others who I approached were not receptive to my request. I was not very good at making small talk, a quality that is seemingly so essential to American culture, and I missed my classmates who had frequently modeled the local, socializing process. My classmates and professors had also deliberately and frequently expressed open admiration about my *Indianness* and often invited me to share the Indian perspective during doctoral seminars. But removed from the protection that these overtures provided, and although attired in semi-formal clothes like those in the context, I could not presume that I could initiate and engage in dialogue with them as though my race was invisible (Ellsworth, 1989 in Villenas 1996, p. 718). Thus, the extent of conscious effort needed to learn the local ways of socializing became an ongoing, internalized issue for me during my fieldwork.

As I continued to visit the research site regularly, however, people seemed to get used to my presence. My skin color actually turned out to be a non-issue, probably because I did not *sound* overwhelmingly international[8]. However, I felt like an outsider and suppressed an urge to flinch every time someone said "I really don't have the time to respond to another lengthy questionnaire!" or "You want to talk to me for 120 minutes?!" or "I want to protect my parents from you." My sense of otherness further intensified when I did not hear back from parents after a few weeks of sending out my recruitment letters. Was my letter to parents as clear as I thought it was? What if the letters never reached them? How would they react to a research request from a foreigner? I realized what a crucial role the

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[8] In part due to my acquired Midwestern accent. I am not recommending that foreign students and faculty in the US modify their accents to please the local residents. In fact, the natural accents can be great conversation openers for teachers and students who may have had little exposure to linguistic and ethnic diversity, as many of my students who were majoring in elementary education were. This is an excellent avenue for students and local faculty to increase their understanding about cultures and languages across the globe and work towards cultural competency.

teacher played in this relay race between the researcher and the potential participants. On my behalf teachers were expected to accept the responsibility of ensuring that the letters reached home and were returned. My misgivings intensified when one of the teachers said "Those parents? I will send your letters home honey, but don't expect them to come back. One of them may agree, another parent doesn't care for research. The third one I can never be sure". It appeared that recruiting parents was problematic in general, but another teacher made it clear that I was encroaching on 'her' space. She said, "I am not interested in this study…Why do you want to talk to parents? I want to protect them from you…"

Evidently, scholars mean what they say when they declare, "Ethnographers are pesky people. Resentment and rejection are conditions of life in the field" (Spindler & Spindler 1987, p. 20). When I face disappointment, I take refuge in taking a philosophical view of things, which helped restore my equanimity. In chapter two, verse 47, the Bhagavadgita states, "Let right deeds be Thy motive, not the fruits which come from them" (Radhakrishnan 1993, p. 11). I repeated this mantra throughout the process of my inquiry, which eased the pain caused by rejections. Doing the right things during my research meant implementing my research agenda with fidelity and giving back—providing professional development workshops for teachers and teacher assistants on behavior management in the music class, tutoring a child who had multiple disabilities, helping clean up classrooms, helping in tuning children's violins and monitoring children in the hallways when they transitioned from the music class to other classes. These acts ultimately facilitated both the quality and extent of my research and most importantly, brought me closer to the school members. The resulting rapport with teachers created a sense of familiarity and ease in our interactions.

Writing Fieldnotes

In this section, I will discuss the process of writing and recording fieldnotes, which are essential components of ethnography. On the recommendation of my professors, I decided to be prepared with different ways of recording what I observed and thus carried a few large spiral note books, a digital video camera, an audio recorder, and a planner. After distributing recruitment letters, I spent the first few days trying to understand the school's routines and establishing my own routine as an ethnographer. As soon as I received my participants' permission, I began recording my observations in a notebook and also into a voice recorder, with an aim to generate thick descriptions. According to Denzin (1989):

> A thick description … does more than record what a person is doing. It goes beyond mere fact and surface appearances. It presents detail, context, emotion, and the webs of social relationships that join persons to one another. Thick description evokes emotionality and self-feelings. It inserts history into

experience. It establishes the significance of an experience, or the sequence of events, for the person or persons in question. In thick description, the voices, feelings, actions, and meanings of interacting individuals are heard. (Denzin, 1989, p. 83)

Mulhall (2003) also states that every ethnographer has his/her own method of documenting observations. Like Mulhall (2003, p. 311), I used audio and video recordings and a reflexive journal to document the following: my observations of people, their actions, the setting, daily routines, special events in the school, unexpected happenings and my own daily routine in the field and finally my life experiences, thoughts and ideas that seemed to relate to my observations.

For example, at the beginning I strictly followed textbook guidelines on writing fieldnotes, and thus they contained descriptions of classrooms, displays on the walls, type of furniture, seating arrangement, how cold or warm the room felt, grade level, number and gender of the students, the number of teachers and teacher assistants, number of violins that sounded off-key, where the cameras were positioned, who manned them and the number of visitors to the music room. I also noted down unexpected events like the mock fire drill that seemed common to schools across the U.S. Following Carspecken's (1996) example I wrote down the things that my participants said or did, including the time, the location of the building where each dialogue was enacted, the hierarchical position of the speaker in the school and my impressions about the facial expressions of each speaker. Next to each dialogue, I would write down the possible emotions that it seemed to convey and a put a question mark next to those that needed further clarification with the participant.

This process facilitated member checking which is critical to ensure articulation of researcher bias and strengthen truth claims. I further realized the value of this process when I reflected on these questions personally and with my advisor. In particular, the meanings I attributed to some of the teachers' actions clearly showed the differences in the way individual and collective cultures approached education. If I had too many questions, I would go to an empty hallway or the rest room at the end of the observation and talk to my digital recording device. An added benefit of recording my thoughts in this manner was that it helped capture my own emotional reactions about what I was observing. Initially I wrote down exhaustive notes. I acknowledge it is impossible to have written everything down, but I decided more was better given that thick description is central to ethnographic research.

Apart from noting down details of things as they appeared, my notes often also connected my thoughts and ideas of events that happened in the classrooms to outside events—in the surrounding community, in the children's homes and even the current status of education. For example, nearly 300 teachers in the county were laid off when I was half way through my data collection. That greatly

affected the mood, attitude, and behavior of teachers that I interviewed. My reflexive journal included detailed notes on the feelings they shared about the crisis, their misgivings about finding new jobs and their concerns about how their absence would affect their students. Finally, being a special educator who was trained in conducting functional behavior analysis (FBA), I was always cognizant of how students' home life, their relationships with their parents and their diagnoses affected student behavior in the classroom. In the words of Carspecken (1996, p. 45) " …what was taking place in this room could only be understood through observing many other things, like the other classrooms in the school, the counseling room, the office and the teacher's lounge, and the homes and neighborhoods of the students." Thus, whenever a child was punished for non-compliance, in my journal I reflected on the possible events that may have transpired at home or in the previous class that he/she attended that could have triggered the behavior. For example, I would write "Max seems to be having a bad day and has been sent out of class. When I talked to him in the hallway, he said he had hardly had any sleep the previous night because there was a late night party going on at his home. Perhaps that's one of the reason's he didn't want to play the violin today."

Gradually, my notes began to take on a semblance of an order and I stopped writing down routine events like 'The bell rang' or 'The teacher sent him to the restroom'. Additionally, I found it helpful to revisit my research questions frequently in order to maintain focus and contain my note taking and recording to those events most pertinent to my research. Thus, like me, most researchers will eventually discover what is important to record and what is not. I recommend reading the book by Carspecken (1996) on how to do ethnography in education. In chapter three of the book, the author provides detailed guidelines on how to take fieldnotes. On occasion, I had to abandon my writing because I was enjoying my time with the children, learning to play a mini violin or assisting a child to position the violin correctly under his chin or talking to a child who had been sent out to the hallway for misbehaving. On one such occasion, the teacher reprimanded me for talking to students who had been sent out to the hallway, as in the teacher's opinion, paying attention to the student defeated the purpose of punishment. This conflicted with my view of reward and punishment and I wrote down my thoughts later on in my journal. As a result of this incident, I wondered if I should include a section on representation of children's voices in my data analysis.

As illustrated in the above example, I learned the importance of writing down one's thoughts, feelings, impressions and questions frequently and regularly. My reflexive journal served to jog my memory about the context in which events occurred. During scheduling of formal interviews, these notes helped add new and relevant interview questions and points for discussion to my

stock questions. I recognized that while some questions had the potential for more in depth exploration, such as the ones discussed above, others may fall into the realm of 'future research goals'.

I also quickly learned that discretion is vital to note taking. Even though I had their permission to watch and note down what was happening in the setting, I could sense that some of my co-actors were a little uncomfortable, and rightly so, at being observed and written about. At such times, I put away my notebook and relied on audio and video recorders, even if it meant I spent more time transcribing. As videotaping each session was a process used in the larger study, my participants were already accustomed to the presence of cameras. When I used the audio recorder, I always did it in a quiet area, away from the setting. However, if you are like me and would like to use rhyme, rhythm, drawings and diagrams to capture sublime moments, then the notebook and pen are unavoidable and extremely valuable. Even though I had my participants' written consent to write about their actions, I recognized the importance of reaffirming their permission. Because of my own sensitivity to how others may feel when someone is constantly watching and recording what they are doing, every time I observed children in a setting, I would gently inform the teacher that I would be taking notes and/or recording. Some teachers seemed very self-assured and would smile in acknowledgement but a few others would just nod in agreement. The latter reaction seemed to indicate their discomfort with my intent. At such times, I would abandon my notebook, volunteer to assist the teacher in the classroom and continue to write during a break in the session. It was possible that I missed some details, but this helped me understand that writing down one's observation is also dependent on the participants' comfort level at the process and that a researcher could not possibly write down everything that was observed.

Towards the conclusion of this paper, I will engage in productive knowledge by creating a poem that crystallizes my experiences about how to do ethnography in a school. According to Eisner (2008, p. 5) "… not only does knowledge come in different forms, the forms of its creation differ". Furthermore, based on Aristotle's philosophy, knowledge can be of three distinctive kinds: the theoretical, the practical and the productive (McKeon, 2001). McKeon argues that productive knowledge is when children learn by creating something—a piece of music, a sculpture or a painting. The process of creating is rewarding in itself, and may not always result in a 'product' that is useful. When I drew or attempted to create poetry from my data, I was able to better understand my own thought process, what my feelings were at that time, what went well and what did not and so on. Poetry and drawings enabled expression of emotions in more powerful and dramatic ways than words. When I looked back at my drawings and poems much later, the memories they evoked were visceral and tangible. This poem illustrates the sum of my experiences and how they transformed me. There are other

examples of the use of research poetry in fieldwork that are noteworthy, namely those by Friedrich (1996), Furman (2004), Poindexter (2002) and Ware (2001), but to my knowledge the use of poetry in special education research is not common. Here's an excerpt of the poem:

Sense and Sensitivity
Before Heading Towards the Field
Don't forget to carry
A note book and a few pens
And of course your lens
The first for writing what you see
The other for seeing what you sense

When You Enter the Field
Look directly at folks and smile
Be grateful if they smile back
If they don't that's something to explore
Be glad that they let you in
Knock with your open mind at a closed door
Once You Are in the Field
Expect people to look at you with suspicion
No matter what your skin color
Adopt a 'eyes more open-mouth more closed' policy
At first glance look at things simply as they appear

During Observation
Ask what you can do for them
Admire what the group is doing
Do what you can of what they ask
Sing if they're singing, dance if they're dancing

Looking Back…Looking Forward

This narrative was written when I was half way through my fieldwork for my dissertation. I was intently conscious of what I was observing, and how my co-actors and I were affecting, influencing and transforming one another through our frequent interactions. The insights that I gained as an international student researcher may also resonate with other novice and veteran researchers. Readers are invited to make their own interpretations of my experiences. Throughout the research process, I had a predominant feeling of gratitude for the teachers, the school personnel, the project personnel, the children and their families. They were very generous with their time, resources and their welcoming attitude.

The main goal of this narrative was to present the intricacies involved in conducting fieldwork from an international perspective. Right from the beginning

of the narrative the issue of my identity frequently and prominently manifested itself. However, the concept of identity was new to me at the time and I had not fully grasped that I could have an identity of my own, claim it and even negotiate between two different spaces-Indian and American. Now in my fourth year as a teacher and researcher, I realize I continue to negotiate, switch and assume these cultural and academic identities. I have the same misgivings that center around my cultural identity when I venture into schools to conduct research because I am the only Indian special educator in town and thus am highly visible and novel, but the "cross-cultural adaptation" process (Sussman, 2000) that I have gone through is enabling me to present a more confident, self-assured and assertive image of myself. For example, I am more assertive about engaging in small talk with my students and members of the local community. The effect of this important socialization process is reflected in students feeling comfortable enough to share humorous anecdotes during class and the ease with which I am able to approach local school members with research ideas. There has also been a gradual shift in my stance on wide versus narrow interests—which is considered problematic in the academia. I now assert that by adopting a broader research agenda in special education, I am able to see multiple perspectives and argue that connections and interplay between issues can only lead to a holistic set of knowledge.

My year-long fieldwork in the elementary school has proven invaluable to me and has increased my sensitivity towards potential participants. It has also helped understand the complexities involved in minority researchers researching the marginalized of a dominant culture. Qualitative research and ethnography allowed me to address emergent questions that arose from conversations with the participants. Interweaving the narratives of the ethnographic text and the researcher helped break down any barriers, making *us* co-authors of a common text, rather than one writing about the other.

My knowledge about research poetry continues to increase, and I make a conscious effort to practice writing and publishing research poetry and non-research poetry, because after all, research poetry is crafted using elements of conventional poetry. I elaborate more on how I create research poetry in a book chapter that I will be publishing soon (Cousik, in press). By engaging in such deliberate and ongoing practice I have even ventured to further the area of research poetry. For example, in an article published recently (Cousik, 2014), I tease out each line of a previously published research poem (Cousik, 2011b) and use it as a teaching guide. I recommend to those who aspire to write and use research poetry to take one or two courses in creative writing and experiment with writing conventional poetry before constructing data-driven and data-informed research poetry. I encourage student researchers who aspire to write research poems to delve deeply into their data and ponder issues that appear complex, evocative and provocative. Students may also benefit from being keenly alert not

just to what participants say, but also to *how* they say it. This helps in creating poetic data *during* fieldwork. Poetry also has the power to paint words of participants with subtle and bold colors and it also helps the researcher capture the unexpressed.

Finally, my message to teachers of ethnography is to help international student researchers understand how and why their race, gender, class, and status affects their interactions and research in the context of a majority culture and how the "university cloak" does not automatically grant them the power to transcend boundaries and establish rapport with participants from a privileged class.

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Appendix A: Sense and Sensitivity

Sense and Sensitivity
Before Heading Towards the Field
Avoid wearing florescent colors
Go with a clean slate
Don't forget to carry
A smile on your face

Take along your confident self
And plenty of food and water
Also carry an inconspicuous recorder
And letters from those that matter

A note book and a few pens
And of course your lens
The first for writing what you see
The other for seeing what you sense

When You Enter the Field
Pass on your smile to the headmen
Pass on your smile to the tailmen
Pass on your smile to the middlemen
Pass on your smile to everyone

Be grateful if they smile back
If they don't that's something to explore
Be glad that they let you in
Knock with your open mind at a closed door

Be generous with your sorry and please
Get a bird's eye view of things you see
This is the path you chose to tread
Oh ask where the bathroom may be

Once You Are in the Field
Tell them why you are there
Unload your paperwork on their shoulders
Just like you they have their priorities
Some may accede some may look askance

Expect people to look at you with suspicion
No matter what your skin color
Adopt a 'eyes more open-mouth more closed' policy
At first glance look at things simply as they appear

During Observation
Scan the room for an unobtrusive corner
Ask them to show you one if they prefer
Station yourself there along with the spider
Know that after all you are the intruder

Ask what you can do for them
Admire what the group is doing
Do what you can of what they ask
Sing if they're singing, dance if they're dancing

Ask them before you touch any of their material
Don't get touchy if they say No
Remember they are doing you a favor
By letting you in a mere tyro

Use breaks in schedule to record your thoughts
Save details for when you get back home
Its ok if they question you about your notes
Use your tact and sensitivity to field them

Before You Leave the Field
Clean up and thank them when you are all done
Tell them when to expect you next
Ask them if that's ok if you come again and again
Fully expect them to be vexed

Be prepared to hear 'Oh!' 'Well...' 'Haven't you seen enough?'
They are all legitimate reactions
They have a right to say those things
School your own facial expressions

Ask once again
What they expect from you
Show that you care
About how you do what you do

After You Leave the Field
Follow what the text book tells you…
Stare at your notes till they begin to talk
Analyze and reason till the cows come home
But know that a good dissertation is a done dissertation