

Introduction

IT SHOULD PERHAPS COME AS LITTLE SURPRISE that women researchers face sexual harassment and violence while conducting field research. Ethnographic research often entails traveling alone to new locations, taking an intense personal interest in the people there, and seeking to become a part of their daily lives. These very activities may later be used to explain, if not justify, the harassment and assault of women ethnographers. Some have even taken sexual harassment in the field as a “given,” asking why women ethnographers would be treated differently than women in other social contexts. As Gary Alan Fine writes, “These obnoxious and brazen attempts at sexual acquaintanceship are part of the territory in a sexist world.”¹

Some researchers have reacted to unwanted attention and sexual advances in the field by publishing reflections on their experiences, in which they have proposed tips and strategies to help women prevent or at least negotiate sexual harassment in the field.² These reflections seek to give women tools to protect themselves but most often look to the worlds in which research is conducted to account for why women confront, and might acquiesce to, sexual harassment and advances, less often analyzing the field of academia in which researchers are embedded. Norms and practices within academia, which allow for and contribute to women’s harassment and assault, have largely been ignored in discussions about violence against women and fieldwork. Assumptions that academia is a progressive safe haven—that violence is something that happens “out there,” outside of the “civilized” spaces of academia—evidence the ongoing influence of colonialism within departments and disciplines. And although it is important to learn how to negotiate violence in the field, focusing on what happens “out there” structures conversations on sexual assault and harassment as a problem *women* must learn to

deal with if they are to conduct research. The focus on sexism and gendered violence in our field sites ignores the fact that academia, too, is structured by patriarchy and obscures the legacies of sexism and other structures of inequality within it.

Because much of this literature focuses on individual fieldwork reflections, we lack a systematic analysis of the training, mentorship, and fieldwork narratives that construct sexual harassment in the field as a “given,” just one more hardship worth navigating to gather good data.³ In their review of methods books, Fran Markowitz and Michael Ashkenazi found that the few times that sex and sexuality were mentioned, “they were given short shrift or trivialized. Sexuality in the field was treated as a joke, brushed aside with funny anecdotes about how to avoid ‘romantic encounters’ or embarrassment.”⁴ Though there has been an increase in anthropological texts and courses on these issues, Markowitz and Ashkenazi acknowledge that including sex and sexuality in ethnography remains risky.

In this book, we use women’s experiences with harassment in the field to interrogate the epistemological foundations of ethnographic methodology within sociology and related disciplines. Indeed, this methods book is novel in that it is based on empirical research conducted with qualitative researchers. Although we recognize that social norms and cultural codes in the social worlds we study inform experiences of harassment, our analysis situates the problem not in those worlds but rather in the academic community itself. We explore in detail the ethnographic standards that inform understandings of what “counts” as good research. Standards of solitude, danger and intimacy—which we refer to as “ethnographic fixations”—encourage researchers to endure various forms of violence in the field. As we show throughout this book, while women face sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence more frequently, men also are encouraged to endure physical and emotional violence associated with expectations of hegemonic masculinity. These experiences are always mutually constituted by other structures of inequality as well, including race and heteronormativity. These standards shape ethnographic knowledge produced even by researchers who choose to transgress them, as they too seek to align their tales of the field with the standards by editing certain decisions, and the embodied interactions that informed them, out of vignettes and methods sections. As we discuss in chapter 6, many researchers edit embodied experiences out of their tales of the field, pushing them aside and into a category that Joan Fujimura has called “awkward surplus.”⁵ These experiences, which can be both difficult

and risky to fit into our findings and theories, become superfluous stories, excess that must be cut to get at the “real” data.

This book intervenes at three levels. First, it fills a gap in the methodological literature on qualitative research. Experiences of sexual harassment in the field—and violence more broadly—and their implications for the construction of knowledge have not been sufficiently addressed in the methodological literature. This leaves students unprepared to confront these experiences while conducting research and to acknowledge their importance in the collection, analysis, and presentation of data. Rather than relegate these experiences to awkward surplus, we advocate for embodied reflexivity about these issues. Embodied reflexivity calls attention to aspects of our field sites and the people we study that are obscured by established procedures and dominant assumptions of ethnography. Second, this book comments on the current state of ethnography and delivers a call for changes in training, mentorship, writing, and recognition; in short, it demands a transformation of ethnography as a profession. We hope it will contribute to this transformation by challenging students and mentors to think about the principal tool of the qualitative researcher in the field—the body—and how it shapes research. While previous methods books have suggested that researchers relegate embodied experiences to “venting journals” or appendixes, this book calls on readers to incorporate embodiment throughout the research process, from proposal to research, analysis, and writing. Third, this book provides a case study on sexual harassment in academia at a time when sexual harassment charges are rapidly emerging in various occupations. These charges are being taken more seriously than they were in the past, resulting in resignations of men in positions of power, an outpouring of support for women’s advocacy, and demands for change from Hollywood to the university. However, we argue that if efforts to reduce sexual violence are to succeed in academia, we must deconstruct the foundations of knowledge production in the social sciences and move beyond the restrictive categories and rules that limit how we conceptualize and understand the social world.⁶ Our contributions, then, are a critique of the construction of ethnographic knowledge, a guide to conducting and writing embodied ethnography, and a demand for open recognition of the inequalities and oppression that continue to structure academic disciplines and universities.

In this introduction, we describe how we came to write the book and introduce the problem of embodiment and qualitative research. We explain how we use instances of unwanted sexual attention in the field to investigate

this often-overlooked aspect of research. We contextualize fieldwork as an amorphous or dual workplace, shaped by the competing norms of academia and the ethnographic field, both of which can enforce conspicuous silences around sex and gender. We describe our interview method and discuss the variety of projects in which our participants were engaged, showing that embodiment is an important consideration for the production of all qualitative knowledge.

Our findings show that the ethnographic fixations on solitary, dangerous, and intimate research not only put researchers at risk but also have negative implications for the construction of ethnographic knowledge. They encourage researchers to edit gender and sexuality out of their fieldwork discussions and publications, thus contributing to a disembodied presentation of research, which is both ethically and epistemologically problematic.⁷ We contribute to this body of work by arguing that writing the researcher out reproduces a concept of validity inherited from an androcentric, positivist, and colonial past that obscures the embodied nature of fieldwork. Furthermore, we show that although experiences are structured differently according to a researcher's positionality, these ethnographic fixations encourage researchers to adhere to a homogenized narrative of data collection. This narrative conceals the multiple paths ethnographers take to collect their data.

The silence surrounding sexual harassment is motivated by and reproduces norms that valorize certain types of fieldwork.⁸ The internalization of these norms might explain why, despite evidence that sexual harassment of women researchers is common,⁹ there is relatively little discussion of the topic in the profession outside of feminist circles. Our data show that few women realized they would face sexual harassment in the field and many were confused about what to do and how their mentors would respond to their reports. Most had not discussed these issues in their methods classes, and only a few had discussions with committee members about them before going into the field. If we assume, along with Fine, that sexual harassment in the field is just "part of the territory," then why do discussions about it remain marginal in methods classes? If sexual harassment is consistent and common among field researchers, then why is there such an absence in ethnographic narratives about this issue? We argue that this silence is indicative of a broader problem: the writing of researchers' embodied—and therefore raced and gendered—experiences out of qualitative research. By examining the experiences of women ethnographers, which have been marginalized in the dominant canon, we can identify and understand the underlying assumptions of

ethnographic knowledge that obscure bodies in ethnographic narratives. Thus we do not focus on women's experiences because only knowledge produced by women is structured or negatively affected by these fixations. Rather, we analyze women's experiences to show how they are structured by gendered systems within academia.

It is because women's experiences are often excluded that they can operate as sites of transgression—in this case, of the ethnographic canon.¹⁰ In her study of women's political practices in Northern Ireland, Begoña Aretxaga points out that women's bodies and experiences can constitute “irruptions[,] . . . disturbing presences that break the order of authorized historical narratives and in so doing raise questions about the nature of such order.”¹¹ Though our study is not focused on the same political practices that Aretxaga examines, we use women's tales of the field in a similar way: to disrupt dominant field narratives and raise questions about the taken for granted assumptions that undergird ethnography. Following Barbara Sutton, we argue that women's embodied practices should be understood both as individual experience and as structured by underlying social relations of inequality.¹² Similarly, although Joan Scott warns against taking women's experiences as unquestioned evidence of social processes, she argues that analyzing these experiences can open up an inquiry into the production of subjectivities.¹³ Examining how women are socialized into and reproduce hegemonic narratives and ideologies allows us to also analyze how domination and power operate in academia more broadly.

Rather than take experiences as evidence of difference or similarity, Scott argues, experience must be interrogated if we are to understand “how difference is established, how it operates, how and in what way it constitutes subjects who see and act in the world.”¹⁴ Thus we do not use women's experiences to suggest that there is a common thread that connects all women but to introduce difference into ethnographic research and writing. Methodologically, Dorothy Smith argues that a focus on “women's experience” is not an analytic homogenization but a means to challenge the “male” sociological gaze that preemptively writes women's existence out of its scientific narrative.¹⁵

At first glance, this book may appear more useful to researchers working in “dangerous” settings. However, only some of our participants did their research in what would be considered unsafe areas or on dangerous subjects. Others were working on topics such as music festivals, sports, and education that would not seem to be associated with threats to researchers. Some had spent years working in the field off and on, while others conducted shorter

projects or ones that were interview based. The fact that researchers working on such distinct projects faced similar issues speaks to the need to discuss embodiment, danger, and sexual harassment with all students of qualitative research, regardless of their area of research or the amount of time they will spend in the field. We hope this book serves as a conversation starter for faculty and students, as well as a source of debate in sociology and other fields invested in the construction of ethnographic knowledge.

HOW WE CAME TO WRITE THE BOOK

This book has its roots in a conversation between the two authors, when Rebecca—on a break from her dissertation fieldwork—hesitantly admitted to Patricia that she had been experiencing near-constant sexual harassment throughout her time in the field. When she was conducting her research, Rebecca did not think about modifying her project or changing it altogether to lessen or avoid harassment. It did not occur to her that these options were available. Modifying or changing her project, she assumed, would reflect poorly on her as an ethnographer. Even talking to someone about the harassment would be professionally risky, she thought. In fact, it had taken more than six months for Rebecca to mention it to one of her committee members. When she did, she introduced it as a joke, laughing about the “awkward” situations she had experienced. However, when she discussed these experiences with Patricia, the conversation led the two to reflect on their experiences of harassment in the field and formulate the questions that provided the impetus for this study. This book is, in part, a response to these concerns.

We received overwhelming support from women who approached us after conference panels or contacted us after hearing about the project. These responses largely centered on one theme: sexual harassment was common and widespread, but few women felt comfortable talking about it publicly. Others acknowledged that it had never even occurred to them to talk about these experiences in relation to their fieldwork. The consistent outpouring of stories of sexual harassment in academia and in field sites sustained our belief throughout the writing process that there is a pressing need for this book.¹⁶

We seek to provide all ethnographers (regardless of gender) with alternative ways in which to think about their research and data, ways that evaluate modifications, changes, withdrawals, and boundaries as part and parcel of the research process. We want to reassure researchers that “falling short” of

hegemonic ethnographic standards is as common as “falling short” of hegemonic standards of femininity and masculinity and to encourage our disciplines as a whole to rethink these standards and evaluate critically how we consciously and unconsciously reinforce them.

CRITIQUING ETHNOGRAPHIC METHODS

We recognize that there are multiple, competing, and mutually contesting ethnographic methodologies. As John Van Maanen notes in the second edition of his *Tales of the Field*, the literature on ethnography has expanded since the 1980s to such a degree that it is impossible to keep up with the “new theories, new problems, new topics, new concepts, and new critiques of older work.”¹⁷ Nevertheless, as Foucault argues, knowledge and its production occur within a dominant “episteme,” his term for the conditions and prevailing beliefs that give power to certain forms of knowing and knowledge. Thus there are always dominant epistemological assumptions that “define the conditions of possibility of all knowledge, whether expressed in a theory or silently invested in a practice.”¹⁸ Similarly, Gramsci reminds us that hegemonic discourses, practices, and institutions, while contested, still allow dominant groups to shape society by claiming to represent “universal” or “neutral” interests.¹⁹ This is why, despite the increasing diversity of ethnographic methods since the 1980s, the ethnographic fixations continue to give form to tales of the field. These fixations continue to be important in the minds of researchers because they “make sense” within the white, androcentric, and positivistic episteme that remains dominant. It is in this sense that we use the terms “dominant” and “hegemonic” throughout this book, keeping in mind that there are always alternative and subaltern forms of knowledge and knowledge production at play.

Nancy Scheper-Hughes has referred to the ethnographer mythologized since the nineteenth century as the “Victorian butler, always present and keenly observant, but invisible in his ministrations and empty of personal affect and passion.”²⁰ To some extent, this myth continues to influence how sociologists think about conducting and evaluating the validity of ethnographic research. For instance, Michael Burawoy reminds us that Robert Park and the Chicago school championed the objective and detached character of ethnography.²¹ As with other methodological approaches, the goal of ethnography was to understand human conduct through systematic scientific investigation, to reflect “without distortion the way the world is[,] . . .

corresponding to a reality that is ‘out there’ and unchanged by the human study of it.”²² As Norman Denzin has argued, even interpretivist schools like symbolic interactionism continue to struggle with this legacy.²³ Of course, these values were not the only ones, even during the heyday of the Chicago school. Jane Addams was integral to the founding of sociology in the United States, but she and those who worked with her were marginalized by the men of the Chicago school and conducted research and advocacy work at Hull House instead.²⁴ W. E. B. Du Bois began the Atlanta University Studies decades before the Chicago school emerged. In his research at Atlanta University, Du Bois rejected the scientific objectivity that would be championed by the Chicago school, advocating instead for scholarship as activism.²⁵ Nevertheless, the values of the Chicago school became hegemonic. One need only look at the references to the Chicago school compared to the Atlanta school in undergraduate and graduate methods texts to confirm its eminence: between 1897—when the Atlanta University Studies began—and 1999, only three sociological analyses had been published on the school led by Du Bois.²⁶

Over the past several decades, scholars influenced by postmodern and postcolonial thought, critical race theory, and feminism have critiqued the notion of the “objective” researcher. Their many contributions are too substantial to review in full, but we wish to draw attention to several key points, focusing in particular on feminist critiques.²⁷ Identifying a number of androcentric norms and masculinist biases that structure positivist social inquiry, feminist scholars have critiqued the concepts of objectivity and neutrality as first excluding and then marginalizing forms of knowledge that do not correspond with those of white elite men. They have highlighted the exclusion of certain spaces and actors from study,²⁸ the selection and definition of problems for inquiry,²⁹ and the delegitimization of the experiences of women and the validation of those of men as legitimate “knowledge” as evidence of androcentric norms that structure all aspects of the research process.³⁰

Building on these critiques, Harding developed the notion of “strong objectivity.”³¹ Strong objectivity requires recognition of the situatedness of the researcher and a corresponding commitment to reflexivity, which demands that researchers “subject themselves to the same level of scrutiny they direct toward the subjects of their inquiry.”³² Recognizing multiple or partial truths, feminist scholars also have sought to dismantle the self/other and subject/object dichotomies. Other approaches, such as interpretivist and critical ones, have similarly challenged ethnography’s positivist origins,

drawing attention to how researchers' presuppositions shape the field of study,³³ as well as how dominant views of objectivity may reinforce power hierarchies.³⁴

Some of these contributions are now broadly accepted as standard ethnographic practice, even as they are not always recognized as feminist contributions. (Certainly, they have multiple trajectories.) This is true in particular of the call for reflexivity about how multiple positionalities shape research processes, access, and outcomes. Nevertheless, our findings demonstrate that many women ethnographers, even those who are aware of these contributions, continue to evaluate their projects according to standards that obscure the gendered and sexual dynamics inherent in research. Furthermore, they anticipate that others will use these standards when evaluating their research projects. Indeed, it is important to keep in mind that most of our research participants were graduate students or assistant professors for whom, arguably, these standards should hold less weight given the proliferation of research methods and epistemologies. While we agree that there has been an overwhelming expansion in ethnographic approaches, we believe it is important to ask why certain standards continue to weigh on researchers *despite* the dizzying array of publications, presentations, blogs, and groups dedicated to the diversification and critiques of ethnography. Indeed, instead of holding less weight for those trained after methodological interventions made by feminist, critical race, poststructural, and postcolonial scholars, early career researchers are often most vulnerable to the pressure of abiding by hegemonic standards in the field even if, internally, they are critical of these standards.

To be clear, we are not advocating for approaches that turn research into an exposé of the ethnographer but for using embodied analysis and writing to explore and critique the production of gender, race, class, and so on within academia and our field sites. Embodied research and writing is not simply another call to include the self in research and writing. Practically, reflexive research that incorporates positionality does not require that researchers take center stage in their ethnographies. It does not require that we include positionality in all vignettes or analysis.³⁵ Rather, it is a call to think and write about how our bodies—the meanings, practices, and experiences that constitute them—are implicated in the research process. We are less focused on researchers writing their subjectivities into their research (though there is of course a place for this) and more concerned with using embodied experiences

to “address the question of *how* these subject positionings affect knowledge construction.”³⁶ Like Bourdieu, we call for a reflexivity that “focuses not on the individual sociologist as subject, but on the organizational and cognitive structures that shape sociologists’ work.”³⁷

FIELDWORK AND INTERSECTIONALITY

This book is written from an intersectional perspective, and we encourage readers to think about how intersecting systems of power structure their academic and fieldwork experiences. Because we focus heavily on gender and how it intersects with other systems of domination, here we first provide a brief discussion of what we mean by “gender” and related terms and then address our understanding of intersectionality.

We start from the position that people are not born as women or men but instead become gendered persons. This “becoming” is made possible by both rigid gender structures and more flexible practices and meanings. Gender is both a social structure and a social construct, accomplished and performed through social interactions. Gender as social structure refers to a patterned social arrangement, a system that has been reproduced over time and is capable of giving form to “the individual, interactional, and institutional dimensions of our society.”³⁸ Conceptualizing gender as structure does not mean denying the interactional dimensions of gender but recognizing how these come to be reinforced in ways that reproduce inequality. Indeed, as Leslie Salzinger points out, gender’s defining characteristic is its dichotomous structure, which reproduces “two, unequal, othered categories” and the stratified distribution of resources and power.³⁹ These categories are intransigent and have changed relatively little over time; hence the classification as a structure.

Nevertheless, while gender categories have structural consequences, the content of these categories is variable, fluid, and constantly negotiated. Gender is produced, modified, and given meaning through discourse and performance. As Candace West and Don Zimmerman write in their formative article, gender is an accomplishment achieved through everyday performances in interaction.⁴⁰ According to Judith Butler, gender is “an identity tenuously constituted in time—an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts.”⁴¹ In this way, gender is “the appearance of substance[.] . . . a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and perform in the mode of belief.”⁴²

Although we understand gender as performative—which allows for contestation and change—it is also performance, a performance that is assessed and for which actors are held accountable.⁴³ While individuals can contest and reinterpret gendered meanings, they are held accountable, and face repercussions, when they “do gender” in ways that rupture taken for granted scripts. These accountability mechanisms are, in turn, fundamental to understanding gender as structure, because they increase the probability that certain discourses and “stylized repetition of acts”⁴⁴ will be reproduced, generating patterns that maintain social structures. Doing gender in “appropriate” ways (which, of course, means different things in different contexts) is essential to conducting fieldwork, and this is a key component of the issues many of our participants faced in the field. In some cases, researchers may engage in performances that challenge gender essentialism, for example, if one wants to study drag culture. In other cases, the researcher might need to adhere to hegemonic femininity or masculinity, as would be the case if one were to research the Southern Baptist Church. Whether research means challenging or reproducing gendered meanings, ethnographers try to demonstrate that they are competent performers given the contexts in which they attempt to build relationships.

While expectations may vary in different academic fields (and depending on the location, history, and type of university and department), researchers must also perform gender in certain ways to get ahead in the academy. Thus, as we discuss in chapter 2, women may redact certain experiences with sexual harassment (in field sites and in academia) in order to avoid being labeled overly emotional and by extension, irrational and incompetent. These concerns suggest—unsurprisingly—that academic fields are structured by gendered inequality. Performing gender “appropriately” in some academic contexts can mean neutralizing signs that mark a body as feminine. Indeed, like the hegemonic ethnographic narrative that demands researchers present themselves as “passive vessels” in the field, rid of “enculturation, adult and gendered statuses, and desires, passions, comforts, and disgusts,” similar narratives may hold true for women researchers when they return from the field to their academic departments.⁴⁵

Like other scholars, we recognize gender and other aspects of embodiment as nuanced, complex, and fluid. Nevertheless, the fixations we discuss in this book and the broader systems of power in which they are embedded produce similarities across ethnographic narratives. Despite the fluidity and variability of gendered meanings, gendered categories are structured by inequality,

an inequality that has historically worked to the advantage of those who identify and present themselves as white, straight, elite men. While we agree that gender can be unpredictable, inconsistent, contradictory, and fragmented, we argue that researchers receive signals (implicitly or explicitly) that they should produce a seamless narrative of fieldwork that is uninterrupted by researchers' bodies or by manifestations of inequality. By examining women's experiences in the field, we seek to undermine this "staying power," introducing ruptures and inconsistencies to hegemonic narratives.

In addition, gender is always also intersecting with race, class, heteronormativity, and other structures of inequality.⁴⁶ Our findings show that experiences of gender inequality in the ethnographic field (as well as the academic one) are mutually constituted by assumptions about race, nation, and sexuality in particular. Therefore, we cannot understand gender in the field without also understanding these other social structures and how they are reproduced in social interaction. The implications of intersectionality are various. It signals that a group of people (such as white women) might be oppressed on the basis of one category of domination but privileged, and thus capable of oppressing others, on the basis of other categories. It also signals that oppression on the basis of multiple categories (such as race, class, and gender) is not additive but rather a unique product of the ways those categories interact with, reinforce, or contradict one another. Moreover, as post- and decolonial feminists have indicated, feminist researchers are not exempt from the colonialist gaze. They also impose Western categories and skewed accounts of realities in the Global South.⁴⁷ Recent work by Maya Berry and colleagues and Bianca C. Williams shows how race, gender, and nation intersect in particular ways to shape the experiences of women of color in the field.⁴⁸ We are attentive to these intersectional experiences over the course of the book, highlighting how assumptions and expectations about whiteness, blackness, Latinas, Asians, and Muslims, as well as about LGBTQIA+ people, can lead to different gendered dynamics of harassment in the field.

In an attempt to avoid reifying gender categories, throughout this book we often use terms such as "gendered meanings" and "gendered practices" rather than "gender" alone, with the hope of reminding readers that gender does not exist outside of performance, discourse, and symbolic logics.⁴⁹ We refrain from using the biological and essentializing terms "male" and "female" except in a few cases, which are explained in context. Many of our research participants did use this terminology (unsurprising, given its ubiquity in everyday conversation), and in these cases we have left the phrasing unchanged.

DEFINING SEXUAL HARASSMENT

We use Kloß's definition of sexual(ized) harassment as "coercive behavior, which may include gestures, actions, and other modes of verbal or nonverbal communication, with sexual connotations, which intimidate, humiliate, and exercise power over another person."⁵⁰ We define sexual assault as "any kind of sexual activity committed against another person without that person's consent—for example, vaginal, oral, or anal penetration, inappropriate touching, forced kissing, child sexual abuse, sexual harassment, or exhibitionism."⁵¹ We do not use the term "attempted assault" because we do not see that this concept applies to actual experiences; it is a semantic sleight of hand. When victimizers are in the process of "attempting" to assault another person, they are assaulting them. "Attempt" here creates a false category that exists in no concrete place or time, as if the beginning stages of an assault do not count in the same way as what comes after. We use the term "rape" to refer to "penetration with the use of force and without the person's consent." Penetration may occur "in the vagina, anus, or mouth [and] can be committed with a body part or instruments such as bottles or sticks."⁵²

Though we have agreed on precise definitions of these terms for the book, sexual harassment and sexualized interactions in the field involve a range of behaviors that elude simplistic definitions. And labeling of and subjective experiences with sexual harassment vary and are structured by race, class, gender, nationality, citizenship, age, and so forth.⁵³ Unsurprisingly, then, our participants often struggled with how to define harassment and other sexualized interactions in the field, noting that they left them feeling "uncomfortable." For example, a conversation that demeans or objectifies women might take place when the researcher is present, or body language might be sexual but not targeted directly at the researcher. We consider these covert forms of sexual harassment, even though participants were ambivalent about how to characterize them. In some cases, we use the term "sexualized interactions" to refer to experiences that do not necessarily reach the threshold for harassment; these might include unwelcome come-ons, compliments, or flirtation that the researcher was uncertain about how to handle in the field. In certain instances, we include kissing and touching in this category, rather than in the category of sexual harassment, because the research participant did not understand the experience as harassment. Likewise, some researchers enjoyed come-ons from some participants and saw flirtation as a pleasant interaction. In some cases, women rejected advances not because they were unwanted but

out of ethical concern as researchers. Indeed, though not within the purview of this book, ethnography must recognize researchers as sexual beings, not only sexualized beings, an issue we briefly discuss in chapter 3.

FIELDWORK AS DUAL WORKPLACE

We conceptualize fieldwork as a dual or amorphous workplace. Fieldwork is constitutive of our academic careers, and what we do in the field is shaped by scholarly norms and expectations, as well as the norms and expectations that structure the social worlds we study. The norms and expectations of these overlapping fields can come into conflict. For example, many of our participants expected that they would be treated as professionals while they conducted fieldwork, that their credentials would garner respect and, thus, protect them. But this often was not the case. Fieldwork takes place at the interstices of the public and the private, opening up the possibility for violation of boundaries between the professional and the personal. Our participants reported being objectified, mistreated, and regarded as innocent, naive, and dumb and confronting the same sexual dynamics that many women do in their daily lives. Although there are mechanisms in place that women can use to report harassment and abuse in academia (however inadequate they may be), there are often no institutions through which to seek justice when they are harassed and abused in the field. Moreover, social rules about navigating and responding to violence and sexual harassment can be difficult to ascertain in an unfamiliar cultural context.

These experiences were often compounded by conflicting messages within academia. Students might be given sexual harassment training or required to sign a code of conduct that bars harassment and discrimination, but, as our data show, they are almost never provided with guidelines in their ethnography and other methods courses for how to handle these behaviors when they occur in the field. Students also may be told that being a “good ethnographer” means “sucking it up” and doing “whatever it takes” to get the data. In this context, many participants perceived that talking about harassment in the field could discredit the researcher and put her professional relationships and career at risk. Similarly, in academia, where “credentials are everything,” women’s credentials can be marred by public disclosures of harassment and abuse.⁵⁴ Indeed, some participants reported deciding to smile and go along with harassment from professors and mentors rather than report it. The

underlying message is similar across academia and field sites: talking about harassment is neither welcome nor appropriate. This creates a workplace scenario in which it is very difficult to know how to deal with harassment and violence more generally.

Gender itself is produced in the workplace, and sexual harassment is often a central component of this process.⁵⁵ In academia, gender is produced through training, mentorship, and coursework—all of which can be thought of alongside guidelines or employee manuals—in ways that leave researchers unprepared to navigate and acknowledge sexualized harassment when it occurs in the field. Writing on the reproduction of white logic in academia, John Clausen observed that sociologists are socialized to “accept, internalize, and act as though the prevailing norms of the role to which [they are] aspiring ‘has validity for [them].’”⁵⁶ Similarly, and like other workplaces, students are socialized to internalize norms that ignore gender. This is not to negate that the workplace is an important site of gender production. Rather, it is to say that the construction of gender in the workplace and the gendered performances that we engage in are not acknowledged as such. The denial that academia is a workplace like any other—where gender as structure divides bodies and assigns them to unequal categories—has been well captured by recent responses after sexual harassment accusations against (mostly) men academics began to trickle into and then flood news and social media.⁵⁷ Accounts from students and faculty members suggest that harassment is just as common in academia as in other workplaces. Nevertheless, our study shows that these “it doesn’t happen here” mores filter into the training of graduate students, resulting in little guidance on how to deal with harassment in the ethnographic field and leading them to avoid talking about it openly for fear that they will be judged and their work considered invalid if they do.

EMBODIMENT AND QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Ethnographic training and writing continues to be “disembodied.” This, we argue, is because bodies (particularly those that look different from those of white men) present problems for neutrality, validity, and objectivity within the positivist tradition. In 1974 Dorothy Smith observed that it was precisely the association between women and the mundane particularities of daily existence (which often includes caring for others’ bodies) that allowed men

to exclude women from producing the objective and abstract knowledge revered in sociology.⁵⁸ Intersectional approaches that go beyond Smith's work show how not only sexism but also racism, classism, and colonialism exclude certain people from knowledge production on the basis of the meanings assigned to their embodiment.⁵⁹ While women of color inhabit social positions that allow them to better understand the interlocking nature of oppression,⁶⁰ these same scholars are often delegitimized as hypersensitive, overly emotional, and biased.⁶¹ Negative associations between scholars' bodies and knowledge have undoubtedly been challenged over the past several decades. Nevertheless, as we show, researchers are still encouraged to leave out particularities of daily existence that bring bodies into our work.

To redress this absence, we call for embodied ethnography, ethnography that not only recognizes bodies as tools to get closer to the worlds of research participants but also takes seriously the presupposition that all data and knowledge emerge from experiences, conversations, and interactions shaped by the bodies that engage in them. Indeed, collapsing the mind-body duality and showing that all knowledge is embodied are principal aims of this book. In this section, we briefly summarize the literature that influences our concept of embodied ethnography.

First, we understand bodies as historically situated and constituted by power relations; there is no interior essence separate from the social that gives bodies meaning. According to Foucault, bodies are controlled, worked upon, and maintained by power and molded through daily practices in institutions.⁶² The work done on bodies creates certain forms of identification and categorization but also forms of thinking, feeling, and expressing. Feminist theorists have also conceptualized the body as the product of power, more specifically, power that reproduces patriarchal, androcentric, racist, and heteronormative systems and institutions.⁶³

While keeping in mind that bodies are constituted by systems of power, we are also interested in the gaps and contradictions created by the production of gendered bodies and the lived experiences of researchers as gendered, racialized subjects. Phenomenological and feminist traditions have both focused on lived experience, as a methodological and an epistemological approach. From phenomenological theory we adopt the concept "being-in-the-world," a "temporally / historically informed sensory presence and engagement."⁶⁴ These experiences of being-in-the-world cannot be retold or examined without including how our bodies experience being: our

sensations, our emotions, our movements, and our viscosity. Bodies are energized, scarred, emboldened, mortified, repulsed, warmed, energized, and desensitized as we fumble into the social worlds that we study.⁶⁵ Including visceral descriptions of participants' social worlds cannot be limited to what these worlds feel like to them but must also include what being in these worlds does to us as researchers.

Finally, reflexive research must be grounded in an awareness of our bodies—what they mean to us as well as what they mean to others. Reflexive research can only exist where we consider the social relations—within the academy as well as the ethnographic field—that make possible social scientific inquiries and claims, the same social relations that structure who gets to make these inquiries and claims in the first place.⁶⁶ To move away from disembodied, colonialist, and androcentric research, ethnographers must reflect on how and why their bodies fit into (or disrupt) the places they study, situating their being-in-the-world within the power dynamics that constitute all social worlds.

Embodied ethnography, then, is not just about including embodied experience in our work, but grounding these experiences in the social conditions that allow them to occur. As Mary Steedly has noted, "Experience is that which is at once most necessary and most in need of examination."⁶⁷ Indeed, a main contention of this book is that paying attention to what happens to our bodies in the field is a form of data collection. How others respond to our bodies, where we are allowed to go and with whom we are allowed to associate, and the types of violence and dangers we experience while conducting research all tell us about the systems of power that structure our field sites. If bodies are tools of research, then we must consider how these tools structure daily experiences, which eventually become ethnographic data, facts, and knowledge. Embodied ethnography includes understanding our bodies as objects out in the world, objects to which meanings are assigned, objects that are perceived and treated differently according to these meanings, and objects that elicit distinct feelings and responses in others. Finally, as Nancy Naples has written:

An embodied perspective (one that is tied to particular social locations and particular positions in a community) emphasizes how researchers' social positions (not limited to ones gender, race, ethnicity, class, culture, and place or region of residence) influence what questions we ask, whom we approach in the field, how we make sense of our fieldwork experience, and how we analyze and report our findings.⁶⁸

In short, a fully embodied approach begins with research design and extends to analysis and writing.

Taking these steps can be unsettling, as they rupture the way in which scholars understand themselves as creators of knowledge. Even scholars who are women and/or people of color, who cannot lay claim to hegemonic knowledge creation in the way elite white men can, may struggle in adopting ethnographic practices and narratives that more closely map onto their experiences. This struggle is undoubtedly compounded by these scholars' structural locations in the university, where a precarious hold on academic legitimacy discourages them from speaking out against hegemonic narratives. Nevertheless, while bodies are the creation of multiple forms of domination, they are also, as feminist theorists have argued, the terrain upon which the subversion of domination can be carried out.⁶⁹ Incorporating our bodies into research and writing, we hope, will contribute to a questioning and, eventually, dislodging of hegemonic narratives that reproduce oppression and inequalities in academic departments and disciplines.

METHODS

We carried out fifty-six in-depth interviews for this study, which was approved by our university Institutional Review Board (IRB). These interviews are supplemented by our own conversations regarding these issues. Interviewees were recruited via calls for participants sent out to several listservs and also through snowball sampling. Most participants were graduate students or early assistant professors. A few were more seasoned associate professors. The majority were sociologists, although several anthropologists and some scholars from other disciplines were interviewed. All but one had conducted fieldwork within the past ten years. Most had done so much more recently, and a few were still in the field. Roughly half of our participants conducted research in the United States and half in other countries (mostly in the Global South). This was intentional. We wanted to avoid contributing to a stereotypical view that the extent to which sexual harassment occurs in the field depends on misunderstandings or clumsy encounters between "backward" men from the Global South and naive gringa researchers.

Forty-seven participants were cisgender women, including 29 white / anglo women and 18 women of color (5 Asian Americans, 8 Latinas, 2 black women, 1 Muslim American, and 2 women of mixed race / ethnicity).⁷⁰ Thirteen

identified as lesbian, bisexual, or queer; 4 did not report their sexual orientation; and the remainder identified as heterosexual/straight (with a few of these identifying as fluid or “mostly” straight). After starting with a sample consisting entirely of women, we interviewed 9 men in order to help clarify some of our theoretical ideas and avoid essentialist traps. Of these, 6 were white/anglo, 2 were Latino/Latin American mestizo, and 1 was of mixed race/ethnicity. Six of the men were cisgender straight/heterosexual, and 3 identified as gay or queer. One individual was trans. We purposefully sought a diverse sample on the basis of race/ethnicity and sexual identity/gender expression because we anticipated that experiences of the sexualized fieldwork context would be shaped by these factors as well. Our experiences also informed the writing of this book, and in the spirit of embodied ethnography, we have included these as data. At the time that we began this project, Rebecca’s experiences were those of a white, cisgender bisexual PhD sociology student just back from the field. Patricia is a straight, cisgender, white professor of sociology and women’s studies. We did not ask participants to discuss all aspects of their positionalities; most glaringly, perhaps, we did not ask participants if they self-identified as able-bodied, an omission that speaks to how occupying privileged social locations (in this case, being able-bodied, a position that both authors share) can blind us to research questions and the lived experiences of those that diverge from our own. And although our sample does include LGBTQIA+ researchers, more systematic interviews with that community are important as scholars move forward with this and similar research. We did not conduct systematic interviews with men of color. While we interviewed two Latino/Latin American mestizo men and one man of mixed race/ethnicity, we did not interview any Asian American or black men. It must be acknowledged that men of color’s embodiment carries distinct and more severe costs than the embodiment of white men: they are also an “other” to the hegemonic “neutral” ideal researcher, and their experiences and insights would have undoubtedly revealed implications and costs associated with ethnographic fixations that did not arise in interviews with women. We therefore want to note here the importance of recognizing that the “neutral” researcher is not only embodied as male but also as white, and we hope other researchers will pursue this line of inquiry in the future.

The types of objectification, sexualization, sexual harassment, and/or assault experienced by participants covered a wide spectrum, as did the degree. Some reported having to deal with these issues infrequently. Others faced them on a daily basis. Some navigated light flirtation, sexual banter, or

frequent comments on their physical appearance. Many were asked out, propositioned, or touched without giving their permission. Others were physically assaulted, and one was raped. Most experienced various forms and degrees of these behaviors.

Each coauthor conducted roughly half of the interviews, which usually lasted between one and two hours. Most interviews took place via Skype, although whenever possible we conducted them in person. Interview questions focused on issues of trust, power, and building relationships in the field, experiences of unwanted sexual attention, and methodological training. Although all interviews were coded separately by both authors, we checked our interpretations and codes with each other in many conversations during the coding process. In these conversations we noted a high degree of overlap between our codes and were thus able to come to an agreement on salient themes and processes emerging from the interviews.

Interview excerpts included here have been edited for clarity (generally, fillers like “um,” “like,” and “you know” and repetitions have been removed). Participants are identified by pseudonym. We have tried to provide some contextualizing information while protecting anonymity. For most participants, we have included racial identification and location in their academic career. When race is not specified, it is to protect the participant’s identity. Other identifying characteristics generally have been omitted, unless they are particularly important to understand the analysis at hand. Likewise, we have avoided referring to precise locations and overly specific topics of research. In some cases, participants specifically asked that particular identifying characteristics be withheld; Michelle asked that we not reveal any characteristics that could identify her. Although this may cloud clarity in a few cases, it was imperative to honor these requests for the security of our participants. Because of the sensitivity of some of the subject matter, we sent all excerpts and contextualizing details to participants prior to publication in order to ensure their comfort with the level of confidentiality provided.

We refer to our interviewees as men and women because this is how they identified. The vast majority of our sample is cisgender. Where we refer to women and men, however, we ask readers to keep in mind that these are socially constructed categories that ground our participants’ identities and the meanings they and others attach to their bodies. Though gender is not natural or biological, it is taken for granted in everyday interactions and was sometimes discussed using essentialist language in our interviews.