

p. 465 Most of the time, though, I was simply a curiosity. Occasionally there was ridicule that I was aware of, but usually they just stared at me. And they had good reason to stare! Take a look at Fig. 20.1.

Figure 20.1



The author with a member of the community and her sons.

p. 466 Note the sheer difference in scale between the two adults. Although it is really a very embarrassing picture, I include it to show how my mere physical presence affected how I must have been perceived. It was clear the whole time that I was there that I was regarded as an alien from outer space. I was an unmarried woman by herself, twice as tall as most people, with short hair, and wearing jeans.

The fieldworker's marital status is of particular significance to anthropological informants, since most 'primitive' cultures take kinship bonds as the fundamental source of social structure and social order... But an unmarried, childless adult woman has no fully legitimate social place in most cultures. (Warren 1988: 13)

A further idea of just how sore-thumb-like I was can be seen in the following anecdote: shortly before I left the village someone asked me if I had ever noticed that children ran screaming from me when I walked down the street. Of course I *had* noticed that. She told me that it was because the women had taken to telling their children to be good—or *the gringa would take them*.

I had become the bogeyman.

Although it is a funny story—and I tell it as a funny story—it also just sums up perfectly how alien I felt, and how alien they regarded me as being.