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Power and pleasure in ethnographic home-work: producing a recognizable ethics

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ABSTRACT The author uses Michel Foucault's power/knowledge/pleasure combination to analyze the production of ethical practices in qualitative research. Through two data stories, the author recounts her own pleasurable acts while carrying out an ethnographic study in her hometown high school. The pleasures of conducting such home-work are analyzed to point out the ethics of constituting the experience of the self in qualitative research.

KEYWORDS: *ethics, pleasure, poststructural ethnography, power/knowledge, subjectivity*

Introduction

I was called home, after a 16-year absence, to conduct qualitative research. I could loosely use the words, 'I returned home' or 'I chose to study' to introduce this work. But in reality, home seduced me and produced my desire to see what life was like there, in the school system, 16 years later. I was called home to conduct a poststructural ethnography of small-town schooling, yet I too am a product of the same cultural structures and institutions that I sought to study. I was persuaded by my own, already-inscribed subjectivity to critically examine the culture of schooling in my hometown of Garner.

In this article, I describe power and pleasure in conducting such ethnographic work at home, or home-work. I use power and pleasure as it has been recently re-invented in poststructuralism through the works of Michel Foucault. Foucault's concept of power has been aptly utilized in poststructural qualitative research in recent years (e.g. see Collins, 2000; Ferguson, 2001; Finders, 1997; Lesko, 2000; Toll and Crumpler, 2004; Vadeboncoeur, 2005). Power as producing pleasure is noticeably absent in qualitative inquiry, though Erica McWilliam's studies of the teaching profession (1999, 2004) and of women's academic work (2000) have explored 'proper pleasure' and desire as an effect of disciplinary power.

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To argue for more attention to pleasure as an ethical, productive practice in qualitative research, and to offer a framework for critiquing pleasurable moments in such work, I first describe the methodology I used to do home-work. Next, I provide an overview of Foucault's power and pleasure and explain how he linked the two concepts to his idea of an ethical subject. I then move into two data stories to elucidate my practices of Foucault's ethics through the 'use of pleasure' in my home-work at Garner. I use Foucault's power/knowledge/pleasure combination to make meaning of the ethics of my subjectivity as I negotiated the field.

Methodology

There is a sense of nostalgia when thinking of small-town schools in the United States. Images of safety, family, autonomy, and community emerge when picturing small schools. According to some research, small schools have 'better' everything: attendance, test scores, relationships, curriculum, student achievement, teacher satisfaction, safety, democratic and equitable structures, graduation rates, and college-going rates (e.g. see Ayers et al., 2000; Darling-Hammond et al., 2002; Meier, 2002, 2003; Toch, 2003; Wasley and Lear, 2001).

In the years leading up to my ethnographic home-work, I had been captivated by the rhetorical allure of 'less is more' when it comes to small schools. As a product of a small school, I questioned the appeal of such places and desired to engage in a poststructural critique of the culture of my own small-town schooling. I was uninterested in the 'truth' of the romanticization and idealization of small schools and drawn to how those ideals get constructed, deployed, and circulated in discourse in specific places. In particular, I was interested in how community members who are invested in the schools produce their vision of schooling through their material, political, and cultural practices.

To conduct my home-work of small-town schooling, I engaged in one year of fieldwork in which I used the following ethnographic methods: I interviewed former classmates and community members, I reviewed historical documents of the school system, and I functioned as a participant-observer at Garner High, shadowing seniors who had attended the school system since kindergarten.[1] These fieldwork experiences produced multiple subject positions for me as a researcher, a southern woman, a product of the small-school system, a PhD student, and a feminist. As I talked with former teachers and classmates and spent time with children of former teachers, I felt my own subjectivity slipping and protesting in response to an intricate network of cultural practices and power relations. These relations and practices intersected and produced competing ways of constructing myself (and of my being constructed) in particular, contextualized situations. The ongoing construction of my researcher subjectivity, then, became a heavy task of taking up certain subject positions that were available at the time, haunted by excesses of my other more recent selves. It became obvious to me that 'identity is not a fixed "thing," it is negotiated,

open, shifting, ambiguous – the result of culturally available meanings and the open-ended, power-laden enactments of those meanings' (Kondo, 1990: 24). Therefore, my subjectivity remained neither stable nor coherent during my fieldwork. Rather than being a 'fixed point of departure or arrival' (de Lauretis, 1984: 159) to which I could safely return, my subjectivity in the field emerged as an excessive *effect* of the interrelationships among social practices, power relations, and my specific experiences as a researcher.

This poststructural view of the self has been theorized in fieldwork at home. Hoodfar (1994) likens the construction of the self in fieldwork at home to a 'schizophrenic experience', and Caputo (2000) referred to her ethnographic identity at home as always partial in response to the shifting and often-times stressful instability of the ground. Caputo (2000: 28) aptly refers to the field at home as a 'swirl of sites' and recounts the difficulty of sustaining her positionality while being at once 'at home' and 'away'. Hastrup (1987: 105) claims the field is 'everywhere' – a 'third culture' of sorts – and thus the ethnographer 'lives and works in the third person'. Hastrup's 'third person' is not an omniscient observer who is detached and objectively knows everything, but one who is the combined effect of memory, history, place, and culture. It is one who is a contradictory, splintered self – a rupturing and hybridization of meaning systems, consciousness, and identity (Chaudhry, 1997).

A turn toward home, the present, and the familiar in western social anthropology has produced a methodological awareness that is unique to studying home, including greater personal insight and keener reflexivity (Amit-Talai, 1994; Caputo, 2000; Hastrup, 1987; Jackson, 1987; Strathern, 1987). Yet problematic for the self in studying home is realizing the limits of memory, negotiating the insider/outsider binary, and experiencing the stress and anxiety of constant self-monitoring (Caputo, 2000; Chaudhry, 1997; Coffey, 1999; Hastrup, 1987, 1992; Jackson, 1987; Kondo, 1990; Stack, 1996; Strathern, 1987; Visweswaran, 1994). While I certainly experienced all of these problems of subjectivity while conducting home-work, I am attempting to theorize them differently by re-conceptualizing the ethnographic self as an ethical construct produced by power and pleasure.

In order to interrogate and disrupt certainties about the self in home-work – even those certainties regarding fractured subjectivities – I attend to issues of power and pleasure in novel ways. I remember preparing myself for fieldwork at home by anticipating that I would in many ways become a split subject and would encounter many moments of collapsed subjectivity while at home. Yet as I experienced my self in the field, I came to understand that my split subjectivity, while in constant tension, was something that I looked forward to, that offered pleasant insights, and that actually delighted me in surprising ways. Interrogating power in this way offered a different sort of negotiation of the self that produced pleasures while in the field. This negotiation of the self is unlike other theories of subjectivity in ethnography at home. That is, the work cited above recounts the anxieties and difficulties of subjectivity; of course, my

own experiences of my self were often rife with tumult. However, I contend that constructs of a hybrid self may enable possibilities for transformation that produce certain freedoms in the research process. To re-conceptualize the self in home-work is to interpret ethical practices as not only constrained and disciplined but also engendering freedom and agency. Furthermore, an ethical construction of the ethnographic self can produce certain pleasures that enable a particular type of knowing in the research process. I turn to Foucault's theories of power and pleasure, and their connection to the ethical construction of the self, to explicate how researchers might confront the plays of power in the making of their ethnographic selves.

Theories of power and pleasure

In a 1976 lecture, Foucault (1980) critiqued conventional notions of power by arguing that a structural, repressive view of power is limited and limiting because it ignores the fluid and relational characteristics of power and the subtle ways in which power operates. Foucault was interested in thinking about power as more than simply prohibitive or repressive and explained that power becomes possible through the mutability of unequal and unstable local relations. To put it simply, there is a power relationship between two people when one is attempting to 'control the conduct of the other' (Foucault, 1994a: 292). Foucault believed that power relations are unstable and can shift within conflict because they are characterized by freedom; Foucault (1994a: 292) believed that:

> power relations are possible only insofar as the subjects are free. If one were completely at the other's disposal and became his thing, an object on which he could wreak boundless and limitless violence, there wouldn't be any relations of power. Thus, in order for power relations to come into play, there must be at least a certain degree of freedom on both sides.

Plays of power, then, occur among free subjects who are caught up in complex webs of control and conflict. Power relations exist only when the field of possibilities is open and people may react to each other in various ways. Furthermore, power relations are endowed 'with processes which are more or less adjusted to the situation' (Foucault, 2000: 224). That is, power relations are specific and local to subjects who are in mutual relations with one another. Power, then, 'is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere'; it is a repetitious and self-producing effect of mobile, strategical practices and relations within particular social networks (Foucault, 1978: 93). As a network of relations, power is 'constantly in tension, in activity', and power relations are made of various points of instability that *produce* multiple sites and modes of activity, including both compliance and resistance (Foucault, 1977: 26).

Because Foucault thought that power is embedded in relationships rather than existing merely as a possession that is wielded over others, his work

focused on studying the functions and effects of power, not its origin. Foucault investigated *the strategical and productive effects of power as it circulates through the practices of people in their daily lives*. To explain productive power, Foucault said, 'What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces *pleasure* …' (1980: 119, emphasis added).

Productive power that 'induces pleasure' is of particular use to me as I think about my undertaking of home-work in Garner. In this analysis, I am interested in examining those pleasurable moments as a product of power within the available discourses of small-town schooling in Garner. It is important to distinguish the French *jouissance* from *plaisir*, the form that Foucault used in his work on pleasure. *Jouissance* often refers to sensual pleasures, or to signal an intensity of pleasure, while *plaisir* translates into joy, delight, enjoyment, or fun. *Plaisir* can also be conjugated to indicate the phrase 'to please someone', as in being a people-pleaser, which is of most relevance to my work here. Barthes (1975) used *jouissance* and *plaisir* in a similar vein, which is also helpful in my thinking about forms of pleasure. Barthes's (1975: 14) *plaisir* signifies 'comfort' and 'fulfillment'. To think of pleasure this way – as joy, contentment, or comfort produced by power and organized through discourse – is to situate pleasure within Foucault's work on sexuality, particularly in his work *The Use of Pleasure*.

Similar to his analysis of power, Foucault's (1985) interest was not in the origins, essential nature, or meanings of pleasure but in 'the ontology of force that linked together acts, pleasures, and desires' (1985: 43). That is, Foucault investigated the dynamic interplay of rules and conditions that enabled individuals (i.e. the ancient Greeks) to manage and conduct their own acts in order to achieve the 'proper use of pleasure' (1985: 63). Freedom and power produce 'proper pleasure' through the use of moderation; that is, to form oneself as a free, ethical subject is to 'rule' pleasure, bring pleasure 'under authority', and 'dominate' pleasure within the conditions of knowledge that govern acts and desires (1985: 86). Such pleasure emphasizes reason over desire; pleasure's use must be 'adaptable to the needs, times and circumstances' of the situation (1985: 87). In other words, people use their knowledge of what they 'ought' to do to guide their acts. Only the knowledgeable, only the 'self-controlled have power' to moderate themselves, subduing their desires and regulating their behavior (1985: 87). 'Stylized' freedom is produced by this power/knowledge; this ability to govern, rule, and control one's self is in response to a particular condition. The power/knowledge/freedom combination, then, produces the correct or acceptable feelings of proper pleasure, of harmony, of contentment within contextualized situations.

Power-induced pleasure came to be recognizable through the discourses that regulated and elaborated the cultural practices and relations during my fieldwork, or home-work, in Garner. It is now that I turn to stories from the field to consider how I came to shape myself as a desiring researcher and a

'subject of ethical conduct' (Foucault, 1985: 251), or how I governed my own behavior as I was taught to do as a young girl.

Data story one: the/my teachers' lounge

'Oh, we're going to have a PhD!' My former ninth grade typing teacher, Mrs Anderson,[2] clapped in approval. She sat across from me in the teachers' lounge, my former ninth grade English teacher sat to my right, and my former eleventh and twelfth grades English teacher, Mrs Hill, was on my left. Mrs Hill was also my 'informant' for the time that I would spend at my former high school, Garner High, as part of an ethnographic study I was conducting on small-town schooling. The teachers sipped coffee at 7:15 a.m. before their school day began; I abstained, not needing any extra stimulant on my first day of fieldwork. They wanted to know what I had been doing since my 1986 graduation. As I glossed over the highlights, I repeatedly glanced at a half-sheet of paper on the table in front of Mrs Hill, a list I knew contained the names of several senior girls she recommended that I observe for my ethnography – girls who had been students in this small school system since kindergarten and who would be willing to share their experiences of small-town schooling with me (I was particularly interested in girls' perspectives because of my own history). We adults reminisced, my former teachers attempting to specifically place me by asking, 'Now, who else was in your class?' and 'What teachers did you have?' My responses were met with exclamations of 'Oh yes! I remember that!' or 'Mrs Booker is still here! You'll have to stop by her room and say hello!' The three teachers who welcomed me back that first day had begun their teaching careers at Garner as many as 28 years before. One had missed teaching my own mother by just a few years, each of them had taught my younger sister, and the next year they would begin teaching the children of several of my high school classmates.

Just after the 7:30 a.m. bell rang, Mrs Hill and I emerged from the teachers' lounge. I followed her down the hallway to her classroom; walking side by side was impossible given the congestion of students who were going to their lockers and socializing with their friends. Mrs Hill stopped behind one girl who had her back to us, and Mrs Hill stroked the girl's long, naturally curly dark hair. 'She's mine', Mrs Hill said to me, over her shoulder. 'She's one you're going to follow.' The girl turned around, her brown eyes bright, and flashed a smile at us.

'Is that Abbey?' I asked, as I continued to trail behind Mrs Hill. She nodded yes. Mrs Hill was pregnant with Abbey when I was a sophomore, and I was astonished that her now-18-year-old daughter would be one of the many participants in my study.

We took a left down an adjoining hallway, and Mrs Hill's room was the first door on the left. This was the 'Humanities' wing: four English classrooms, four History classrooms, one Spanish and one French classroom, and the Art Studio. Mrs Hill unlocked the door to her room, and we walked in. Though the high school was a new building and therefore hers was a different physical

room from the one I occupied as her student for two years, the inside was uncannily similar to its late 1980s look that I remembered: the same Shakespeare posters, the podium that all of her students sign as seniors (yes, I found my name), the desks arranged in five rows of five. Even the notes written on the dry-erase board rang familiar. The seniors were reading *The Hollow Hills*, just as my class had 16 years before.

Mrs Hill crossed the front of the room to her desk, which was situated in the back right corner. We sat at her desk, and she handed me the list I had been coveting since my arrival a half-hour earlier. She explained that when she received the email from Regina[3] about my project, she knew immediately who would 'be perfect' for me to shadow. 'I tried to come up with a wide variety of girls', Mrs Hill told me. She took me through the list while students were trickling into her classroom. I would rather have had the conversation in private, but she did not seem concerned. She said,

> Destiny is in first period, my lowest level class. She used to be on the college track, but she dropped down. She's perfectly capable of doing college work; she's just lazy. Marin is in my Advanced Placement class. She's Mrs Cleary's[4] daughter and is just brilliant. One of the best writers I have. Yesterday when I announced to my classes that you would be here today, Marin was the first to volunteer. Then in third period is my Abbey, who wants to be an aerospace engineer, whatever that is. She built a model of the Endeavor space shuttle using a computer program. I don't know where she gets it! Alexis is in fifth period, college prep. She's really active in the band as captain of the color guard. Quenisha is in that class too. She is just the nicest young lady, always has a smile on her face. I taught her daddy. And in my last class is Justice. She's a new mother. She told me, 'Mrs Hill, it was my first time. I was a virgin.' And she got pregnant.

Mrs Hill beamed. She had carefully selected the participants for my study based on the criteria I had provided in the proposal I sent to Regina, who forwarded them to Mrs Hill. Mrs Hill understood that I wanted to study small-town schooling and that I was especially interested in girls' perspectives on their schooling. These girls should be seniors in high school, should have attended Garner City Schools since kindergarten, and that among the girls there should be diversity in race, class, academic ability, and extracurricular interests and activities. The day before, Mrs Hill had spoken to each girl whom she thought would be suitable to ensure their participation and to prepare them for my arrival. She described, in broad strokes, this group of six senior girls: four White, two Black; college- or vocational-bound; singers, dancers, writers, musicians, actresses, athletes, tutors, volunteers, class officers, mathematicians, Christians; a teenage mother. All would represent Garner well, and all were social enough to 'keep me busy', Mrs Hill told me.

In designing my research, I had hardly expected to show up on the first day of fieldwork with my participants selected, somewhat informed, and ready for me to begin shadowing them. In my research design, I had planned to spend a couple of days in Mrs Hill's room observing all of her senior classes so that I

could watch everyone and talk to her about certain seniors, especially girls, who might offer unique perspectives on small-town schooling. In the moment that she showed me the list, I was a bit annoyed that she was controlling such a vital part of the research process. But I came to recognize myself as her student again, wanting to please my favorite teacher. I thanked her for the list of girls, for thinking so carefully about her choices and preparing them for my arrival, and, rather disappointed that one of the most important steps in my research design was thwarted, I settled into my researcher space to observe. I knew my place and not to question it.

My desire to acquiesce was produced by the historically laden power relationship between Mrs Hill and me, a desire that made visible the institutional discourses of small-town schooling in Garner. As my former teacher, she knew best, and perhaps she intended her actions to be that of 'southern hospitality', of helpfulness – not of control, as it felt on my receiving end. Yet, to act as Foucault's ethical subject – to moderate my own desires in the face of conflict – left me with a surprising feeling of pleasure in re-inhabiting a space that I had long since left: that of a nice, quiet, people-pleaser. I slipped rather quickly – though not easily – back into the comfortable discourses of my childhood and schooling that subjected me as a working-class, southern girl. I became acutely aware of how control is actually characterized by freedom, and I shaped my ethnographic self through the range of choices available to me at the time. As an ethical subject, I moderated my competing desires to comply, to argue, to flat-out resist and made a choice to enact what Foucault names 'stylized freedom'. Within the power relations and discursive practices of being back in Garner, I knew what I 'ought' to do as a former student who was now a guest in the school system: to do what I was told and not make trouble. Admittedly, and most importantly, I took pleasure in the fact that I could return to Garner, go back to the school, and not embarrass my family.

I also realized, during my first day of fieldwork, that my memories and my past selves were functioning to enable sense-making of my experience. Coffey (1999) emphasizes the importance of the relationship between fieldwork and memory, and she asserts that memory helps to contextualize the self in relation to the field. Indeed, memories of my former selves as a southern girl in a small-town school helped me to understand how I should respond to certain contextual situations while doing home-work. Memory-work, in the context of home-work, actually led to my experiencing and conceptualizing my ethnographic self as pleasurable. That is, the tension and negotiation of memory and the present, in regard to my subjectivity, heightened my awareness of how to behave in the moment – what Foucault would regard as an ethical practice of the (ethnographic) self.

Data story two: pleasures of southern girlhood

Even though Mrs Hill selected senior girls to host me while I was a participant-observer at Garner High, leaving me at the start of my project with a feeling of

loss, her discursive practice enabled a particular relationship between me and my participants. Because Mrs Hill seemingly sanctioned my project via her historical relationship with me, the girls received my project with enthusiasm, even a sense of superiority to others. By the end of the school day on that first day of fieldwork, I had met all six girls. In Mrs Hill's classes, they seemed well-liked, polite, respectful, and helpful to others. I began to glean Mrs Hill's rationale for choosing these girls; they were truly hospitable, and they seemed excited about being in a 'book'. Throughout the day, just before the beginning of each English class, Mrs Hill introduced me to Destiny, Marin, Abbey, Alexis, Justice, and Quenisha. My spiel to each of them was, 'I am writing a book about small-town schooling. I'd like to follow you to all of your classes and extra-curricular activities to see what your day is like and casually talk to you about going to school in a small town.' I also handed each a letter of informed consent to read and sign. Each girl smiled and said something like, 'Yes ma'am. That will be fine' before returning to her seat (I almost always expected a polite, southern curtsey to follow). As Mrs Hill began each class, she introduced me to all of the students in the senior class and allowed me to explain what I was doing there. I recited my spiel again, and Mrs Hill was always certain to add, with pride, 'And she was one of my former students.' (I noticed that, without fail, each of the girls said to the person sitting closest to her, 'I'm going to be in her book!') Marin actually took ownership of *me*; as I talked with other seniors about their experiences, she jokingly said, 'Don't talk to my shadow!' or 'I'm in her book; you can't be!' All of the girls eventually became protective of me and my work, and they produced me as a marker of their privilege.

Other seniors asked questions of me: What are you doing here? Who were your teachers when you were at Garner? Are you married? Do you have children? Do you want to shadow me? Are you going to the prom/awards ceremony/spring play/band concert? When can we read the book you are writing? Can I be in the book? Seniors welcomed me into their school culture, collected data about me, and offered information when I did not ask for it – data about living in Garner, going to school there, and liking and disliking certain teachers and rules of the school. Often, when I was having a conversation with one or two students, surrounding seniors would join in and offer their perceptions of the topic, especially in casual situations such as lunch and break. My field notebook continued to be a source of intrigue; seniors constantly asked me what I was writing 'in there' and would often make statements for the sole purpose of my recording them (e.g. 'This school is all about football. If you don't play football, you're nobody'). I was constructed by the seniors as someone who 'got out': I had attended Garner High; I 'knew' what it was like; I was a model for escape. Students even asked me, 'Was it as awful then as it is now?'

As a working-class girl at Garner High in the 1980s, I had hardly experienced such immediate acceptance and sensations of importance – of 'fitting in' – as I did upon my return to Garner. My ethical decision to become 'recognizable'

(Butler, 2004) was a significant act in the discourse of southern girlhood at Garner High. To be popular, there needed to be a seemingly seamless connection between my past self and my present self. I needed to look and act the part – not necessarily that of an adolescent girl, but that of a southern woman to whom the seniors could partially relate and identify. Each morning I carefully considered how I would present myself by shaping my physical appearance in a way that would meet the approval of the girls and their peers. I ate the 'right' lunches, knew just enough pop culture to converse intelligibly with the Garner seniors, and wore enviable shoes. During the day, I knew how to be polite and accommodating to adults in the building (and as a former public school teacher, I carried a bit of intelligibility in that regard). And with the seniors, I did not participate in critiques of the school, did not get caught up in love triangles, offered advice only when asked, and certainly did not condone some of the more deviant behaviors I learned about. My knowledge of southern girlhood made possible my practices of being an educated southern woman, and somewhat of an 'authority' figure, but most of all, one who knew how to exhibit proper pleasure in her work.

The freedom I felt – at once constrained and produced by discourse – to construct a particular version of myself offered me power-induced pleasurable moments of living parts of my past that I missed, or even missed out on. Fitting in, being popular, feeling important – all were the result of my careful self-control to abstain from speaking out against injustices I saw in the school, critiquing the administration for illegal decisions (e.g. Title IX violations[5]), or stepping in the way of some of the students' destructive behaviors that I learned about. I had ample opportunities to do each of these, yet my desire to moderate myself was made possible by the discursive power/knowledge relations embedded in the social networks at Garner High. I prioritized my efforts to exert power over other parts of my self that would have made data collection quite problematic. To the point, I did not want to disappoint my former teachers by not fitting into the community or even not fitting the image they had of me. Though I had long left my hometown high school, my renewed contact with those from my past sharpened the disjuncture between my self working-class girl who was schooled to be a competent secretary and my more recent self as a PhD. I was returning (parading?) home as a different (better?) woman, proving to others that I had 'made something of myself', as one teacher introduced me. It felt good to have surrounding adults proud of me, and those were proper pleasures to have within the discourse of small-town schooling and southern girlhood. Indeed, part of being a southern girl was conducting one's self within the knowledge of how to please others.

The freedom and power to refuse to 'break with culture' (Barthes, 1975: 14) and to choose to present myself as someone 'recognizable' (Butler, 2004) to my historical others was comfortable and comforting. As Judith Butler (2004: 2) writes, 'The Hegelian tradition links desire with recognition, claiming that desire is always a desire for recognition and that it is only through the experience of

recognition that any of us becomes constituted as socially viable beings.' Butler goes on to elaborate this idea, arguing that recognition is in actuality a site of *power* where who gets to be recognized, and by whom, is governed by social norms. Furthermore, Butler maintains, the choice to be recognized (or not) within the constraints of normativity is a condition of agency in the doing, and undoing, of gender.

This idea of 'recognition' and its connection to pleasure and power in qualitative fieldwork – or in my case, home-work – became significantly apparent to me. There were all sorts of ways that I could have been recognized in my ethnographic home-work, whether I knew it or not. The point is not to emphasize the extent to which anyone was aware of this but to accentuate what this recognizability *produced*. The social norms that constituted my practices produced a range of options for me that I described in the data stories above. I realized that I flickered between *being* 'recognizable' to myself and *becoming* 'recognizable' to others involved in my research. This, of course, meant living in paradox: to embrace the conditions of existence that I normally refused in order to make myself possible. As I have narrated here, such paradoxical pleasures can become rich sources of data that require ethical critique. Rajchman (1986: 166) wrote that such an ethical critique considers 'who we are said to be, and what, therefore, it is possible for us to become'. The implications of this ethical consideration of subjectivity, of reinventing experience to analyze how it constitutes possibilities for becoming and knowing, are elaborated by Foucault, who reminds me that my enacting 'stylized freedom' was more than simply doing my work well as a qualitative researcher. For example, my ethical choices to achieve recognizability – as disciplined as they were – enabled situated ways of knowing in my home-work. Eating lunch with the seniors in the high school cafeteria and parking my car in the student lot did not provide more true or real data for my ethnography, but my ethical practices certainly made possible the students' choices to reveal (or not) particular views of small-town schooling.

Conclusion: a recognizable ethics

To critique my pleasurable acts as those of ethics is not to look to my experiences in the field in order to rationalize them or to compare them against a moral good to justify my choices and decisions. Pleasure emerged within power and discourse as an ethical substance to render me recognizable, to comfort me, to push me beyond my current and historical borders. Though I came to re-live spaces (and even places) that I had historically refused, my iterations of identity were not ones based on my essential nature – or even on whom I used to be. This moves the source of my self from my history, my experiences, my *a priori* knowledge of myself to the constitution of my self through the material and discursive intersections of power, knowledge, pleasure, and freedom. This is the ethical work of subject construction in Foucault's oeuvre.

Certain pleasures became available to me through my home-work, pleasures that had never been free for my taking before. Performing pleasure – or enacting 'stylized freedom' – is Foucault's ethical practice: *one that asked me to transform myself in order to make myself viable within social norms*.

Though I described, in the data stories, my ethical obligations as fitting in to avoid shame and failure, Foucault would claim that these practices were, rather, incitements to enter into the 'game of truth' and form myself as a knowing, 'proper', and 'right' kind of person, within relations of power (Foucault, 1994b). Foucault (1985: 28) describes the very deliberate, practical work of ethical subject formation as this process:

> The individual delimits that part of himself that will form the object of his moral practice, define his position relative to the precept he will follow, and decides on a certain mode of being that will serve as his moral goal. And this requires him to act on himself, to monitor, test, improve, and transform himself.

Such delimiting, positioning, and transforming myself in relation to others was to make myself active, rather than passive, in moderating my pleasures – or keeping them in their proper place. These ethical practices involved a constant reinvention of myself – neither as the high school girl I was nor as the woman I had become – but someone else (much like Hastrup's 'third person'). I transgressed neither identity (as Foucault would have it) but crafted, even fictionalized, a discontinuous self that called into question the truth of my being.

Achieving what I am calling a 'recognizable ethics' in my research through the authoring of my subjectivity was a practice of determining the kind of person I could be, or the kinds of actions I could perform, in a certain time and place (Rajchman, 1986). The possibilities for recognition came not only from conflicting discourses but also from my choices to live out the ethical practices that were conditioned by those freedoms. Those ethical, pleasurable efforts of self-control, of mastery, of moderation, of seeming consistency emerged as 'decisive events in [my] ethical tradition'; deciding what to wear, what and where to eat, how to speak to others, what to do with my *self* (and their unforeseen consequences) were not only discursive but also practical, material issues that made me who I was, that constituted my experience of my self (Rajchman, 1986: 169).

As I have illustrated above, analyses of power-induced pleasures reveal the different ways in which the self is performed that might otherwise go unnoticed. While these ethics have particular meaning for research at home, they also have implications for constructing an ethical self in fieldwork. Performing pleasure, becoming recognized, practicing ethics – all point to Foucault's imperative that we turn our attention to how we make ourselves, critique those formations or truths of the self, and constantly engage in freeing ourselves *from* ourselves in order to transform who we can become in relation to the ethnographic field.

NOTES

1. During participant-observation at Garner High, I shadowed six senior girls to provide structure to my daily schedule, though I collected and produced data about/with/from almost all of the students in the senior class. I followed each girl for several weeks. My day began at 7:30 a.m. with each girl (sitting beside or behind her in her classes) and ended with her last school-related activity, sometimes at 10:00 p.m. I carried with me a blue suede notebook in which I wrote copious descriptive, analytic, and reflective notes (Glesne, 1999; Wolcott, 1995) on the details of their school day, focusing on the conditions that enabled a particular version of small-town schooling.
2. All people and place names in this manuscript are pseudonyms.
3. Regina was the Curriculum Coordinator for Garner City Schools. She approved my research proposal and arranged my fieldwork at the high school. Regina was also my Sunday school teacher at Garner First Baptist Church when I was in middle school.
4. Mrs Cleary, Marin's mother, is the ninth grade English teacher at Garner High. She was also my ninth grade English teacher in 1982, her first year of teaching.
5. Title IX is an educational amendment that was enacted in 1972 to ensure equitable treatment for girls in US public schools. The equal opportunities cover all educational activities, including athletics, science and math, and non-academic aspects such as access to health care and equal participation in school bands. In the present study, Title IX violations occurred in areas of athletics (limited opportunities for participation and equal access to sports facilities) and in the school principal's removal of a pregnant and parenting teen from an honor's English class to force her into taking Home Life Studies, the modern equivalent of Home Economics.

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