

Reflexivity & VOICE

Rosanna Hertz, Editor



SAGE Publications

International Educational and Professional Publisher
Thousand Oaks London New Delhi

1

Who Am I?

The Need for a Variety of Selves in the Field

Shulamit Reinharz

This chapter deals with the self of the researcher while conducting fieldwork. Presumably, this is an essential topic because, as the editors of an important research methods book series boldly proclaimed, “the self is the key fieldwork tool.”¹ Why, then, does so little of the methodological literature on fieldwork actually focus on the self? Why does the vast majority of fieldwork literature concern the research *role* in the field rather than the researcher’s *self*? The familiar topics—the ethics of covert research, the deficits of active participation, the mechanics of recording data, the preferred stance toward member beliefs, appropriate responses to illegal or immoral behavior, taking sides in the field—are all role related. But what about the self, “the key fieldwork tool”?

This chapter offers a framework to explain how the self actually does serve as “the key fieldwork tool.” I propose that we both *bring* the self to the field and *create* the self in the field. The self we create *in the field* is a product of the norms of the social setting and the ways in which the “research subjects” interact with the selves the researcher brings *to the field*.

In sum, “being a researcher” is only one aspect of the researcher’s self in the field. Although the researcher may consider “being a researcher” one’s most salient self, community members may not agree. Methodological literature currently overlooks the variety of attributes that researchers bring to the field;

similarly, it minimizes the wide range of selves created in the field. Because these "brought" and "created" selves are those that are relevant to the people being studied, they shape or obstruct the relationships that the researcher can form and hence the knowledge that can be obtained. Thus, these selves affect the researcher's ability to conduct research.

More dramatically, I would say that unless the researcher (and subsequent reader) knows what the researcher's attributes mean to the people being studied, the researcher (and reader) cannot understand the phenomenon being studied. In anthropologist Pat Caplan's words,

There are . . . a number of factors which determine the kinds of data we collect, and our interpretation of them. One of the most important of these is our positionality—who are we for them? Who are they for us? Such questions have to be considered . . . in terms of such factors as our gender, age and life experience, as well as our race and nationality.²

It is through understanding the relevance and creation of different characteristics of the researcher in the setting that the self becomes the key fieldwork tool. Like Pat Caplan,

I have become aware that being an ethnographer means studying the self as well as the other. In this way, the self becomes "othered", an object of study, while at the same time, the other, because of familiarity, and a different approach to fieldwork, becomes part of the self.³

Similarly, in *Living the Ethnographic Life*, Dan Rose emphasizes that anthropologists (and sociologists) should learn how they are perceived. He suggests we focus on the "unnamed space" where "our" study of "them" meets and clashes with "their" study of "us." If we adopt this framework, then fieldwork reports will combine a full discussion of what the researcher *became* in the field with *how the field revealed itself to the researcher*. Field research will then strike a balance between self and other in its reporting and will also report the process of change.

FIELD NOTES, THEORY, AND RETROSPECTIVE ACCOUNTS

My discussion of the variety of selves in the field draws on a study I undertook in 1979-1980 of elderly kibbutz members' quality of life. After leaving the field,

in the field. Because relevant to the people the researcher can these selves affect

her (and subsequent people being studied, person being studied.

data we collect, of these is our questions have er, age and life

nt characteristics work tool. Like

self as well study, while approach to

s that anthro- He suggests meets and en fieldwork e in the field ll then strike the process

ndertook the field,

I analyzed my field notes in various ways, including a chronological review of references to myself. This process transformed me into a data-based object of study. I found that I referred to myself in different ways throughout the year because different aspects of myself became salient over time and across contexts.

Besides the study of my field notes, my argument reflects feminist and poststructuralist theory, in particular its sensitivity to hidden voices and identities.⁴ This theory helped me see that to understand "the key fieldwork tool," I also had to understand who I was *not* in the field. Thus, my field notes do not mention that I was *not* an Arab, Sephardi Jew, or lesbian. Only later did I understand the salience of these nonidentities, any of which would have stood in the way of establishing trust and relationships with most kibbutz members. Only in retrospect do I recognize the privileged position of being a heterosexual Ashkenzi Jew.

My analysis also reflects my reading of other experiential accounts of fieldwork. After doing fieldwork in North Catalonia, for example, Oonagh O'Brien commented that "housing is of vital importance in fieldwork" as are "choices about which part of the village to stay in," both of which I did recognize during my fieldwork. But her question about "whether to stay with a family or not" was a significant question I had neglected.⁵

A VARIETY OF SELVES IN THE FIELD

Analysis of my field notes reveals approximately 20 different selves that I have categorized in three major groups:

- *Research-based selves*: being sponsored (removing myself from the sponsor), being a researcher, being a good listener, being a person who has given feedback, being a person who is leaving
- *Brought selves*: being a mother, having relatives, being a woman, being a wife, being an American, being a Jew, being an academic, being 33 years old, being a dance enthusiast, being a daughter
- *Situationally created selves*: being a resident ("temporary member," not true member), being a worker, being a friend, being a psychologist/social worker, being chronically exhausted, sick, and sometimes injured

Although these selves are clear in my field notes, the categories into which I have clustered them are arbitrary. For example, I list "being a worker" as a situationally created self because in the field I learned that understanding this community required sharing people's experience of working. The work assign-

ments I received were linked to my being a woman. My acceptance of physical assignments stems from my upbringing. Similarly, I am not typically conscious of "being an American," but this background feature of my identity was highlighted in the kibbutz in countless ways. In the field, the salience of my various selves varied among subsettings. Here, though, there is room to discuss only a few of these selves.

RESEARCH-BASED SELVES

Being Sponsored, Being a Researcher

Entry into the field begins with the desire and opportunity to study a particular setting. In my case, I wanted to do a field study in Israel, preferably in a kibbutz and dealing with gerontology because I suspected that kibbutzim had innovative approaches to aging. I hoped to study kibbutz elderly by living among them for an extended period of time and participating fully in their lives.⁶ I planned to combine empirical information (e.g., how many hours do they work?) with an examination of their definitions of the situation (e.g., how do they feel about growing old on a kibbutz?).⁷

A friend of mine showed a kibbutz member friend of his who was visiting in the United States a book I had recently published and told him of my interest in doing fieldwork. This kibbutz member then contacted me and invited me to carry out the study on his kibbutz contingent on its approval. We next began to negotiate the conditions for my stay, and thus, like many other researchers, I relied on a sponsor to gain access to the study site.⁸

Eventually, this man brought a proposal to the weekly town meeting of his kibbutz, which I will call Kibbutz Emek ("valley"). By bringing this request to the town meeting he obtained the status of "my sponsor" in the eyes of the community, and I was a person "sponsored" by him. The following are segments of official minutes from the meeting:

January 20, 1979: *Research team on old age in Emek: Proposal of [my sponsor].*⁹
 We are talking about 3 researchers with their families: a neurologist, a social worker and a sociologist. . . . The intent is that the researchers together with a parallel staff¹⁰ would study the elderly only of Emek and would focus on the problems of Emek. 'I am interested in the future of Emek.'

Conditions for selection of staff: a) Every one would know some Hebrew;¹¹
 b) They would live in the kibbutz for a certain period; c) They would study the people of Emek only.

The researchers want to test community life not in terms of questionnaires but, rather, using the method of community anthropology. At the end of the year, a final report will be delivered with practical suggestions for the kibbutz. The researchers will be permitted to use the research for their own purposes, without the disclosure of names. Members who are affected by this topic are requested to take part. We must provide one room¹² for a year or two and a second room¹³ for a half year. . . .

Discussion:

M. R.*:¹⁴ There is a lot of demand for rooms of this type. A building with 5 rooms [in one area of the kibbutz] is about to be torn down. We don't have sufficient space to house our soldiers who are released from the army.¹⁵ And in the [certain neighborhood in the kibbutz], there are no available rooms. If this proposal is accepted, it will compete with the establishment of a neighborhood¹⁶ for young people.¹⁷

M. M.*: There are problems—a) housing; b) the cost of caring for the child; and c) will this research be specific to Emek? I personally am not enthusiastic about this research.

T. S.: The topic was brought to the executive committee more than a year ago. The financial aspect is not really a factor. It is likely that this project will help solve problems of the elderly. There is a technical problem of housing, but we should resolve it for the larger good of the research.

I.*: Advises acceptance of the proposal and points out that the kibbutz founders are the first generation of older people on the kibbutz. There is alienation between these people and the younger generation. Every effort to solve this problem is desirable.

D.: Accepts the idea but asks who the anonymous people are who will do the research. It is clear that someone will be affected by the housing shortage. With regard to the research, expresses concern from the last experience that the researchers will end up not working in the kibbutz and that in actuality we will have to support the researchers and that will cost us money.

T. Y.*: It seems to me that old people are not a problem; the real problem is the next generation.

M.: I was elected to the committee that helps new members become integrated into kibbutz life and I was warned that we have no rooms; the research will cause additional difficulties.

Outcome of the vote: 26 in favor, 6 opposed. The research proposal was endorsed.

Only 32 of the 200+ members voted, reflecting either small attendance or few votes; 20% were opposed. These minutes show that although the project received formal approval there was little enthusiasm or interest, including among the elderly themselves. Thus, the first perception that kibbutz members had of me before I even arrived was as a person who would consume valuable housing to do a project of questionable value. My sponsor wrote to me in the United States simply that "the project was approved."

As I was to find out, the "town meeting" vote represented only the first figurative gate that had to be unlocked before I would be accepted as a researcher in this kibbutz. In every setting, there is a difference between formal acceptance and social integration. I was soon to learn that I would have to perform much additional "entry work," and my study would hinge on my performance. I would have to (a) free myself from my sponsor and get new allies to ward off opponents; (b) integrate my daughter into her children's house; (c) find suitable workplaces for myself; (d) gain permission to attend "town meetings"; (e) get invitations to committee meetings; (f) demonstrate adherence to kibbutz policies; (g) be visible to community members; (h) earn the trust and cooperation of each individual separately; and (i) develop friendships.¹⁸ Each gate had to be unlocked with its own "key"; each way of entering the community formed my selves. The reward of getting through each invisible "gate" was the sense of having proved myself to the kibbutz members and the ability to go on.

Seven months following approval of the project, my 2½-year-old daughter and I moved to Kibbutz Emek with the status of "temporary member" for 6 months, renewable for another 6 months if the kibbutz and I agreed. Shortly after arriving, I tried to learn more about the town meeting discussion:

18:4: I asked one of the "mazkirim" (elected kibbutz leaders) to tell me who had been in favor of and who had opposed the project.¹⁹ But he said that at the meeting "no one spoke against it," even though my sponsor . . . had introduced the proposal!

*THINK
SPROUSE*

I thus learned (as I had suspected) that being affiliated with my particular sponsor would affect how I was going to be perceived in the field. Unbeknownst to me, my sponsor had the reputation of being difficult. He was disliked by many people and soon by me as well. Instead of being my guide and protector, he became my liability. Thus, one of the selves I quickly had to create in the field was a person who could function independently of my sponsor. Obviously, I was not going to be able to divorce myself from him entirely; therefore, another self I had to develop was a person who could cope with this individual. Moreover, because he was my sponsor, his wife automatically became a kind of auxiliary sponsor. In conflicts between us, his wife had to take his side. Although I liked the wife, I realized that developing a separate relationship with her would be impossible.

In retrospect, I recognize that I actually benefited experientially from this exceedingly difficult relationship because most kibbutz members have at least one problematic tie: They live, work, eat, and do just about everything together. Even when relationships are severely strained, people have to be able to live

with each other. On a kibbutz, people remain in deeply interdependent relationships even with individuals they despise. If it becomes truly unbearable, they may renounce their membership and leave. They may even be asked to leave, as occurred in the case of two individuals whose families were asked to leave by a vote at the town meeting during the year I spent on the kibbutz. The fact that many kibbutz members have dissatisfying relationships made me attractive to many people as a potential new friend. I suspect that I had no difficulty obtaining interviews, in part because people valued the chance to talk to someone who had not heard their story. I also suspect that I was particularly privy to negative comments about the kibbutz and about other people, for there were no interpersonal consequences telling these things to a stranger.

Because of my tense relation with my sponsor, I understood and empathized with kibbutz members who had interpersonal problems with other members. During the course of the year, I learned about who was currently not speaking to whom and which people were locked in a state of "permanent" hostility. A few individuals had become complete isolates. I observed many people fighting with one another verbally and a small number who got along with nearly everybody. I assumed that I would be able to get along with everyone, but I, too, could not.

My husband, daughter, and I had a "festive dinner" with my sponsor's family in the collective dining hall every Friday night along with the entire kibbutz community. Although my sponsor seemed to undermine my work as much as support it, we maintained our "public festive face" of sitting together because originally we had requested this seating assignment from the person who makes the Friday evening dining room arrangement.²⁰ To ask for a change would mean, in a sense, stating publicly that we dislike the very family that had invited me to the kibbutz. I could not bring myself to make such a "declaration" and so spent each week's ostensibly festive meal in extreme tension.

Being a Temporary Member

The kibbutz is run internally as a cashless economy—for example, members receive meals without paying for them and work without receiving a salary. As a "temporary member," my contract gave me a one-room apartment (with electricity and water) located in the section of member housing (as opposed to volunteer housing), all meals, laundry service, child care, health care (visits to a kibbutz doctor and all medications), health insurance, pocket money at the rate received by a member of my age and family status, telephone tokens,²¹ an English-language newspaper subscription, haircuts,²² and some research expenses such as audiocassettes, photocopying, and bus fare for travel within

not being
in a room
but with
my
page 11/17

VOICE
the first
researcher
acceptance
in much
I would
ward off
suitable
(e) get
itz poli-
paration
had to be
med my
ense of
laughter
for 6
dy after
had
ing
the
ponsor
to me,
people
me my
person
going
had to
because
ponsor.
e wife,
ossible.
in this
at least
gether.
to live

Israel. The kibbutz provided me with rugged work shoes, sturdy work clothes, and a clothing and shoe allowance for my daughter.

My contract entitled me to use a kibbutz car for occasional research-related transportation. I also received lodging, meals, and laundry service for my husband when he visited me.²³ I was permitted to bring guests to the dining room and have overnight guests stay in my room. Using these necessary services compelled me to construct situationally created selves and both allowed and forced me to have many role relationships with a broad range of kibbutz members and institutions.

In exchange for this support and to enhance my research, I agreed to work in various kibbutz work branches, guided by the needs of the "women's work organizer" at the rate of 8 hours per day (6:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m.), 6 days per week (not Saturdays) required of kibbutz members my age. I also carried out all the service rotations considered appropriate for women members of my age,²⁴ including guarding the children's houses at night and taking care of groups of young children every fourth Saturday afternoon.

There are several categories of people who reside or spend time on a kibbutz—adult members over age 20 or so, children of members, nonmember parents of members, guests of members, long-term nonmember residents, hired workers (Arabs and Jews), volunteers, and special volunteers who take Hebrew language classes half-days. Volunteers usually are non-Jewish foreigners; special volunteers usually are foreign Jews, especially American Jews. My particular work obligations, Jewish religion, one-year residential status, ability to speak Hebrew, and status as a mother made me more similar (not identical) to the category of female kibbutz members my age than to any other category. I was unlike a guest who has no work obligation and unlike a volunteer who usually works in one branch only (typically requiring no Hebrew language skills—e.g., fruit picking), does no guard duty rotations, and usually stays less than a year. Although volunteers work hard, they are peripheral to the social life of the kibbutz (although because they are young and single they frequently become involved with young, single children of kibbutz members, and many marriages ensue). Being a temporary member with all these duties and assets brought me close to kibbutz members and thereby enhanced my ability to understand their experience.

Being a Worker

My work-formed self-in-the-field (just like my status as "temporary member") created role relationships with kibbutz members and institutions. It also

made me acceptable in some members' eyes, as evidenced in this example from a transcribed interview with an elderly female kibbutz member:

I always say, "The world belongs to the young; it's their kibbutz." I have to respect that this is how they want things. Except for one thing—work. I always tell young people, "Whatever you want to do, fine, but you have to earn your keep." I ask them if they work enough to make a living. They produce children, and in the afternoon they're already off the job. They only work a few hours. They're great socialists, but in the meantime, the Arabs are working, the volunteers are working, and the kids who go to the *ulpan* (study Hebrew) are working. What about the young kibbutz members? That's the one thing I can't tolerate. I could never forgive them for that.

After hearing what she had to say, I was relieved that I had chosen to work. In many ways, my working was the key to securing interviews. Only by working could I be sure that I would not be placed in the stigmatized category of "parasite." Not only did I have to be a worker, but I had to be seen working. Thus my first job, which consisted of serving food in the dining room, was ideal: Everyone in the kibbutz would have to interact with me to get their food. This job also reinforced my status as a woman—women were always being assigned to the kitchen. Thus the work I did helped form my identity in the field as did all the other ways I interacted on the kibbutz.

Being an Academic

About 2 months into my stay, there was a change in leadership on the kibbutz. The two elected kibbutz heads with whom I had negotiated the conditions of my research ended their term of office, and a new head assumed office. Kibbutz members told me that this man "had no patience for the academics who contribute 'nothing' to the kibbutz." The "academics" to whom he was referring were the four kibbutz members who were professors in Israeli universities. Hearing about his antipathy to "academics" made me wary about the kind of relationship we would have. After we met, however, I learned that he himself had an academic degree from the United States. It appeared that he would not dismiss me out of hand as long as I also worked at regular kibbutz jobs. To my surprise, he actually seemed to enjoy talking with me privately in my role as an academic. What he wanted to avoid, I soon realized, was any public acknowledgment of this shared interest that might highlight *his own outsider status*. Because he was not born in a kibbutz, the kibbutz-born members might not perceive him as a "real" kibbutznik. As a person with an academic degree who

Who Am I? - as a research note on kibbutz

Women can be a part of kibbutz - access to help

was not working in academia and had just become a *mazkir*, he expressed kibbutz members' historic ambivalence toward academic jobs.²⁵

186:2: I met with the new "mazkir" in his office from 9:00 to 10:00 a.m. . . . I asked him if a new social worker would start working at Emek (because I knew the current social worker had left). He told me that Emek has applied for a social worker from the main kibbutz movement, but there is a long waiting list(!). He doesn't think social work is such a great thing anyhow, except maybe for individual therapy which is simply "listening" and kind of "silly." The only social worker he is interested in accepting is a kibbutz member since otherwise it takes a year for them to figure out what a kibbutz is. . . . He agreed to meet on Thursday morning for a more "personal discussion." He set aside from 9 a.m. to noon, although I had asked for only an hour or two.

As it turned out, he was skeptical about me for another reason—he thought I would arrogantly assume that I understood the kibbutz. Since my accepting the role of "not knowledgeable about the kibbutz" was clearly important to him, I was careful to let him explain things to me and to express few opinions of my own. At the same time, how could I sustain this "ignorant self" without becoming "silly"?

Later in our private discussion, he expressed considerable disdain for the United States because of the "crazy ideas Americans try to bring to Israel." He probably would have appreciated me more if I had been an Israeli social scientist, preferably an Israeli who was a member of one of the 200 kibbutzim. With him I had to downplay both being an American and understanding the kibbutz.

Fortunately, as a kind of bureaucrat, the *mazkir* accepted my presence as long as I was generally self-sufficient. As a new *mazkir*, he had a great deal to do and did not need superfluous burdens. We could be intellectually close about topics other than the kibbutz as long as I remained distant and did not make him look like an academic who likes Americans.

Being a Person Who Was Staying for a Year or Only a Year

The first thing that seemed salient to *non-office-holding* kibbutz members was that although I was going to be with them on a temporary basis, it would last a full year.²⁶ Thus, one of the initial categories I was put into by kibbutz members was a "temporary" person or nonapplicant for permanent membership. In this community, the temporary/permanence dimension was highly significant.

m. . . . I
 e. Tknew
 e a social
 (d). He
 ybe for
 y social
 it takes
 Thursday
 o noon,

thought I
 epting the
 to him, I
 ns of my
 ecoming

rn for the
 rael." He
 scientist,
 With him
 butz.
 e as long
 to do and
 ut topics
 im look

members
 ould last
 members
 . In this
 mit.

18:3: Nicole (a long-term nonmember resident) said about herself: I'm unimportant on the kibbutz. Everyone says I've got good ideas, but they aren't implemented. It's because I'm not a member.

Sociologically, the question arises as to how much a community will invest in a temporary person.

154: Me: Do you prefer to socialize with the people who live here, in contrast with the volunteers?

Tamar: It's not really a preference, it's knowing that the volunteers will be leaving soon. So, I should invite them? Every 3 months to start all over again the same story?

Me: So slowly, you turn away from doing that.

Tamar: The volunteers are not really connected, they are, "as if," "next to" the society. Volunteers are distributed among the members to be hosted, and I didn't know what to do with the last one since he spoke no Hebrew and I speak almost no English. People know Mindy (another volunteer) from work; she speaks Hebrew and has a kibbutz boyfriend, so I have gotten to know her. Also Laurie who is going to marry a kibbutz son.

A "temporary person" is someone who, by definition, usually has limited social value because a community's investment in him or her cannot pay off in terms of future interaction. A "temporary" person is someone the community knows in advance it will lose. Yet the temporary person has value as a stranger—a person who is exotic, can hear secrets, and provides a new perspective. This issue is very salient in the kibbutz because there are so many temporary people; so many people pass through. I would suggest that the two major social categories are in fact "members" and "temporary people" (ranging from one day to several years), and I was immediately part of the second category. For some people, my being "temporary" was the only salient thing about me. Because I would not stay and become a member, I automatically had diminished value. There was no compelling reason for anyone to get to know me.

The "temporary" category contained gradations. Some temporary people lived on the kibbutz for a few years and thus had *higher* social value than I. Some stayed only for a summer or 6 months and had *less* social value.²⁷ Some temporaries had permanent relations with kibbutz members (e.g., parent of a member). I found myself constantly being asked how long I would stay and reiterating endlessly that I would be staying for a year. This question expressed more than the kibbutz members' desire for information—it was, I believe, a way of placing me in the hierarchy of community value. I found myself emphasizing my difference from volunteers.

For me, one calendar year revealed the cycle of seasons that constitutes the agricultural, school, holiday, and fiscal year in a kibbutz. I could get sick and get better; I could anticipate future events and reminisce a bit with people about past events that we had experienced together. I could observe the way crises would come to a head, be brought to the town meeting for resolution, be debated all week long in every corner of the kibbutz, and then brought back for endless discussion and voting.

Living on the kibbutz day and night for a year meant that I was always "bumping into" people. Those individuals whom I sensed would be hard to approach for formal interviews I could interview informally in what I called "sidewalk interviewing." The views expressed on the sidewalks, which I immediately entered in my field notes in the privacy of my room, were spontaneous and thus perhaps even more authentic than the interviews that were scheduled, prepared, and tape-recorded.

105A @ diff ways people see you
& how to approach them

305:3: On the way to the dining room, I bumped into S. We asked each other, *Ma nishma?* (How are things?), which was an invitation to talk. . . . It turns out that S is completely bitter. . . . She would like to leave.

Staying a year enabled me to reschedule canceled interviews, if needed. It allowed me to witness the kibbutz's collective joy when children were born (although it varied), how secrets about who is pregnant were kept or not, and how weddings were prepared and funerals conducted. A full year's stay enabled me to experience the cycle of moods as the kibbutz went through all the weather changes of the year and defined how people's behavior correlated with the weather.

X:X: My sponsor said, "It's so hot, people don't visit each other."

38:6: She said, "People are a little edgy in August anyhow since it's so hot. Things will get better soon."

48:2: He said, "Things are a little difficult right now in the kibbutz, with the weather being so hot, so many people on vacation. There really are pressures."

Understanding these connections and the annual cycle generated ideas about years to come and years that have passed. As time went on, I anticipated situations and no longer had to ask so many questions, giving me confidence that I understood aspects of kibbutz life. I knew different people's tastes in food (97:3) and how they responded to each other. I soon could predict what would happen next at most events.

seasons that constitutes the
 kibbutz. I could get sick and
 discuss a bit with people about
 could observe the way crises
 for resolution, be debated
 brought back for endless

meant that I was always
 sensed would be hard to
 normally in what I called
 walks, which I imme-
 room, were spontaneous
 that were scheduled,

*see you
 a then*
 We asked each other,
 talk. . . . It turns out

interviews, if needed. It
 children were born
 are kept or not, and
 year's stay enabled
 though all the weather
 correlated with the

shot. Things

kibbutz, with the
 pressures."

ideas about
 I anticipated
 confidence
 tastes in food
 what would

92:2: Breakfast.²⁸ I joined H. Everything was very quiet. . . . I knew it wouldn't take long for things to heat up. There is a certain rhythm to most of our breakfasts. Today's blow-up came over the *mazkir* who came by the table where the flower-arranging staff was eating and announced that he was going to present some flowers in the name of the *mazkirut* to R and to some of the actors in the kibbutz play. E was furious and said, "Why shouldn't the electricians get flowers too?" Everyone stopped eating to listen and then discussed the blow-up when they resumed their meal.

My problem here was that to be seen as really being part of the kibbutz and understanding kibbutz life I had to have an opinion. An opinion almost always meant taking one side or another. If I waffled, I would be seen as being "just an academic," or a "coward," or lacking "principles." There was no escape because kibbutz members were always looking for ways to judge each other's character or to use one's behavior as further proof of one's reputation.

In the eyes of some members of the kibbutz, the constant change that occurred made it seem ludicrous that a year was sufficient to understand kibbutz life. To these people, my plan to stay a year illustrated that my study was superficial.

85:4: I told her that my goal was to examine the situation of the elderly members and give the kibbutz some suggestions. She said I wouldn't be able to do that because the situation changes all the time. What is not happening today might occur tomorrow. The elderly are an "unstable population," in her view.

Although field researchers might say that one year is adequate for the kind of study I was doing,²⁹ some people in the kibbutz disagreed. People I considered to be insecure (e.g., recent kibbutz members) used their greater length of stay on the kibbutz relative to mine as a way of pulling rank on me and undermining my right to claim I understood the kibbutz.

101:1: Chana said that my (erroneous) beliefs probably reflect the fact that I have been here such a short time. She's been here 4½ years, so she knows!

Does that mean that being an outsider will leave me forever ignorant in the insiders' eyes? What about the objectivity they wanted? Or is it just Chana's way of pulling rank on me?

There were those who stressed the brevity rather than the length of the year I was devoting to this study. Even people who were very involved with me and helpful occasionally said that more time was necessary:

198:3: Z grabbed me by the arm and asked how things were going. I told him "Well," and he wished me good luck. But he said it would take at least 2 or 3 years for me to learn about the kibbutz. [A *mazkir* told me it takes people a year. What does it take?]

Others stressed that the kibbutz was essentially unknowable regardless of the time spent:

6:5: C said to me, "People who write about kibbutz are people who don't know about it."

It was unknowable even by esteemed researchers who have lived on a kibbutz most of their lives:

57:1: Y thinks that one of the major sociologists of kibbutz life doesn't understand the kibbutz.

If the kibbutz was unknowable, or required enormous time before one could say that one understood it, then, surely, it was completely inappropriate for me to make recommendations to the kibbutz on the basis of a year or any amount of time. I believe that the constant reminders by people of the near impossibility of understanding the kibbutz functioned to motivate me to study it as well as I could and to be cautious about what I claimed to know. These reminders were the way that some kibbutz members expressed the "otherness" and special quality of kibbutz life. After all, the kibbutz was founded, in part, to provide an alternative to nonsocialist living. Could I, as an inhabitant of the capitalist world, understand what it is like to live in a socialist society? Would I be arrogant and assume I could take the ideas from "my world" and use them to improve "their world"? Clearly, some members considered it presumptuous when outsiders claimed to know what was going on and how to do things better. I also began to discern condescension in social science's assumption that we can understand worlds that people spend their whole lives trying to understand. This reciprocal problem became a crisis for me at the end of the study.

Some kibbutz members pointed out the significance of my temporary status, not in terms of adequate or inadequate knowledge but in terms of how I was *better off* than permanent kibbutz members because my stay was shorter:

282:2: M explained to me that I'm happy here since I'm temporary.

Although this comment was made to me ironically, he may have been right in suggesting that being temporary allowed me to experience more pleasures than pains of membership. Experiencing the kibbutz as a visitor is utterly different from experiencing it as a member. I could walk away from conflicts. I did not participate in the essence of kibbutz life, a lifetime of mutual social obligations.

My announced intention to stay a year might have provided a convenient cover for delay in consenting to an interview:

16:3: When I said I'd like to invite her to talk sometime, she seemed pleased but said, "We have lots of time."

60:6: S cancelled for today, too busy.

And I did the same:

45:4: S asked me if I had read his book and I said, "No, I was too busy." He said, "There's no rush."

Thus, my temporary status was salient to kibbutz members and to me and was loaded with meaning about whether or not the community was knowable, what my rank was in the kibbutz, and what my/their knowledge of the kibbutz actually meant.

There were others, however, who felt that whether or not I could be said to "know" the kibbutz depended on people's willingness to speak with me and whether or not I worked on the kibbutz. It was not the length of stay but whether or not I was "integrated." There was a difference in members' eyes between being a member and being fully accepted:

305:3: T claims it took her 15 years to be integrated here. Earlier, she tried to move with her husband into the kibbutz in which he was born, realized she could never be integrated there, and "fled" within a week.

Clearly, people were telling me that despite the kibbutz having formally approved of my project I would have to pass additional tests of acceptance based on the way I did my work and who I was as a human being. In a sense, I was treated like all new "members"—although they had "voted me in," I had to prove myself. The running joke in the kibbutz was that if people had to be voted on once again (after having been members for years), most would *not* be accepted.

Kibbutz life consists of nearly imperceptible change, on the one hand, and dramatic events, on the other. Opinions grind against each other until a person's

reputation becomes rigid or a policy becomes firm. Stories unfold; problems emerge; relationships change; decisions are made; people come; people go. Had I stopped at one point in the process, I might mistakenly have prejudged the outcome. Thus, a major factor in the study was my presence for a year, which allowed me to experience change. Of course, it was only one year, and only that particular year, so I wonder what I would have learned if I had stayed longer.

FINAL COMMENTS

The researcher does not know in advance what attributes will be meaningful in the field.³⁰ From the examination of my field notes, it appears that the attributes are those listed earlier in this chapter: the research-based selves, the brought selves, and the situationally created selves. These general categories can be applied to any field setting. The specifics within these categories, however, are related to the culture of the particular setting. The meanings related to these various selves are the basis of how the researcher is perceived. How the researcher is perceived, in turn, will affect how she or he understands him- or herself. And finally, this understanding will affect the way the study proceeds. Documentation of these processes is essential in fieldwork and does not constitute an unwarranted, narcissistic display. Quite the contrary: Understanding the self in fieldwork releases us from the epistemological tension between unreflexive positivism, on the one hand, and navel gazing, on the other. It will help us document how and why the self is the key fieldwork tool.

NOTES

1. John Van Maanen, Peter Manning, and Marc Miller (1989), p. 5.
2. Pat Caplan (1993), p. 178.
3. Caplan (1993), p. 180.
4. Shulamit Reinharz (1992).
5. Oonagh O'Brien (1993), p. 235.
6. See Andrei Simic (1978), p. 9.
7. See Shulamit Reinharz and Graham Rowles (1987) and Shulamit Reinharz ([1979] 1984).
8. Adler and Adler (1987), p. 38.
9. His name was entered into the record. For the sake of his privacy, I refer to him as my sponsor.
10. The social worker and neurologist never materialized, nor did a parallel internal team.
11. Thus, my knowledge of Hebrew was defined in advance as salient and adequate. Perhaps this explains why people didn't want to see me as needing help in Hebrew and no one found time

to work with me systematically, although several discussed it with me a bit. People who wanted to learn Hebrew went to the *ulpan*.

12. In which a researcher could live. Members of a kibbutz live on a kibbutz. The members of this kibbutz were saying that they would have to provide the researchers with a place to live.

13. For a second researcher or family.

14. Every time a person is mentioned who is over age 65, I put an asterisk next to their name.

15. Kibbutz members must find housing on the kibbutz for soldiers after their release from the army. The kibbutz did not have a sufficient supply of rooms for all the soldiers who were expected to be released in the near future.

16. Areas within this kibbutz consisted of apartments in which certain groups lived (e.g., young couples, newly released unmarried soldiers, middle-aged couples, older people, volunteers, etc.).

17. When I left, I joked with one kibbutz member who was sad that I was leaving, "Don't be sad, now you'll have a room."

18. In other communities, the phases would take different forms, grounded in the structure of the particular community.

19. A "mazkir" is the kibbutz member elected to coordinate all kibbutz activities. *Mazkirim* is the plural form. This particular kibbutz was developing a pattern of electing two individuals—a man and a woman—to serve in this post.

20. Friday night dinner is the weekly festive meal. Most kibbutz members and their families eat as families in the large dining room at assigned seats that they select at one point and retain for a long time.

21. At the time of my study, most kibbutz members (except for high-ranking army officers) did not have telephones in their homes. Most calls were made from a public telephone, which required the use of tokens, or from a telephone that required the assistance of a kibbutz member who served as switchboard operator.

22. Having my hair cut on the kibbutz became a valuable source of observations and interviews with the hairdresser. My hair was cut on day 79, 150, 228, and 292 of my year in the field. Having my hair cut by the kibbutz hairdresser was a political statement that she was good enough for me!

23. During the week, my husband lived in Jerusalem; on weekends he came to visit me and our daughter on the kibbutz. Although he was not obligated to perform work on the kibbutz, he participated in the men's dishwashing rotation and in the grapefruit harvest.

24. Older women had different rotations, such as ironing clothes for soldiers who were home on leave.

25. Historic ambivalence refers to the fact that some socialist Zionists believed that to free themselves from anti-Semitism, Jews would have to change their preference for academic work and enter new lines of work to develop a proletariat. When Jewish youngsters in Europe reached late adolescence, they had to decide whether to go to the university to study (in which case they would be "lost") or learn to be a farmer who would immigrate to Palestine/Israel and be part of a kibbutz.

26. The kibbutz actually made a commitment to me that I could stay for half a year, renewable for another half. I assumed, in advance, that things would work out well and that I would stay for a year. That is how I always announced it to people when asked. I realize that many projects have undefined termination points, such as reported in Tamar El-Or (1997 [this volume]). She visited a particular woman "over a two-year period . . . 2-3 times per week" and ended her fieldwork after she realized she could continue only if she accepted some of their practices. Staying with them a long time implied incorrectly that she was accepting their beliefs.

27. Of course, the temporary/permanent distinction was not quite as certain as this statement makes it appear. Some "temporaries" married a kibbutz member and ended up staying perma-

did, problems
people go. Had
prejudged the
year, which
and only that
stayed longer.

meaningful in
the attributes
the brought
categories can be
however, are
related to these
ved. How the
stands him- or
ndy proceeds.
does not consti-
understanding the
between unre-
It will help

z([1979] 1984).

fer to him as my

internal team.

adequate. Perhaps

no one found time

nently. Other "permanents" suddenly got up and left—illustrating that they only seemed to permanent.

28. In principle, all meals are eaten communally on a kibbutz. In this kibbutz, however, as most kibbutzim, breakfast and lunch were eaten communally with co-workers from one's work setting, whereas families ate dinner on their own in their private apartments. Lunch is the hot meal of the day.

29. "What is the natural ending for a field work? My teachers used to say that one has to work for at least a year, to experience a full round of seasons, holidays, cycles of agriculture, and so forth. Some talk about an inner feeling signalling the right time to withdraw. Others have financial restrictions, like a limit on grant funds. Some say that, in a sense, most ethnographers never really leave their field" (El-Or 1997 [this volume]:169).

30. A previous researcher on this same kibbutz was completely discredited because he left the field during wartime. I was told the story about this researcher on my first day in the field and repeatedly thereafter. I knew how I would have to act should war break out if I wanted to retain the opportunity of studying this community.

REFERENCES

- Adler, Patricia A. and Peter Adler. 1987. *Membership Roles in Field Research*. Qualitative Research Methods Series No. 6. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Caplan, Pat. 1993. "Learning Gender: Fieldwork in a Tanzanian Coastal Village, 1965-85." Pp. 168-181 in *Gendered Fields: Women, Men and Ethnography*, edited by Diane Bell, Pat Caplan, and Wazir Jahan Karim. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- El-Or, Tamar. 1997. "Do You Really Know How They Make Love? The Limits on Intimacy with Ethnographic Informants." Reprint. Pp. 169-190 in *Reflexivity and Voice*, edited by Rosann Hertz. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- O'Brien, Oonagh. 1993. "Sisters, Parents, Neighbours, Friends: Reflections on Fieldwork in Northern Catalonia (France)." Pp. 234-247 in *Gendered Fields: Women, Men and Ethnography* edited by Diane Bell, Pat Caplan, and Wazir Jahan Karim. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Reinharz, Shulamit. [1979] 1984. *On Becoming a Social Scientist: From Survey Research to Participant Observation to Experiential Analysis*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Books.
- . 1992. *Feminist Methods in Social Research*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Reinharz, Shulamit and Graham Rowles, eds. 1987. *Qualitative Gerontology*. New York: Springer.
- Simic, Andrei. 1978. "Aging and the Aged in Cultural Perspective." Pp. 9-22 in *Life's Career: Aging*, edited by Barbara G. Myerhoff and Andrei Simic. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Van Mannen, John, Peter Manning, and Marc Miller. 1989. "Editors' Introduction." Pp. 5-6 in Jennifer C. Hunt, *Psychoanalytic Aspects of Fieldwork*. Qualitative Research Methods Series No. 18. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.