

# Chapter 1

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## READING ETHNOGRAPHY

**I**t is now time to look closely at published ethnographies. I have selected two ethnographies for you to read. Both use high school students as the central figures, are written by women students, use writing styles that are direct and personal, and are written in the first person.

In the early days of ethnography, researchers typically studied cultures that were dramatically different from their own. In those cases, researchers were always in a dominant position with relation to those they studied, and power rested with the researchers. Those researchers traveled to the far reaches of the world. Today's ethnographers tend to stay closer to home—but some travel around the world via the Internet. Although the relationship between the researcher and those studied is not always as one-sided as it once was, we still see power differences. Some researchers have tried to reduce the power discrepancy by identifying those studied as co-researchers. In my view, however, this still does not solve the problem.

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### KEY ELEMENTS OF ETHNOGRAPHY

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- Ethnography consists of an in-depth look at a culture or subculture;
- often limits the study to a specific aspect of culture;
- relies on the field of anthropology for its theoretical base;
- addresses issues of gaining access, role of observer, power issues; and
- often uses words of participants in written presentations.
- Much of the research in ethnography comes out of the field of education.

The first article is by Misako Nukaga. It is a study of Korean-American students in Los Angeles. Specifically, it targets how children use food as a symbolic resource to negotiate group boundaries in peer interaction. Nukaga doesn't travel to another country to study a culture different from her own. Instead, she selects Korean-American students who attend school in a large urban area. Because she is of Japanese descent, Nukaga says it is easy for her to study other Asian students. Nukaga's study of

Korean-American children during their school lunchtime presents a slice of culture that will be unfamiliar to many of you. Because she is an adult and working in the school, power discrepancies occur. Nukaga does try to minimize them by sitting with the kids and “becoming one of them.” Nukaga was a student when this article was published, and received a fellowship to support her dissertation.

The study follows a traditional approach to ethnography. It includes a detailed review of the literature that focuses on issues related to food and ethnicity. As a fairly traditional ethnography, she writes in a somewhat remote and objective style, and not in the personal style that you will encounter in the second study in this chapter. Unlike a contemporary ethnography, which might explore issues of feminism, power, and reflexivity, this study is more traditional in its look and in its format. In addition, it includes detailed quotes.

In contrast to Nukaga’s study, Alecia Jackson’s study presents an ethnography that is less traditional. She calls it “post-structural.” On first glance, it appears that Jackson’s ethnography is a study of high school girls in a small town. As you read in greater depth, however, you will discover the article is really about Jackson’s role and how she negotiates and comes to understand being an ethnographer in a personal setting. In fact, it goes far afield from what you might expect. It fits quite well into a post-structural model because she relies on the philosophical contributions of Michel Foucault, a French philosopher who wrote about power and knowledge.

In her study, which she conducted in the same high school she had attended years before, Jackson turns the idea of looking at diverse cultures on its head. She does not want to place herself in a position of power, and in fact struggles at times with trying to move away from the power role. Jackson does a good job of explaining some of the philosophical underpinnings of Foucault’s philosophy.

There were several reasons I selected this article for you to read: first, because it is written in a very engaging manner; second, because it is about students. A third reason I chose this work is because Jackson wrote it while she was still a doctoral student. You should be able to identify with her more readily than if she had been a professor for many years.

Conducting ethnographies in school settings is challenging. You will see my comments interspersed in both studies related to some of the issues. You should anticipate that issues might include gaining access, keeping confidences, negotiating boundaries, getting appropriate permissions with minors, and allowing sufficient time for observations.

You will find that both writers use some basic techniques as they study aspects of the culture of a particular group. They directly observe the students over some time. And they reveal information about themselves.

## ADVANCE PREPARATIONS

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Begin by reading the title and the abstract, then flipping through the article and reading the major headings and subheadings. Once you have an idea of the article’s structure, go back and read through the article carefully. When you finish reading, you will need to decide the extent to which the article is successful. To do so, ask yourself four questions:

- Does it provide new information and insights related to the topic?
  - Is it engaging and written in a clear manner?
  - Does it illustrate elements you would expect to find in an ethnography?
  - Do the positive aspects of the article outweigh the potential drawbacks?
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## Article 1.1. The Underlife of Kids' School Lunchtime: Negotiating Ethnic Boundaries and Identity in Food Exchange (2008)

Misako Nukaga

### My Expectations

I am now ready to look at the article in depth. I anticipate it will follow a fairly traditional approach to conducting ethnography. I expect to see a fairly detailed review of the literature that would focus on the issues related to food exchange and ethnicity. The author of a traditional ethnography would probably write in a somewhat remote and objective style, as opposed to a personal style. Unlike a contemporary ethnography that would get into issues of feminism, power, and reflexivity, I anticipate that this study will avoid those topics. I expect to see detailed quotes from the field, also.

The title is appealing to me, but I wonder what the author means by “underlife.” She seems to be studying a topic I know something about. I know that various cultural groups connect their identity with food, and that many important exchanges occur when people come together in a common activity. Although my experience with Koreans is limited, I live in a diverse area of the country, and I believe my experiences with other ethnic groups might help me understand this study.

From the abstract, I discover the direction the study will take. I focus on key descriptions in the abstract: food serves as a symbolic resource; group boundaries will be negotiated somehow through food; there are two kinds of food (dry and wet); and food is exchanged in one of three different ways (as a gift, as a shared resource, or as a traded commodity). Nukaga's last sentence in the abstract is not clear to me. I will have to read further to understand what is meant by “layered and situated ethnic identity.”

Given the issues in various societies regarding race, I find this topic particularly relevant.

As I move through the headings, I note that there is no heading for several pages. I know that it is common for writers to omit a heading such as *Introduction*, so I know that this first part will be some kind of introduction to the problem and the issues that surround it. I encounter the

### ABSTRACT

While the literature on ethnic identity takes traditional “adult-centered” socialization theory for granted, this study breaks away from such a perspective, and instead uses ethnographic data on children's food exchange during lunchtime in two predominantly Korean (-American) elementary schools to explore how children use food as a symbolic resource to negotiate group boundaries in peer interaction. Following a discussion of lunchtime seating patterns, this article presents children practicing exchange of “dry food (mass-consumed)” and “wet food (homemade)” that takes three different forms—gift-giving, sharing, and trading—each of which have different relevance for marking, maintaining, and muting ethnic boundaries and other social differences. Taking a child-centered perspective, the study finds that children's ethnic identity development is by no means a universal linear process. Instead, preadolescent children, although constrained by external forces, learn to do layered and situated ethnic identity through using cultural resources in peer interaction.

In her insightful fieldwork at a racially and ethnically mixed high school in urban California, Olsen (1997) reveals a striking racial divide and conflict among American adolescents and a pressure against immigrant adolescents to conform to this racialization process at school. A white girl in her study talked about the changing relationship with her best friend in elementary school, who was African American. As the racial divide became increasingly intensified through middle school to high school, she lost contact with her African American friend who continued to go to the same school with

heading *Children's Racial and Ethnic Identity*. I expect to find some kind of literature review in this section, although I am not sure how broad it will be. I see that the review is quite long. *Children's Participation in Gift Economy* seems to include another body of literature about gifting. I remember the abstract suggested that children exchange food in one of three ways: as a gift, as a shared resource, and as a traded commodity. I do not know whether the author read the literature before she embarked on her study. I know that different researchers choose different strategies to look at the related research. If you have skimmed the headings, you will notice that *Setting and Method* follows these two reviews of the literature. I anticipate learning in that section where the study was done, how schools were selected, how the researcher gained entry, how she negotiated joining kids during lunch, how long she spent in the field, and other issues related to doing ethnography. I see that this section on method is also quite long, so I anticipate learning much of the detail regarding the "how" of her study.

I am surprised the author tells us so quickly about the gist of her study. Do you find it helpful for her to have done so?

Marking, maintaining, and muting boundaries—I wish she had said more about these topics.

her. While cross-racial ethnic friendship may be much more salient during preadolescence, previous studies at elementary schools show that preadolescent children also tend to segregate according to their race and ethnicity under some circumstances (Ausdale and Feagin 2001; Lewis 2005; Thorne forthcoming). Fine and Sandstrom (1988) argue that "preadolescents, perhaps more than any other age group, are concerned about the nature of proper relationship with others" (p. 55). Since learning to affiliate with a "proper" racial and ethnic group is one of the crucial tasks for preadolescents, racial and ethnic divides at school start to crystallize at a very young age. To promote cooperative relationships among children from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, we first need to understand how preadolescent children construct racial and ethnic boundaries and come to develop ethnic identity at an elementary school setting.

The constructionist view of race and ethnicity, which has gained popularity in the last several decades, suggests that racial and ethnic identities are created, elaborated, and reconstructed in the interaction between internal identification and external categorization (Barth 1969; Cornell and Hartmann 1998; Nagel 1994). This view rejects a conceptualization of ethnic and racial identity as static entities, and instead assumes that they vary across space and change across time (Cornell and Hartman 1998, 101). While an increasing number of case studies focus on ethnic identity formation of adults and adolescents, there are few studies that have paid full attention to how small children construct ethnic boundaries and identity. The traditional socialization framework is still prevalent in this genre of study, which consequentially neglects children as learners of the norms and values of the established adult society. Children's experience is not understood on its own terms, but interpreted as molding children into members of a presumed ethnic group in society. Such an "adult-centered framework" (Thorne 1987) relegates children to passive recipients of adult culture, and dismisses processes of how children, with limited autonomy, actively negotiate their ethnic differences and identities.

Conducting participant observations of children's peer interaction during lunchtime in two predominantly Korean (-American) elementary schools in Los Angeles, this study reveals how the fourth-grade children negotiated ethnic boundaries through using food as a symbolic resource in an intricate system of distribution, which they cooperatively constructed without teachers noticing. Adopting the sociology of childhood perspective (see Corsaro 1997), this study demonstrates children as "active economic agents" (Zelizer 2002), who skillfully selected the use of two types of food, "dry food (mass-consumed)" and "wet food (homemade)" in three forms of exchange—gift-giving, sharing, and trading—to control their relationships with peers as well as to mark, maintain, and mute ethnic boundaries. As I will show, such ethnic boundary

negotiation usually accompanied children's marking of differences based on gender, age, classroom, and to some extent, social class. Simultaneously, I find that construction of these various boundaries are confined by a larger social context, such as school demography and social class inequality. These findings suggest the pitfalls of previous racial and ethnic studies that have neglected children's active construction of ethnic boundaries and identity. A child-centered perspective allows us to understand that children's ethnic identity development is not a universal linear process that is automatically triggered as children go through a series of distinct stages of intellectual ability (see Piaget 1965). Rather, preadolescent children, although constrained by external forces, learn to do emergent, layered, and situated ethnicity through creating and using cultural resources in peer interaction.

The author has presented a brief summary of her findings and conclusions. Most authors do not do this at the beginning of a journal article.

#### CHILDREN'S RACIAL AND ETHNIC IDENTITY

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Although a growing number of studies examine construction of race and ethnicity among adolescents and adults, little attention has been devoted to how small children "do" race and ethnicity (West and Fenstermaker 1995) in everyday settings.

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Instead, preadolescent children's race and ethnicity have often been studied by the use of sociometric tests, which have become a popular quantitative method to examine children's friendship bonds (Hallinan and Teixeira 1987). One of the important contributions that these studies have made is the revelation that race and gender are both crucial determinants of children's friendship choices, with gender producing a much stronger effect than race (Sagar, Schofield, and Sneyder 1983; Schofield and Whitley 1983; Singleton and Asher 1977). Still, these studies perceive children's ethnic differentiation as fixed and stable patterns that are replicated across different social contexts. Conducting both sociometric tests and observation in elementary school classrooms, Denscombe et al. (1993) point to a dissonance between the results obtained from the two methods and maintain that sociometric research fails to capture the complexity of children's friendship choice and ethnic differentiation. In studies that rely on sociometric tests, race and ethnicity are considered independent variables that affect children's social relationships, and not dependent variables to be explored. These studies conceptualize children's social identities as "fixed and often essentialized categories rather than as multifaceted, situated, and socially constructed processes" (Orellana and Bowman 2003, 26). Consequently, they do not tell us how children construct ethnic identities in interactional contexts, let alone how such processes are

This author has included a very detailed and comprehensive review of the literature. Some authors omit writing a review at this point. One thing you should look for later in the article is the extent to which she ties her own findings to the literature that she reviews here.

The following develops an argument for her perspective on how to study the topic.

The author assumes the reader is familiar with Piaget, and “the Piagetian model.”

This is part of the build-up and argument for doing this study. I am happy to see this here since it adds to my belief about the importance of the interconnection of various pieces of an article.

related to the construction of gender identity which is presumably more salient than race and ethnicity. These gaps can only be addressed by conducting direct observation of children’s interaction.

To illuminate children’s construction of ethnic identity, I rely on an emerging perspective provided by a “new sociology of childhood,” which attempts to break away from a Piagetian socialization model and individualistic biases concerning children (see Corsaro 1997; Fine 1987; Goodwin 1991; Thorne 1993). Corsaro (1997) argues that a new sociology of childhood conceptualizes children as innovative agents who constantly engage in a process of appropriation, reinvention, and reproduction of their social world. This approach to children’s socialization highlights children’s collective creation and the reproduction of peer culture in interactional contexts, and looks at how children participate in such culture with others. It questions the universal linear model of children’s development assumed in the Piagetian model, and calls attention to more flexible ways in which children present and form a sense of self and identities.

While there are increasing numbers of ethnographic studies that have focused on preadolescent children’s construction of gender identity using sociology of childhood as well as symbolic interactionist perspectives (see Adler and Adler 1998; Adler, Kless, and Adler 1992; Best 1983; Eder and Parker 1987; Eder 1985; Thorne 1993), few have studied racial and ethnic identity using these frameworks since most studies have been conducted at predominantly white schools. As Ausdale and Feagin (2001) suggest, Corsaro’s overview of recent sociology of childhood literature says little about children’s understandings and practice of race and ethnicity. Yet, Thorne’s pioneering study of children’s gender identity formation (1993) is suggestive in studying children’s race and ethnicity. Observing fourth- and fifth-grade children’s behavior on a school playground, Thorne argues that girls and boys engaged in a range of “borderwork,” which evoked a sense of boys and girls as opposite groups and exaggerated gender separation and stereotypes. Simultaneously, she cautions not to take gender dualism for granted, suggesting that

Gender boundaries are episodic and ambiguous, and the notion of “borderwork” should be coupled with a parallel term—such as “neutralization”—for processes though which girls and boys (and adults who enter into their social relations) neutralize or undermine a sense of gender as division and opposition.” (Thorne 1993, 84)

To capture children’s dynamic construction of gender, Thorne stresses the need to examine how gender is played out *in context*.

We can surmise the author chose this group because of her own racial background. Perhaps it was easier for her to gain access to these students than to other students, or perhaps she felt she could identify with them more closely than with other minority groups. In the next study you will read, the author, Jackson, actually goes to her own high school in a small town where she had broad access. Researchers often deal with problems of access and “fitting in” when they select a group to study.

As Thorne (1993) argues, race and ethnicity are usually less visible and more ambiguous than gender, which is “clearly marked by dress and by language.” The few existing ethnographic studies in this field mostly focus on race rather than ethnicity, which requires actors’ continuous affirmation and recreation of ethnic boundaries (Ferguson 2000; Lewis 2005; Moore 2001; Schofield 1982). Between race and ethnicity, the latter conveys more changing and constructed quality since it has emphasis on “self-consciousness, the participation of groups themselves in the construction, reproduction, and transformation of their own identities” (Cornell and Hartmann 1998, 37), whereas racial identity is usually based on perceived physical differences. In this study, I strategically chose a racially and ethnically diverse site where Koreans are the largest ethnic group, to expand and deepen the understanding of “the fluid, situational, volitional, and dynamic character of ethnic identification” (Nagel 1994, 152). Furthermore, while African American children are given the most attention in previous studies, little attention has been devoted to Asian American children (Howes and Wu 1990). The selection of the site and the subject will also give voice to these minority children who have often been neglected in previous studies on children’s social development.

Culture plays a crucial role in constructing ethnic boundaries and identity (Nagel 1994; Cornell and Hartmann 1998). To understand how children do ethnicity in everyday settings, Swidler’s conceptualization of culture is particularly useful. According to Swidler, culture is “a ‘tool kit’ from which actors select differing pieces for constructing lines of actions” (Swidler 1986, 277). From a sociology of childhood perspective, children, like adults, *appropriate, produce, and use* culture in their peer interactions to negotiate group boundaries, and in that process, come to see themselves as members of a certain ethnic group. Previous studies have shown that children use various cultural objects (e.g., dress and possession) as well as language to mark gender, racial, and ethnic boundaries (Ausdale and Feagin 2000; Ferguson 2000). Play and games are also important rituals that children produce and use to negotiate their relationships and identities (Evaldsson 1993, 2003; Goodwin 1991 and 2001; Levinson 2005; Thorne 1993). Adding to the literature, this study finds that *children’s use of food and collaborative production of food exchange during lunchtime plays a crucial role in children’s formation of ethnic boundaries and identity*. In this sense, this study also adds to previous research that has studied gift economy, but in which children’s activities are mostly invisible. Brief reviews of these areas of literature are provided in the following section.

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A small number of ethnographic studies have shown that preadolescent children actively construct a gift economy with peers in classrooms, lunchrooms, playgrounds, and on the streets (Chin 2001; Ferguson 2000; Katriel 1987; Thorne 1993 and 2005). Katriel (1987) conducted an ethnographic study of the Israeli sharing routine “xibùdim,” and found that children carefully assessed and negotiated a “normal bite” size of the food for each person so that “everybody can get a share, leaving about half of it for the giver” (p. 315). She maintains that this ritualized sharing serves an important socializing function by providing a context where “a symbolic sacrifice in which one’s self interest and primordial greed are controlled and subordinated to an idea of sociality shaped by particular cultural values, such as equality and generalized reciprocity” (p. 318). Her study shows that children actively create and maintain social solidarity by participating in such gift economy.

Other studies show that gift exchange marked a degree of friendship and also emphasized social differences. Chin (2001) found that children carefully selected to whom they would give gifts of money, food, and objects. In her observation, children gave gifts to their best friends first and then to less intimate classmates. In observing “underground economy of food and objects” which children practiced behind teachers’ scrutinizing eyes in classrooms, Thorne (1993) observed that the pattern of exchange strongly marked the separation between boys’ and girls’ friendship groups (pp. 20–23). Objects that were exchanged also marked gender differences. She found that boys brought in “toy cars and trucks, magnets, and compasses” while girls possessed “tubes of lip gloss, nail polish, barrettes, necklaces, little stuffed animals, and doll furniture” (p. 21). In her recent study of lunchtime at a mixed-income ethnically diverse elementary school in California, Thorne (2005) briefly discusses how children used valued food to mark lines of friendship, gender, social class, and race differences.

Building on this literature, this study shows how children construct, participate, and use food economy during lunchtime to organize peer relationships and group boundaries, and in that process come to develop ethnic identity. Extending Thorne’s observation of lunchtime, I focus not only on “valued food” that encouraged the flow of the economy, but also “ethnic food” that mostly Korean children brought from home and exchanged with their peers. It will be shown that Korean children understood their “ethnic” food as a symbol of their Korean self and negotiated its meanings and value in interacting with their peers. Furthermore, looking closely at different forms of food exchange, I reveal that each form had different relevance for marking, maintaining, and muting ethnic boundaries.

I find it surprising the author tells us the outcome of the study at this point.

In a sense, the author integrates the literature and her findings even before we know what she did and how she did it. Although it is unusual, it is appealing to me.

I find it interesting the author makes a serious case for studying children during their lunchtime. If we think about it, we can see so many advantages. It is a time when children interact without any academic activities and without any direct supervision. We see them at their most natural situation during lunchtime.

Now that she begins to tell you about the study, she shifts into a more personal style, relying heavily on the use of the first person pronoun.

## SETTING AND METHOD

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School lunchtime is an ideal site to dig into children's friendship, group boundary construction, and identity formation. It is the time when children associate freely with their peers under minimal adult surveillance and form a strong sense of solidarity through sitting and eating together. Such experience is what Durkheim (1968 [1915]) called "collective effervescence," which creates emotional foundations of moral bonds. Simultaneously, it is the time when children negotiate their differences through interacting with others and develop identification with a certain social group. In introducing theoretical frameworks for exploring contexts, differences, and trajectories of children's development, Thorne (2005) argues for the advantages of studying school lunchtime as follows:

Like the Balinese cockfight analyzed by Clifford Geertz (1973), school lunchtime is a public and collective "text" with many, sometimes contradictory, layers of meaning. The lunchtime scene, especially in a school where students come from strikingly divergent backgrounds, is a fruitful site for uncovering practices to mark, mute, and negotiate social differences. When these practices involve labeling or group formation, they may become especially consequential for trajectories of personal change. (p.14)

Several studies on children's friendship and social differentiation have studied seating arrangements during lunchtime both qualitatively (Eder 1985; Zisman and Wilson 1992) and quantitatively (Clack, Dixon, and Tredoux 2005; McCauley, Plummer, and Moskalenko 2001). By contrast, this study provides new insights into school lunchtime by mainly focusing on children's ritualized food exchange.

My ethnographic research of school lunchtime was conducted at two elementary schools in Los Angeles, which I call "Hamilton" School and "Claremont" School. These two schools were mixed-income ethnically diverse public elementary schools located just two miles apart in an affluent community. I chose these two schools as my fieldsites because of the similarity in racial and ethnic diversity of the children, with Korean as the most prevalent ethnic group. According to the Los Angeles Unified School District 2005 statistics, at Hamilton, about 50 percent of the students were classified as "Asian," 25 percent were "White," 12 percent were "Hispanic," and 13 percent were "African American." At Claremont, 61 percent of the students were "Asian," 19 percent were "White," 12 percent were Hispanic, and 8 percent were "African American." Most of the children who fell into "Asian" category were Korean. For both schools, about one-third of the students were English learners, most

Notice how she weaves information that she gained during the study into the description of how she did her study.

We don't know how she obtained this information. Would it be helpful for her to give the source or sources of her data?

Again, we find an interweaving of data she collected and a description of the process. Authors choose various techniques to keep reader interest high. Nakuga may have chosen her method to maintain interest and connect the process and the findings.

She writes about entering the school as if it were easy to do so, but I know that is not true. Large school districts such as Los Angeles would normally have a process of requests and approvals to follow. It would be helpful for the author to describe how she gained access to the school. Do you think the author's

of whom were Koreans. The fourth grade children (ages nine and ten) whom I observed were aware of racial and ethnic differences to some extent, and used the following categories to describe themselves and others: "Korean," "Chinese," "Jewish," "Black," "White," and "Latino or Latina." White and Latino children who were not born in the United States also associated themselves with the country where they were born (e.g., Australia, Guatemala, Mexico, Honduras, etc.). These racial and ethnic labels will be used to describe children's racial and ethnic identity throughout this article.

With regard to children's social class backgrounds, most of the children came from upper- or middle-class families, although there were also quite a number of children who qualified for free/reduced lunch program (14 percent at Hamilton and 25 percent at Claremont). When looking at the children who frequently ate cafeteria food, they tended to be Latino/a and Black, rather than White and Korean. However, since most of the children possessed a meal card, which did not indicate a child's reduced or free lunch status in any way, I was not able to tell clearly who qualified for these programs. The social class differences among these children were not very visible because of the schools' rather successful efforts to obscure class differences. When I asked a principal at Hamilton if she thought that children knew about their social class differences, she answered as follows:

No. We try not to let children become aware of such differences. . . . I can tell you the percentage of the students who are in reduced or free lunch program, but I can't give you the names of the children who are in these programs. Same for the children and parents. We try to be very careful. We don't want children to humiliate one another.

Hence, at two schools, I found that talk about class differences was much less common among kids compared to other social differences. Nevertheless, class differences entered into kids' interaction during lunchtime in a very subtle way. As will be shown later, White and Korean kids brought more food from home to school than Latino/a and Black kids, and thus they were at the center of the food economy as the main distributors.

From February through June 2004, I visited Hamilton School on different days of the week, ranging from one to three times a week. I visited Ms. Gill's fourth-grade class and observed kids' interaction in the class, during lunchtime, and at recess, and sat and participated in their activities through eating and playing with them. Hamilton had two cafeterias: outside picnic tables for kids who brought a lunch from home and a much smaller indoor space for those who ate cafeteria food. In the outside cafeteria, kids could freely choose their eating companions and sit at any of the twenty-two tables in the area, while the indoor cafeteria was much more

racial background facilitated her gaining access? Do you think the fact she was a student at UCLA helped her?

Here the author talks about her extensive fieldnotes. Later, she says she did not take notes in front of the children, but rather wrote them up later. Ethnographers often write up notes upon leaving the site. Also, we don't learn anything about whether she gained parental permission to study the students. Did she get parental approval? Since the children were in the lunchroom—in a public space in the school—this might have been seen as tacit approval. However, in today's world of sensitivity to privacy issues, most researchers would assure that they have received appropriate approvals.

I wonder what she wrote in her e-mail. Do you think she told the principal she was a volunteer? If so, do you think it was appropriate for her to have done so?

controlled by a lunch aide. Food exchange occurred mostly in the outdoor cafeteria where kids brought various kinds of food from home. Kids who ate cafeteria food often participated in this food exchange after they finished eating lunch and left the indoor cafeteria. I ended up collecting sixteen sets of fieldnotes that described kids' interaction in the outdoor cafeteria and three sets of fieldnotes from the indoor cafeteria. I also have ten sets of fieldnotes for kids' activities inside Ms. Gill's classroom and during recess. I also conducted focus group interviews (twenty minutes each) with twenty-three kids in Ms. Gill's fourth-grade class, and informal interviews with Ms. Gill, the school principal, a lunch duty aide, and three Korean mothers.

From the end of October 2004 to February 2005, and again in September 2005, I visited nearby Claremont School. Like Hamilton, access to the school was made possible by a principal responding to my e-mail. Introduced by a vice principal, I entered Ms. Wood's fourth-grade classroom as "a volunteer," and sometimes helped kids do their activities in the classroom. During lunchtime, I sat at one of the three lunch tables that were assigned to Ms. Wood's class and ate lunch I had brought from home with kids in the class. Unlike Hamilton, which had two separate cafeterias, there was only one cafeteria at Claremont. Each classroom was assigned three tables, and kids in the same class had to sit at one of these tables. From these participant observations, I collected twenty-three sets of fieldnotes of lunchtime. I also have twenty sets of fieldnotes describing children's interaction in Ms. Wood's class and during recess.

At both schools during lunchtime, I tried to immerse myself into the site. I brought my own lunch that I packed at home, and ate with different kids at different tables on different days. Ethnographers who studied kids and their activities devised various ways of dealing with the age and power barriers that lie between adult-ethnographer and kids (Corsaro 2003; Fine and Sandstrom 1988; Mandell 1988; Thorne 1993). Like Thorne (1993), I refrained from adult roles of authority, and instead related to the kids as their friend willing to learn from them and understand their experiences. My Japanese background seemed to have appealed to kids' interests in schools where the majority of the kids spoke more than one language. Kids asked me how to say certain words in Japanese and we ended up telling and chanting words in different languages in a friendly manner. While my ethnic background contributed to building friendly relationships with the kids, my gender often interfered with my access to boys' friendship groups. As I will discuss in the next section, girls and boys usually sat at different cafeteria tables, creating what they called "girls' tables" and "boys' tables." Even though I am a female, boys did not mind me sitting with them because in their eyes my adult status overrode my gender. However, whenever

The issue she raises here is interesting. Are you surprised she believes gaining access to boys with relation to those they study was hampered by her own gender?

Ethnographers struggle continuously to define themselves with relation to those they study. Should they be friends, thus removing themselves from the presumed power relationship? If so, can they “make friends” successfully? You will see what happened to Jackson in the next study. Both authors you read here are female, and both were students when they did their research. Do you think this makes a difference in how they defined themselves?

The author was clearly not a teacher, and was introduced as a volunteer. We don't know whether it was common for volunteers to just “appear” at the school. In many schools, volunteers are regularly welcomed to assist teachers; we do not know whether that is true at this school.

girls found me at the boys' table, they would ask, “What are you doing at boys' table? You'll get cooties!” and forcefully invited me to come over to their table. Sometimes, girls would come to sit next to me at the boys' table, consequently outnumbering the boys and driving them away to another table. I tried to stop the boys from leaving, but was not always successful. Such dilemmas in the field made me highly aware of the gender separation among preadolescent kids (see Adler and Adler 1998).

It was not long after I started to sit and eat with the kids as their “friend” that they started to give me various kinds of food even without my asking and invited me to participate in their communal food exchange. They also asked if they could have some of my food, especially when I brought a bag of chips or crackers. Through my attempt to immerse myself into the kids' world, I discovered that food exchange was an important ritual that children made use of to create and strengthen friendships with others.

It needs to be emphasized that although food exchange was a prime ritual during lunchtime that involved almost all the kids in school, it was not apparent or accessible to the teachers. Classroom teachers hardly knew anything about children's interaction in the school cafeteria, because they usually went straight to the teachers' lounge to have their lunch. Besides, food exchange was a hidden activity especially at Hamilton, where the principal prohibited children from sharing food because of health concerns. At this school, teachers sent a notification home to parents stating that children were not to share food at school because some children are allergic to certain types of food. During lunchtime, lunch aides warned children to stop sharing whenever they found such activities. However, behind the eyes of the adult surveillance, children's food exchange ritual continued to flourish. They skillfully gave and received food under the table or behind their lunch bags and carefully watched out for the lunch aides, prepared to hide the activity whenever they came close. The giving and receiving of food, which involved minor resistance and challenge to school rules, constituted the *underlife* of school lunchtime. The idea of an underlife is important for her study. According to Goffman (1961), underlives develop in any kind of social establishment; they become an arena where individuals practice secondary adjustments which “represent ways in which the individual stands apart from the role and the self that were taken for granted for him by the institution” (p. 189). Corsaro (2003) and Thorne (1993) observe similar activities among children who defy school rules by bringing in and exchanging snacks and small objects in the classroom. She does an excellent job of interweaving the literature that she reviewed into her own study.

Like Thorne (1993) who participated in children's secret exchange and felt pulled between her loyalty to children and her

Do you think the author behaved appropriately in continuing to break a school rule?

It is interesting that the author writes about her struggle here. I wonder if this conflict will preclude her from continuing her study in the schools.

This point is very important: she didn't know precisely where her study of kids and lunchtime was going to take her.

The author does not clarify what is meant by "retroduction." Do you think she should have done so?

In my opinion, the author should discuss in much greater detail how she went about her coding. As I mentioned in the introduction, this study represents a traditional approach to ethnography. As such, it is not surprising that she chose a traditional approach to data analysis.

The following discussion of her findings is very long and somewhat complicated. Several paragraphs have been omitted due to space considerations. You can see the structure of this next section from the main headings. I suggest you look at them before you continue reading. The main heading—Age, Classroom, Gender, and Ethnicity in Seating Patterns—helps me anticipate what will follow. I have read in the popular literature that kids tend to sit with others of their ethnic

identification with and dependence on the teacher (p. 22), I also could not stop feeling a slight sense of guilt at Hamilton where food exchange was prohibited. It was only after a month of fieldwork that I discovered this school rule, but even after that, I continued to take a *laissez-faire* position. I believed that the fourth graders were well aware of the types of food that they were allergic to, and hence there was little concern for children getting sick through sharing food. However, my affiliation with kids and participation in their rule-breaking, which was one of the strategies to gain access to their world (Fine 1987), continued to collide with my loyalty to the principal who kindly invited me to her school.

While sitting, eating, and sharing food with the kids, I focused on the moments when the kids' various lines of differences became visible in their interaction (Thorne 2005, forthcoming). Although I entered the field with an initial interest in kids' negotiation of ethnic differences, I took an open-minded approach and attempted to gain a holistic understanding of kids' various activities during lunchtime. Seeking immersion in kids' lunchtime, I refrained from taking any notes while I was sitting at the cafeteria table with the kids. Only after I left the school, did I jot down the things I saw and heard during lunchtime. I later used these memos to write up detailed fieldnotes. Analysis of the fieldnotes involved retroduction, moving "constantly from observation and analysis to conceptual refining and reframing and then back to seek new forms of data relevant to their emerging theoretical concerns and categories" (Emerson 2001, 284; see Bulmer 1979; Katz 1983). Using a grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss 1967), I started from open-coding of the fieldnotes and developed them into more integrative memos as I continuously honed theoretical ideas.

#### AGE, CLASSROOM, GENDER, AND ETHNICITY IN SEATING PATTERNS

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Choosing a place to sit and with whom to sit marks the beginning of school lunchtime. Within certain institutional limits, kids can freely choose their eating companions, and thus the seating arrangements tell much about kids' friendship patterns (Eder 1985; Thorne 1993; Zisman and Wilson 1992). In this section, I provide a general portrait of the friendship pattern in two schools from their seating arrangements during lunchtime. This gives an important backdrop of the hidden food exchange that took place after kids were seated at the cafeteria tables. From the seating pattern, I show that age/grade, classroom, gender, and ethnicity helped shape kids' friendship patterns.

group in the lunchroom, and I suspect they also sit with their friends. Two subheadings will no doubt go into detail about the choices kids make. I need to remind myself that I am just getting the structure of the article now so I push on with the remaining headings. According to the next heading, the author will address two kinds of food—dry and wet. I am sure she will explain the difference between these types of food. Next she gets into three forms of exchange: giving, sharing, and trading. I remember that she mentioned them in the abstract, and I see that these will be dealt with in detail here. The author includes quite a long conclusion that I hope will integrate what she did with the related literature. Several figures in the appendix at the end of the paper provide a visual representation of the food exchanges. Note that we have omitted the appendix with its figures from this discussion due to space considerations. She makes the presentation of her results seem quite easy. If you think about it, though, she had to organize her data to come up with the three strategies for students to position themselves to be with friends.

This author skillfully weaves her findings with the related literature, and discusses physical proximity as a signifier for development of friendship and intimacy. Have you ever thought of using data from seemingly unplanned events in this way?

## Kids' Strategies to Sit With Friends

Seating arrangements are shaped through kids' continuous negotiations. Although kids had a choice to choose their seats within certain institutional limits, they were never sure that they could sit with their friends in the same spot every day. From her ethnographic study of lunchtime seating, Eder (1985) found that seating patterns started to stabilize after the seventh grade. Sixth graders in her study had a flexible seating pattern, and they sat with different groups on a daily basis. My observation of the fourth graders also suggests this flexible seating pattern and a lack of stable hierarchical cliques, although I found kids making a considerable effort to sit with a small number of "best" friends (usually one to three) as they entered the cafeteria each day. They used three types of strategies to sit with their friends: choosing seats and/or getting in the cafeteria line with their friends, saving seats, and making space on the bench.

At the two schools, kids usually entered the cafeteria in two lines led by the classroom teacher. When they approached the cafeteria and the lines were dismissed, kids started to rush toward either the cafeteria line or the tables if they brought lunch from home. In this process, kids would break up into small friendship groups, and two or three friends would start walking hastily side by side. For those who bought the cafeteria lunch, kids would get in line with their friends. At Hamilton, those who brought their lunch from home strolled together in the cafeteria area in a small group searching for a clean empty table. Once they found a table, kids usually sat next to each other, and not face to face. Even when the group was big, they often chose to sit on the same side of the table in a long line, instead of separating themselves into different sides. This was also a common practice among friends at Claremont. As many studies have shown, physical proximity is an important marker of kids' friendship and an expression of intimacy (see Epstein and Karweit 1983; Rizzo 1989).

Kids who wanted to sit together did not always arrive at the cafeteria at the same time for various reasons. In these cases, saving seats for friends was an effective strategy that kids used to make sure that they could sit with their friends. Brandon (White) at Hamilton said, "Usually my friends take seats for me. When I go first, I take seats for them." At two schools, I observed various ways kids tried to save seats for their friends: spreading out their property on the table, stretching their legs on the bench, spreading their arms widely on the table, etc. When someone approached these seats and attempted to sit there, they would say, "This seat is taken," or "I'm saving these seats," and try to make others leave. As they saw their friends coming to the cafeteria, they stood up, waved and called out

The unplanned events in this study have to do with where the students choose to sit at the lunch table. I don't think she expected this to be important.

Many ethnographers include a detailed and vivid description of the setting and those they studied. By doing so, they follow a technique called "thick description." If you want to learn more about this idea, you should read Clifford Geertz's work.

In this next section, she breaks her analysis down by age and classroom, by gender, and by ethnicity. Since the primary emphasis in this study is on ethnicity, I only have included details about her findings on that topic.

Much has been written about how children separate themselves by ethnicity. This study of Korean children adds to the literature.

their friends' names to make sure that their friends found them in the crowded and noisy cafeteria.

Kids often faced the problem that there was not enough space to sit next to their friends. Even when kids attempted to save seats for their friends, as other kids started to fill the table, they were not always able to save enough room for all their friends to sit. In these cases, kids managed to sit together by scooting over and making space, so that their friends could squeeze in next to them. Consequently, physical proximity among friends became intensified. Sitting next to each other in a small space, they touch each other's shoulders, arms, buttocks, and legs, which seems to generate an intimate basis for eating together as well as the food exchange that is about to begin.

### Social Differences and Friendship Patterns

Through the processes that I have just described, all the kids are finally seated at the table and they start eating lunch. At Claremont, where kids were assigned tables according to their classroom, I took note of the seating patterns among thirty-one kids in Ms. Wood's class each time I visited the school. There was a great deal of variation of seating on different days, although some general patterns were found. These patterns were shaped by kids' differences in age, classroom, gender, and ethnicity. Figure 1 in the appendix shows seating arrangements on one typical day at Claremont. Kids who are circled showed strong sense of friendship to one another by walking together toward the table, saving seats, making space, and sitting closely next to each other.

...

*Differentiation by ethnicity.* Friendship grouping along ethnic lines, which is the focus of this study, was less salient among the fourth graders at the two schools compared to separation by age/grade, classroom, and gender. . . . Even at Hamilton where kids could freely associate with peers from other classrooms, kids rarely created a "Korean-only" table, despite the fact that there were enough Korean kids at the school to create one. While kids talked openly about "girls' tables" and "boys' tables," as well as tables differentiated by grade and classroom, racial or ethnic group labels were less verbalized during lunchtime.

However, this does not mean that ethnic difference was not an important identity element in peer interactions among the fourth graders. A close look at the formation of seating reveals that Korean kids and other "minority" kids at both schools tended to generate separate groups.

...

At Hamilton, the separation between Koreans and non-Koreans in Ms. Gill's class sometimes became more visible than at Claremont, because kids did not have to sit with their classmates. Among boys, I sometimes saw five to seven Koreans eating at the same table, while three Latino boys were sitting next to each other, and also a White and a Black boy sitting together, each group at a different table. Among girls in Ms. Gill's class, Korean and Chinese girls were frequently seen eating together, while a pair of a Latina and a Black girl and another pair of two White girls (one Jewish and the other Australian) usually sat together, separating themselves from these Asian girls.

In general, perhaps because Koreans were the majority group at both schools, there were more interracial and interethnic mixing among non-Korean kids, which consequentially highlighted the separation between Korean and non-Korean kids. However, it should be emphasized that such patterns of ethnic separation were neither static nor strong. Kids from different ethnic backgrounds chose to sit together at the same table on different days. Although ethnographic studies of middle schools and high schools report that adolescents have a strong tendency to segregate themselves according to race and ethnicity (Institute for the Study of Social Change 1992; Olsen 1997), it appears that preadolescent kids are only starting to strengthen their ethnic identity in peer interaction.

In the following sections, I argue that food exchange during lunchtime provided the kids with opportunities to negotiate ethnic and gender boundaries and their meanings. Through the use of food that they bring from home, kids maintained and strengthened ethnic and gender boundaries that were to some extent already visible in seating patterns. Simultaneously, it will be shown that kids also used food to renegotiate, cross, and mute these boundaries.

Here we see an interweaving of related literature and the author's own study.

This paragraph provides a segue for what is to come.

#### FOOD IN KIDS' FOOD EXCHANGE: "DRY FOOD" AND "WET FOOD"

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In kids' hidden social exchanges, there were two types of food that were frequently given and received: one was store-bought, mass-consumed food products and the other was food that kids brought from home, including Korean "ethnic" food.

I have never thought of separating food into these types of categories. Have you?

#### Dry Food

The dry food included snacks like cookies (e.g., Chips-Ahoy), chocolates (e.g., M&Ms, Twix, Milky Way), gummies, chips (e.g., Doritos, Cheetos, Fritos), as well as "Lunchables," a prepackaged meal, usually containing meat, cheese, and crackers. Some kids

described these fun sharable food items as “dry food.” These are nonsticky food items that are easy to share as well as to play with. These fun dry foods were the central items that moved the flow of kid’s hidden social exchange. Kids who brought these items caught much attention from other kids in the cafeteria, and often became the target of begging and coercing. As many have argued, commercial brand-named food has turned into “the lingua franca of the twenty-first century” (Thorne 2005) for kids who have become active consumers in global capitalism (Langer 2005; Zelizer 2002). Regardless of their racial and ethnic backgrounds, kids that I observed all had access to these dry foods and brought them to school from time to time for sharing and exchange.

It sounds like the term “dry food” comes from the kids and not from the author. Often ethnographers and other qualitative researchers use words used by participants in their write-ups.

### Wet Food

On the contrary, many kids showed unease toward exchanging “wet food” that was made and packed at home. When I asked kids what kinds of food they liked to share at school, Chris (White) at Claremont said, “I only share dry food. I don’t like to share sandwich and stuff ’cause that’s gross.” Erica (Australian) said, “I share chips. Only dry foods. I don’t ask my friends to give me other kinds of stuff, because I don’t really know what they are and I haven’t eaten them before.”

There were practical and symbolic differences between exchanging dry food and wet food. In contrast to dry food, which a receiver can pick up without a giver touching it, wet food is hard to share without the other person “contaminating” it with his or her mouth, hand, or with eating utensils (fork or chopsticks) with his or her saliva attached. In my observation, kids often showed disgust for food that another person had touched with his or her hands. Because a physical substance of a giver is attached, the exchange of these foods seemed to engender the notion of pollution in kids’ minds, and threaten bodily and self-integrity. By preadolescent age, kids have developed the notion of *homo clausus* (Elias 1978), the sense of self that is encapsulated in one’s body and is clearly cut off from others. Violation to this bodily boundary would arouse in them fear and disgust.

This is an interesting interpretation of why students exchange dry food but not wet food.

However, it should be emphasized that kids who regarded themselves as best friends did not seem to care much about sharing wet food and eating food that other person’s eating utensils had touched. For instance, I often watched kids giving their food to their closest friends with chopsticks and forks that they had been using. Sometimes, even having wet food that another person’s mouth had touched was acceptable among close friends. I frequently saw kids sipping a drink from the same can. It appears then that close friends shared strong bonds that allowed them to breach the bodily boundary that generally separates individuals. Indeed, the sharing of wet food marked and reinforced their affection for one another.

In general, Korean and White children were more likely to possess and share wet food with others than Latino and Black children, many of whom appeared to qualify for a reduced/free lunch. Several Latino and Black kids told me that their parents leave early in the morning for work and they do not have time to fix their lunch. On the contrary, White and Korean parents in general seemed to come from economically advantaged backgrounds and had time to prepare lunch for their kids. Several White and Korean kids told me that they did not like cafeteria food and they always asked their parents to fix lunch for them. Judy (Jewish) told me she could not eat in the cafeteria “because I’m Jewish, and we are supposed to eat only what’s called Kosher. And the cafeteria food is not Kosher.”

What was interesting was the fact that Korean kids frequently brought Korean food from home. In interviewing Anna’s mother (Korean), she told me that Anna resisted eating cafeteria food and insisted on bringing Korean food and rice to school because they were her favorites. During lunchtime, some Korean kids often commented on their homemade food as “Korean” and showed their pride in it. For instance, at Claremont, Cindy (Korean girl) usually expressed joy and excitement when she opened her lunchbox:

Cindy opened the lid of her thermal lunchbox. Inside, she found pieces of meat that looked like Burgogi (Korean BBQ meat) and cooked bean sprouts on top of steamed rice. She exclaimed with joy, “Oh, I love this!” When I asked what they were, Cindy replied, “I don’t know what it’s called, but it’s Korean.”

The author enhanced her observations and interviews with the children by talking to their parents. Here is an example of how she used information gleaned from talking to one of the mothers. Ethnographers often rely on multiple sources of data as they try to gain an understanding of the culture of a group.

Here the author begins to explore the idea of identity.

In sum, wet food strongly reflected and represented the self of kids who owned it. However, Korean kids, who frequently brought “Korean” food from home, had more of an advantage than other kids to attach ethnic meanings to their wet food and use it as a token of their ethnic identity. Non-Korean kids brought in sandwiches, spaghetti, pizza, and hotdogs from home, but these foods were never attached to ethnic meanings. Even what is usually considered “Mexican” food such as burritos, tacos, and taquitos became everyday food and had little ethnic meanings for the kids since these foods appeared frequently on the school lunch menu and everyone had access to them. Korean food, on the other hand, only belonged to Korean kids and they were usually exchanged and shared among Koreans, who would appreciate the value of the food. By consciously selecting the receiver of their wet food, Korean kids identified who is “Korean” and who is not. Equipped with a symbolic resource, Korean kids had more opportunities than other kids to build ethnic boundaries and identity in food exchange.

### THREE FORMS OF HIDDEN SOCIAL EXCHANGE AND ETHNIC BOUNDARY NEGOTIATION

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I have trouble with the interpretation offered by the author with respect to differences among the three different kinds of exchange. Do you think she could have explained the concept more clearly?

...  
While gift-giving had a closed structure that only incorporated a few number of selected kids, sharing had an open structure that enabled any kids nearby to participate or at least to try participating. Thus, it had the power to expand the group boundary and form a larger group, although it generally marked weaker friendship bonds. Unlike gift-giving, which started with the giver's voluntary offer, sharing was initiated by the receiver sending cues that indicated his or her interest in the giver's food, such as "staring at food" or giving comments like "Oh, I love that" or "That looks so good." It was also triggered by the receiver's more straightforward asking, "Can I have some?"

What made sharing a ritual that incorporated a large number of kids was that whenever others asked the giver for his or her food, the giver was obliged to give. It was often the case that when one kid received food from the giver, others who witnessed this event approached the giver and started to beg one after another, "Can I have some too?" The giver, sometimes unwillingly, offered food to everyone and the sharing developed like a chain reaction until everyone got some share. What was striking was that the giver would give food to someone whom she or he did not even know. Kids said they did this because people came and begged for their food. They said they did not care about the immediate return.

However, kids became upset when the receiver refused to give some of his or her food in the future, breaking the norms that underlie sharing. Andrew (Black) said to me as follows: "One thing I don't like is that when someone asks me for food, people I never seen, people I don't know at school, I give it to them, but then, when I ask the same person to give me food, they act like they don't remember me, and don't give them to me." His friend, Tim (White) echoes: "Yeah, and if they don't give it to him, he just stops giving it to them forever. He remembers them."

Similar to what Katriel (1987) found in Israeli children's sharing ritual, the underlying norm of sharing at the schools that I observed was that both the giver and the receiver needed to control their self-interest and show respect toward one another. When asked, the giver usually kept control over the amount of food they gave, and the receiver politely accepted whatever amount they were offered. Sometimes, the giver would hand a bag of snacks to the receiver, but even then, the receiver would take only "a piece" from the bag in the first round of sharing. If she wanted more, she would ask the giver "Can I have some more?"

Because of the large number at school and their possession of various foods, Korean kids frequently engaged in sharing wet food

while non-Korean kids did not attempt to participate in such sharing. When Korean kids shared miso soup and noodle soup (udon and ryanmen) from the same cup or bowl, the ethnic boundary became especially visible because of the physical proximity among these kids (see Figure 3 in the appendix):

Toward the end of lunchtime, Jonathan (Korean) started to drink an instant noodle soup directly from the plastic bowl. On the side of the bowl, several Korean letters were printed. Donald, a Korean boy sitting facing Jonathan, pointed at the bowl and asked, "Can I have some?" Jonathan lifted his face from the bowl and nodded. Donald stood up and walked over besides Jonathan. Jonathan also stood up, and now two boys stood face to face. Jonathan handed out the cup to Donald, who received it and started drinking directly from the cup. After a few seconds, Donald removed his lip from the edge of the cup, and returned it to Jonathan. Jonathan started to drink some soup. Then, Michael, another Korean boy who sat next to Donald, stood up and approached the two boys. He stood next to Jonathan and asked him, "Can I have some too?" Lifting his face from the cup, Jonathan passed the cup to Michael keeping its position the way he got it back from Donald. Michael received the cup and stepped forward. Now three boys were standing in a triangle. After Michael removed his lip from the cup, he pointed at the place where his lip touched with his forefinger. Then, he passed it to Jonathan, also keeping the cup in the same position so that each of them would not drink from where others' mouth had touched. The cup was passed on to Jonathan, Donald, and Michael for several times. While three kids stood up beside the table in a triangle, two Latino boys and an African American boy were left at the table sitting next to each other. Joseph (Black) glimpsed these boys several times, but did not join the sharing.

Donald and Michael were not necessarily Jonathan's best friends, as the two usually did not sit next to him at the table. Still, Jonathan offered his soup when the two politely asked him for some share. This sharing ritual made visible an ethnic boundary that was not apparent from the seating pattern. The non-Korean boys were excluded from the sharing, when the two Korean boys approached Jonathan and turned their back on them standing in a triangle facing each other. The Korean boys built a kind of fort with their bodies that outsiders could not easily enter. Drinking soup from the same bowl further highlighted and strengthened their group solidarity. Simultaneously, the way they circulated the bowl in the same position and refrained from drinking from the same spot indicates their less intimate relationship. Still, in the eyes of other kids, this wet food sharing expressed a strong bond among Korean kids.

...

## CONCLUSION

If you have been reading this article carefully, you might have gotten bogged down in details. Here the author brings us back to the central purpose and finding of her study. Her statement here is cogent: children create peer cultures connected to food, a culture essentially hidden from adults.

Here, the author successfully brings into play the literature that she presented earlier.

Notice her choice of words here: children learn to “do ethnicity.” This study makes an important contribution to our understanding of socialization in children.

Corsaro (1997) argues that preadolescence “is a time when children struggle to gain stable identities, and their peer cultures provide both a sense of autonomy from adults and an arena for dealing with uncertainties of an increasingly complex world” (p. 188). Looking closely at children’s interaction during lunchtime, fourth graders in this study collaboratively created peer cultures that emanate from establishing and participating in food economy, which was hidden from adults’ eyes and thus operated largely on its own. While previous studies have focused on game, play, and disputes as an arena for children’s friendship and identity construction (see Corsaro 2003, Evaldsson 1993, 2003; Goodwin 1991 and 2001; Levinson 2005; Thorne 1993), this study has shown that food economy is another sphere where children organize peer relationships and negotiate various social identities. As Zelizer (2002) forcefully argues, children are “active economic agents” (p. 377) who possess an ability to create and participate in economic activity, including distribution. As shown by their use of dry/wet food as well as three forms of food exchange, children created an intricate system and culture of food economy, through which they negotiated various ties with others while marking, maintaining, strengthening, and muting social differences. In this process, ethnic boundaries and identities were marked and developed. The study shows that children do not become ethnic by passively “internalizing” ethnic culture in the adult world, as the traditional socialization model would assume; rather, children learn to do ethnicity by making use of cultural objects (food) in the exchange system that they collaboratively create.

Looking closely at *how* children negotiate ethnic boundaries in food exchange, I have shown “the fluid, situational, volitional, and dynamic character of ethnic identification” (Nagel 1994, 152), which preadolescent children become increasingly adept in negotiating. Children frequently marked and strengthened ethnic boundaries using dry and wet food in gift-giving, sharing, and trading, but as demonstrated in children’s sharing of dry food, these boundaries were often muted to incorporate children from different ethnic backgrounds. Like Thorne’s (1993) conceptualization of borderwork, which not only worked to emphasize gender separation but also created a space where girls and boys could come together and “cross” the gender divide, children’s participation in food economy also created the dynamics of both marking and muting ethnic boundaries. When muting occurred, other identities based on classroom, age, and/or gender came to the fore instead.

This finding also suggests that children’s construction of ethnic boundaries usually accompany a creation and negotiation of other boundaries related to gender, age, classroom, and social class.

Here, again, she refers to children “doing ethnicity.” Do you think she should have explained the term?

Gift-giving and sharing among children from the same ethnic background normally occurred within the same gender group. This observation confirms the results gained from previous sociometric studies, which indicate that children’s friendship is affected first by their gender and then by race/ethnicity (see Sagar et al., 1983). It appears that children learn to do ethnicity at the same time they position themselves in either of the gender category. Identities based on age and classroom were also implicated in children’s construction of ethnic boundaries, since children usually engaged in food exchange with peers from the same grade and classroom. These identities were highlighted when children muted ethnic boundaries through sharing of dry food. Even social class differences, which were mostly obscured by school efforts, sometimes surfaced in the process of food exchange. White and Korean children in this study saw African American children who always “begged” for food as “poor.” Here, children’s understandings of the ethnic differences appear to accompany their emergent sense of social class positioning. These findings suggest that children’s ethnic identity formation is a flexible ongoing process that should be understood in conjunction with the formation of other local categories such as gender, classroom, age, and social class. Different identities are activated at different moments and thus, this process is by no means linear or universal.

While children skillfully negotiated ethnic boundaries and identity in food exchange, this process also depended on larger social contexts which infused the dynamics of children’s interaction. As the constructionist view suggests, ethnic identity is not simply a personal choice but, in fact, a product of a dialect between internal identification and external categorization; in other words, between agency and structure (Barth 1969, Brubaker, Loveman, and Stamaty 2004; Nagel 1994). This study has shown that school demography and social class inequality constrain which differences are marked and which ethnic group has the most cultural resources and opportunities to negotiate and construct ethnic boundaries and identity. Studying Black immigrant adolescents in New York City, Waters (1999) finds that the Black immigrant ratio of the students has a strong influence on whether Black immigrant adolescents would identify themselves as “Americans,” “Ethnic,” or “Immigrants.” Similarly, Thorne (forthcoming) argues that “the availability of differences that may be successfully deployed in the naming of identities and the organization of groups” partly depends on “local demography and knowledge.” At predominantly Korean schools in this study, Korean children were in a much better position to mark their difference and assert their ethnic identity in a positive way. Because of the large number of Korean children, various Korean foods moved the flow of food economy, making more opportunities

for Korean children than for non-Koreans to engage in exchange and thereby to negotiate ethnic boundaries and create ethnic solidarity. Some Korean foods such as seaweed became a popular dry food among children at school, and therefore Korean children, who had access to these foods, were more active as givers. They could use these foods to enhance egalitarian friendship that cross ethnic boundaries, but in several occasions, they also used them in trading to practice power against African American children. Furthermore, Korean children's middle-class background enabled them to bring various kinds of homemade wet food that contributed to their active engagement in food exchange. Latino and African American children, many of whom qualified for free/reduced cafeteria lunches, had fewer cultural resources to construct boundaries in ethnic terms.

Breaking away from the traditional socialization model and demonstrating the situated, multilayered nature of children's ethnic identity which children cooperatively construct in their everyday life, this study suggests the need for more ethnographic case studies that take serious consideration of children's meaning-making process in interaction. As this study has shown, preadolescent children learn to negotiate ethnic boundaries and develop ethnic identity by participating in peer culture. Thus, the question of *how* and *when* children construct ethnic boundaries as well as *who* has the resources to do so should be answered by adopting a child-centered perspective and carefully observing children's peer interaction. Since children's ethnic identification differs according to contexts that they are in, as more case studies at schools of varied racial/ethnic composition accumulate, we will be in a better position to understand the dynamics of the ethnic boundary construction and its relevance to the construction of other social differences.

Finally, the findings gained from this study have some specific practical implications for schools and teachers to create culturally inclusive environments. Although studies of playgrounds have reported that boys are in a much stronger position to invade girls' activities and control more space on the playground (Grant 1984; Oswald et al. 1987; Thorne 1993), I observed that lunchtime provides much space for cross-gender and cross-ethnic friendship. Among the three forms of social exchange, sharing of dry food provided a tool for children to interact with one another harmoniously without any shameful teasing or power enforcement. Regardless of their social backgrounds, they engaged in sharing as "kids" in the same classroom, while maintaining and fostering the mutual respect and trust that underlies any sharing ritual.

The major barrier that prevented cross-gender and cross-ethnic sharing was kids' physical distance during lunchtime: namely, they

The author might be making a political and social statement here.

These suggestions relate her study to more practical aspects. Sometimes researchers get bogged down in theory and basic ideas; however, this author applies some of her findings to real situations.

usually chose to sit at different tables. On the other hand, whenever they had a chance to sit together, they started to practice sharing which often led to “food talk” and “food play,” which further fostered emotional ties across gender and ethnic lines. How is it possible to encourage relaxed cross-ethnic and cross-gender interactions during lunchtime? Perhaps teachers can assign the table to children and intentionally make mixed-gender and mixed-ethnic tables in cafeteria. Also, studies suggest that an adult presence can ameliorate gender divides (Adler and Adler 1998; Moore 2001; Thorne 1993). I also found that my presence at the table encouraged boys and girls to sit together and engage in sharing. If classroom teachers sit and eat with children even once in a while, they can play an important role in fostering cross-gender and cross-ethnic friendship by naturally creating mixed-gender and mixed-ethnic tables. They can also caution against some practices that may cause negative results in peer relationships: teasing food, excessive begging, unfair trading, and so forth. In the United States, eating with teachers is given to children as a “privilege” or a reward for their good behavior. In my fieldwork, children very much appreciated this privilege and looked forward to eating lunch with their teachers. Teachers can perhaps find a way to organize their busy schedules, and sit and eat with the whole class once in a while. Lunchtime is a rich opportunity not only for children to maintain and cultivate friendships with their classmates, but also for the teachers to deepen their understanding about children and their worlds which are full of surprising creativity.

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*Source:* Nukaga, M. (2008). The underlife of kids’ school lunchtime: Negotiating ethnic boundaries and identity in food exchange. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 37(3), 342–380. Reprinted with permission of SAGE Publications.

## Summary and Review

One reason I selected this article is that it is about kids in school. Although it does not specifically deal with kids in classes, it does occur in school settings. I want you to see how researchers have to deal with issues related to doing research in schools. It was only after I had selected and read the article that I learned the author was a graduate student, which places it very close to your own level of experience. It is a bonus that you begin reading a journal article written by a fairly new researcher. Finally, I wanted you to start by reading an article from the *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*. As its name suggests, the articles published in it are related to ethnography.

Nukaga immediately lets you know her position with regard to race and ethnicity. She mentions the constructionist view that identity varies across space and changes over time. Have you ever heard of that view? Does it fit with your own personal view? Do you think she presents sufficient evidence that this view can be supported? Is it the only viewpoint? She puts forth the reason she wants to do this study. She argues that people have not studied children of this age as people, but rather tend to see

children as “passive recipients of adult culture.” She immediately captures our attention by making these statements in her introduction. Remember, the purpose of the introduction is to draw the reader into the study, convincing the reader of the study’s value.

I am somewhat puzzled why she chose to tell you her findings in the second paragraph of her research. I prefer to read about the study before I read what was found. In a way, this second paragraph is like the opening remarks made by a lawyer in a court trial. “The evidence will show that . . .,” and so forth. This is a stylistic issue. At what point do you think an author should tell the reader of findings and what they mean? She chose to do it right at the beginning. Perhaps that is a vehicle for making the reader want to read more.

I believe you found her review of literature especially enlightening. I shortened the review and omitted references and the appendix due to space limitations, but you will be able to access many of her references quite easily.

Many of us work with children each day. Even though our focus is on teaching and learning, it is critical for us to gain insight into how children perceive themselves and negotiate their own identities as we try to understand the whole child. I doubt that many of us face the question of how children “do and learn” race and ethnicity in everyday social interaction. Nukaga makes an argument for doing ethnographic research rather than relying on sociometric studies. She also addresses what she refers to as a new model of the construction of ethnic identity, and argues that the ethnographic studies that have been conducted have concentrated on gender identity. Even though you may not be familiar with the literature she cites, she puts forth her argument extremely well. You would do well to use her literature review as an example of how to do one. By now, you understand that Nukaga belongs to the same racial group as the Koreans she studies, but does not belong to the same ethnic group.

She provides a somewhat shorter review on the topic of gift-giving. Nukaga’s strategy of weaving the results of her own study into the narrative of the literature review is somewhat off-putting to me. If we think of doing a qualitative study in a dynamic fashion, though, we can imagine she wrote the text of this article after she completed the study and not before. It seems clear that the writer has a good understanding of the related research. She writes about it as though it is not new to her.

You will do well to examine the section *Setting and Method* to learn the details of how she did the study. She follows the usual practice of adopting pseudonyms for the two schools in which her study was done, but provides sufficient detail about their location and racial composition. I am not familiar with the Los Angeles school system and so do not know if the actual schools could be identified. To what extent this might compromise the study is unknown. She provides details about the characteristics of the student body. As I mentioned at the outset, ethnography that follows a fairly traditional style would normally include this kind of information. Some might say that ethnography includes this information to make it more “scientific” or to fit the expectations of a quantitative study. Some like the details, and others think they are not important. It is clear from the quote given by one principal that the school is very protective of its ethnographic information.

She provides details about her visits to the two schools. She used e-mail to communicate with the school. She says she ate and played with the students. I do not know her age, but I presume she is fairly young. In addition to observation and extensive fieldnotes, she conducted some interviews and focus groups. I am surprised she does not mention whether or how she obtained parental permission to study the students. She addresses potential issues regarding power between adult and student, and seemed to pass herself off as a friend rather than as an authority figure. Her age and her own ethnicity (Japanese), which is similar to the students’ (Korean), obviously made this easier. She acknowledges that being female sometimes presented problems with her access to boys. The details she provides help the reader to get a clear picture of how her study was done.

This study provides an example of an inductive method. An inductive study moves from the particular to the general, unlike experimental research studies that begin with a general idea (or hypothesis) and then gather data to test the hypothesis. Often, when you do an ethnographic study, you really don't know what you are looking for. Nukaga knew she wanted to study this age group and this ethnic group. Being torn between information she learned and her own ethical standards, she brings up an issue regarding the illegality of food exchange in one of the schools. She readily acknowledges the position she took. Her recognition that teachers don't really know what is going on at lunch might be correct. Teachers relish this all-too-short break from the kids and an opportunity to engage in adult conversation—but look at how much Nukaga learned during this time. Perhaps the teachers themselves could gain similar information about the children.

Almost nothing is said about how she analyzed her data. For instance, I don't know what she means by “retroduction.” And what a surprise: she now moves into what she calls a “grounded theory approach,” using open coding of fieldnotes. I believe she chose to use a grounded theory approach because she was trying to make her study more “acceptable” to those who were overseeing it. I give some examples of grounded theory approaches in a later chapter. Remember, an ethnographic approach does not offer a clear pathway for data analysis. She collected an enormous amount of data, according to her own account, yet she tells us almost nothing about the analysis. What she did with interview data, focus group data, and other information from adults is left unstated.

Much of this article is taken up with detailed descriptions. For instance, she discusses seating patterns, and, when appropriate, she includes references that support her own position or interpretation of the meaning of what she found. For example, she talks about physical proximity as a marker of friendship.

You may recall that a classic ethnography is supposed to provide a rich and detailed description of the setting. Nukaga does this and enhances her description with the seating arrangement figures provided at the end of the article.

Were you surprised about the differences she observed between sharing what she calls “dry food” and “wet food”? I don't think I ever really thought about it. Apparently the kids she studied were reluctant to share food they brought from home. Were they embarrassed, or did they value it too much? She argues they were concerned about touching it, although there were exceptions. For instance, best friends could share wet food. Her interpretation appears to come from what the kids said.

It is in the section about hidden forms of social exchange that Nukaga makes her best case. She suggests that the different forms relate to marking, strengthening, or muting ethnic boundaries and their relationship to friendship. These ideas may be new to you unless you have studied some of the sociological issues and interpretations. She relates Goffman's work, demonstrating her knowledge of the related research.

The paper concludes with a fairly lengthy discussion of the meaning and interpretation of the findings. The writer weaves the relevant literature together with her own data to support her results.

If you return to the four questions I posed at the beginning of this chapter, you can see the extent to which this article was successful. In my opinion, you can answer yes to each of these questions.

- Does it provide new information and insights related to the topic?
- Is it engaging and written in a clear manner?
- Does it illustrate aspects of the Korean sub-culture that you expect to find in an ethnography?
- Do the positive aspects of the article outweigh the potential drawbacks?

I hope you enjoyed reading the article about Korean students and food exchange. The next article is also about students, but this time is about high school girls from a small town where the researcher–author grew up.

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## **Article 1.2. Power and Pleasure in Ethnographic Home-Work: Producing a Recognizable Ethics (2008)**

*Alecia Jackson*

### **My Expectations**

Before I read an article, I find it helpful to connect my own learning with what I am about to read. I ask myself a series of questions based on my own knowledge. For instance, I recognize that Jackson's 2008 study will probably fit into a category of being a postmodern or post-structural ethnography rather than a traditional ethnography. I think some initial clues are the style in which she writes and the personal tone of the writing. As such, I will look for issues associated with that type of ethnography. Does she address power? If so, how does she do so? In what ways does she deal with reflexivity?

I will also look for other important areas. Does she provide a clear explanation of the theory on which her study is based? Michel Foucault is an important French philosopher who wrote about power and knowledge. When I finish reading the section on Foucault in this article I hope I will understand his theories better. Does she write in an engaging manner to draw me in and help me to see what she sees? Does she acknowledge my own experiences—what I see? Are her conclusions justified or supported with what she writes? Do I connect with this study? What can I take away from the study that will be useful to me in my own work? What techniques or strategies do I find engaging? What parts do I want to change? Overall, how successful is she at accomplishing her goals?

At first glance, it appears that Jackson's ethnography will be a study of high school girls in a small town. As you read the study, however, you will discover that it is really about her role and how she negotiates and comes to understand what it means to be an ethnographer in a personal setting. In fact, the article takes a different path from what you might expect. It fits quite well into a post-structural model in that she relies on Foucault's philosophical contributions.

In her study, which was conducted in the high school she herself attended, Jackson turns the idea of looking at diverse cultures on its head. She does not want to place herself in a position of power, yet she struggles at times with trying to move away from the power role. I will talk about these issues in my comments. In this article, Jackson does a good job of explaining some of the philosophical underpinnings of Foucault's philosophy.

I have to admit I'm not sure I know what the title means. I am intrigued with the terms "power" and "pleasure" in it, though. I know the two terms separately, but when joined I am not sure what they mean. Does the author mean that power can be pleasurable, or that pleasure leads to power? What is ethnographic "home-work"? That is an unusual spelling. By hyphenating the two parts of the word is she implying that we should focus on both terms? Finally, I see the phrase "recognizable ethics." Again, I am somewhat stumped. I know I need to continue reading. So, in this study I find that the title is challenging. If the title is so complex that I am discouraged, I will not read further. If the title simply challenges me, I will read on.

This very brief abstract is quite a bit easier to understand than was the title. While I might not actually remember quite what Foucault says, I know he is a postmodern writer and philosopher. So now I see that the power–pleasure concept mentioned in the title comes from Foucault. I need to try to refresh my mind about some details of Foucault, but for now I just make a note to do it later. I am drawn in to the article by the second sentence in the abstract. “Through two data stories, the author recounts her own pleasurable acts while carrying out an ethnographic study in her hometown high school.” This is right up my alley: a study in one’s own school that brought pleasure. I am not sure that I ever thought that doing research could bring pleasure. And now I have a glimmer of an idea about what she means by “home-work.” Perhaps it means doing work in one’s own home setting. The last part of the abstract is another important clue to the purpose of her study: she is going to explore the ethics of the experience of the self. This makes me think about reflexivity.

In the introduction, Jackson provides a brief explanation about her study. She immediately explains her connection to the place she studied—her home town. She quickly explains and acknowledges her own subjectivity. She provides an explanation of the term “home-work”: it is ethnographic work at home. I wonder if that is a little too cute. She suggests that the pleasure of power in qualitative research is

## ABSTRACT

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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 homework are analyzed to point out the ethics of constituting the experience of the self in qualitative research.

## INTRODUCTION

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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 post-structural 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 reinvented in post-structuralism through the works of Michel Foucault. Foucault’s concept of power has been aptly utilized in post-structural 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.

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.

lacking. Furthermore, she suggests that pursuing pleasure in doing research should be seen as an ethical practice. It is interesting that she puts forth her viewpoint and takes a stand here. All too often researchers place themselves in a position of being objective and neutral. However, those ethnographers who adopt a postmodern or post-structural stance would probably agree with Jackson's taking a position, even if they have not actually thought of the position she takes. In the third paragraph, she briefly outlines the remainder of the article. Again, using this style helps you as a reader know what is to come and to set a framework.

This first paragraph works very well as a lure, or hook—something to draw the reader in. It is direct and engaging and immediate. Although I might be intimidated by what is to follow, for now I am willing to continue reading.

Now I know you probably have a tendency to avoid the literature reviews. Perhaps you just want to get on with the stories. For Jackson, though, the theory of power and pleasure that is discussed in the literature is the fulcrum on which her research rests. You should really forge ahead and read about Foucault. I hope that somewhere along the way you have read some of his work or at least heard his name. If you want to read more, Jackson's references include seven works by Foucault.

Let's try to make sense of Jackson's explanation of Foucault. Put yourself in the situation of entering a high school to study

## METHODOLOGY

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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 post-structural 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. 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

the culture. You are an adult, so you have more status than the students have. Jackson's situation is somewhat different from the typical adult in a high school, though. This was *her* high school, in *her* hometown. People might remember her. Some of her family members might be in the school. She certainly seems to have an entrée into the system. If you or I were to try to study this same small town, we would probably be viewed quite differently by the community. I know my accent would be different from the accents in that town, for instance. How would my accent affect my ability to be welcomed into the school? Jackson suggests that Foucault's position vis-à-vis a power relationship is actually unstable and can shift because it is characterized by freedom, but this explanation works only if the individuals in the relationship are free.

I have chosen to place these comments here, but I want you to look ahead at all the headings before you read further. Writers use headings to structure their writing. If you read the headings, you should be able to understand the structure imposed by the author. In writing ethnographies, there are not agreed upon, or required, headings. The author is free to organize the written work in any manner. Look at what Jackson decided to include:

- Introduction (very brief, only three paragraphs in length)

than being a “fixed point of departure or arrival” (de Lauretis, 1984, p. 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 post-structural 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 oftentimes 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 reconceptualizing 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

- Methodology (several pages long)
- Theories of Power and Pleasure (I guess this will explain what Foucault meant and provide some kind of a literature review.)
- Data Story 1 (Now I remember that she said she was going to include two data stories. This first one takes place in the teachers' lounge. That should be fun.)
- Data Story 2 (This is intriguing since it is about pleasure.)
- Conclusion (We return to recognizable ethics. Again, I am not sure what this will be about.)

Why do you think she chooses to place the word truth in quotation marks? Could it be because she does not believe that there is a single truth? If so, that is the position taken by Foucault.

Here she reveals so much about herself, displaying the self-reflexivity that is seen in post-structural writing.

If you take some time to think about what she says here, you will see her struggling with issues of role, power, and subjectivity. Do you think she will resolve the issues in this article? Do you think it is important to acknowledge them? I do.

I suspect she was drawn to look at the research she writes

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 reconceptualize the self in homework 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

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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

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

about after she realized her own struggle. This is an example of how a researcher weaves her own story and the larger body of research around a relevant topic.

Do you like this term she introduces—“fractured subjectivities”? Jackson uses the terms “fractured subjectivity,” “collapsed subjectivity,” and “split subjectivity.” What do you think these terms mean? Initially, I thought she saw this as a problem, but here she says that she takes pleasure in her split subjectivity.

I particularly like the lead-in to the literature review on Foucault. It places the review as a direct part of her research rather than as a requirement that just needs to be done and never thought about again. She clearly is thinking about power and pleasure.

This section is somewhat technical, but Jackson does an excellent job of providing an explanation to some complex material. If you have time, you should read it.

Jackson provides a nice connection between the literature review and her research. This is a sign of a review that is “connected” and not just “stuck” in an article. Try to create a similar segue in your own writing.

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, strategic 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

If you have given yourself the challenge of reading Jackson's explanation of power and pleasure, then you are ready to read her stories. It is here that you learn that Foucault spoke of the subject of ethical conduct; this is not Jackson's construct.

In the first story, you will find yourself in just the kind of setting that is so attractive to ethnographers. Here, Jackson presents a detailed description of the teachers' lounge. While she doesn't specifically say it, you should be able to surmise that the story is probably an amalgam of several stories and events that Jackson weaves together to make key points. After you take some time to read the story, try to see what points she makes. Although she is introduced by her former teacher as a PhD, this research is part of her dissertation work leading to her degree. Imagine all that this must mean in the context of this small town—what it means both to the staff and students. She refers to Mrs. Hill as her informant, but she does not provide an explanation of what she means by that term. Many ethnographers use the term "informant". In fact, qualitative researchers tend to use terms such as "respondent," "informant," or "co-researcher" when they refer to those from whom they gather data. They specifically avoid the term "sample," because that is

"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

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"Oh, we're going to have a PhD!" My former ninth grade typing teacher, Mrs. Anderson, 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-grade 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

often associated with quantitative research studies. After you have read the story, come back and think about these questions: Were you surprised when you finished the first story? Did you think you were going to learn about schooling in a small town? Did you anticipate Jackson's interpretation of what happened to her and her anticipated way of doing business? Why do you think she wrote this story?

Here Jackson writes in an engaging manner, drawing you immediately into the setting.

It might be helpful to know what year she did this fieldwork. How much time had gone by? She weaves information into the story in a seamless manner.

Although Jackson might want to keep identities hidden, it would be a simple matter to determine her hometown and the name and identity of the school and teachers. Other researchers have commented on problems of keeping things anonymous. Since Jackson reveals that this indeed is her high school, it is not possible to maintain anonymity. In this research, it does not appear to be an issue, but it could be in other studies.

Do you agree that Jackson should have selected Abbey as a participant in the study? It is difficult to turn your mind around alternative ways of doing things. In this case, there are so many connections

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 e-mail from Regina 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

between teachers, participants, and the researcher that it is clear that “fractured subjectivity” might become an issue. What is important is that Jackson acknowledges and makes the issue explicit. Later, she actually turns it into a positive aspect of doing the study.

Including considerable detail is typical of ethnographic studies. Clifford Geertz talks about “thick description,” and I think this qualifies. His work is considered seminal in the field.

Do you think she was surprised or comforted that so much had remained the same?

Jackson intersperses a private thought here, but doesn’t really address how she could have changed the situation. Do you think she should have said something to Mrs. Hill about the lack of privacy? Do you think she behaves in a professional way here?

Do you wonder how Jackson obtained this long quote? She has not told us that she is taping her interviews. Do you think she used “artistic license”?

What about issues of informed consent? Do you think the girls really had a “choice” whether to participate?

This is a very significant observation on Jackson’s part. Do you think her dual role compromised the data she was able to get? Or, alternatively, did it facilitate her entry and access to the school?

work; she’s just lazy. Marin is in my Advanced Placement class. She’s Mrs. Cleary’s 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

Are we into power issues here? Does Jackson shift roles as she returns to her personal environment? How does this affect her issues about pleasure that she discusses?

Reframing seems quite a novel way to address what many might perceive as a problem as her role became so controlled by the teachers at her former school. I wonder if she had anticipated any of these issues.

Do you think this section provides insight into the teachers' lounge? How much is Jackson sticking to her intended objectives? Actually, are you clear what her intended research objectives are? Sometimes researchers make them explicit, and in other cases researchers allow them to emerge gradually. This study does not have any section that specifically addresses research objectives or purpose. In an ethnographic study, usually the researcher's main goal is to study the culture of a particular group. Actually it turns out that the purpose of this article is not to report on the culture of a small town high school. It seems the purpose might be about the researcher's understanding of her role as a researcher and the pleasure principle. If you return to the article's title, you can see this more clearly.

I'm not sure what the term "discursive practice" means. Can you guess at its meaning from the context?

Approval by authorities within a setting is an interesting way to gain entrée into a setting. On one level, you can see this is helpful. In contrast, however, those in the

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 reinhabiting 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

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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

setting might feel that they do not really have a choice to refuse to participate. I have seen this problem when studying work environments—the managers might give approval and the workers have to “go along” with the approval. In some cases, the consequences of refusing to participate are quite serious for workers or for students.

Notice how she introduces this important component almost as an afterthought. You can be sure that Jackson had planned to gain consent from each girl. She may not have been clear under what circumstances, but she knew of the importance of such consent. Parental consent is usually needed for minors.

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 extracurricular 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 curtsy 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

What do you think she means here by the term “intelligibility”? I am not really sure. A cautionary word—it is good to avoid jargon or unfamiliar terms in your writing.

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), 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 section provides clues to what this study is really about.

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.

Were you surprised by the second story? It did not really seem to be a story in the usual sense of the word. In this story, Jackson gets into freedom and power. She has even incorporated a few comments from the literature.

## CONCLUSION: A RECOGNIZABLE ETHICS

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The last section of the paper should take her on the journey that she set out on in the beginning. I want you to read this and think about the extent to which she convinces you of her argument.

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 relive 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.

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*Source:* Jackson, A. (2008). Power and pleasure in ethnographic home-work: producing a recognizable ethics. *Qualitative Research*, 8(1), 37–51. Reprinted with permission of SAGE Publications and the author.

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## Summary and Review

Jackson raises some interesting points in the *Methodology* section. In a sense, you could say she acknowledges her own agenda. Rather than to be looked down upon, this way of doing research fits the conceptual understanding of doing this type of post-structural ethnography. You might want her to tell you more about the data she collected. She is a little vague, although she provides some detail in a footnote. She also suggests that this study is her dissertation, since she says she was a PhD student at the time. I don’t know what she means when she says she “felt her own subjectivity slipping and protesting in response to an intricate network of cultural practices and power relations.” Here you might ask: is this study about her or about the small town school, or perhaps about the intertwining of the two? She deals a lot with her subjectivity, which is an issue that ethnographers writing from a particular position often address. Why she raises the issue in the section on methodology is unclear to me. You should notice how she weaves available literature here. It is important to recognize that Jackson has thought about these issues quite a bit and read the literature. She takes you on a new dimension when she talks about reconceptualizing the ethnographic self. I suspect that at this point you might find the positions Jackson takes to be unfamiliar. You might feel as though you are treading on untrammelled ground. Perhaps you can take away the idea that she is thinking very hard about the self and studying what was once her home territory. Yet, at the same time, she is quite removed from the location—some sixteen years removed, according to her own account.

I get a little lost when trying to follow her pathway. She seems to be making new claims about the “negotiation of the self” that are not addressed in the literature on subjectivity. Whether and to what extent you “buy in” to these claims is your choice. All of this leads to what she calls the ethical construction of the self. Remember, you learned earlier that this is the thesis of her research. One thing we do not know: did she begin with this premise or did she come to it after being in the field? I suspect the latter, although she does not say for sure.

Finally, if you return to the four questions I posed at the beginning of this chapter, you can see the extent to which this article was successful. In my opinion, you can answer yes to each of these questions.

- Does it provide new information and insights related to the topic?
- Is it engaging and written in a clear manner?
- Does it illustrate aspects you expect to find in a post-structural ethnography (e.g. power, the self, negotiating)?
- Do the positive aspects of the article outweigh the potential drawbacks?

## FINAL COMMENTS

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At this point, you have read two very different ethnographies. Each represents an example of a way that ethnographies are written today. Nukaga's article takes a fairly traditional approach. In contrast, Jackson's article introduces ideas that are more contemporary.

You can access the complete articles at [www.sagepub.com/lichtmanreadings](http://www.sagepub.com/lichtmanreadings).