

THE LOST ETHNOGRAPHIES

STUDIES IN QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY

Series Editor: Dr. Sam Hillyard

Volumes in this Series:

- Volume 1: Conducting Qualitative Research
- Volume 2: Reflection on Field Experience
- Volume 3: Learning About Fieldwork
- Volume 4: Issues in Qualitative Research
- Volume 5: Computing and Qualitative Research
- Volume 6: Cross-Cultural Case Study
- Volume 7: Seeing Is Believing? Approaches to Visual Research
- Volume 8: Negotiating Boundaries and Borders
- Volume 9: Qualitative Urban Analysis
- Volume 10: Qualitative Housing Analysis: An International Perspective
- Volume 11: New Frontiers in Ethnography
- Volume 12: Ethics in Social Research
- Volume 13: Big Data? Qualitative Approaches to Digital Research
- Volume 14: Gender Identity and Research Relationships
- Volume 15: Perspectives on and from Institutional Ethnography
- Volume 16: Emotion and the Researcher: Sites, Subjectivities and Relationships

STUDIES IN QUALITATIVE
METHODOLOGY VOLUME 17

**THE LOST
ETHNOGRAPHIES:
METHODOLOGICAL
INSIGHTS FROM PROJECTS
THAT NEVER WERE**

EDITED BY

ROBIN JAMES SMITH

Cardiff University, UK

and

SARA DELAMONT

Cardiff University, UK



United Kingdom – North America – Japan
India – Malaysia – China

Emerald Publishing Limited
Howard House, Wagon Lane, Bingley BD16 1WA, UK

First edition 2019

Copyright © 2019 Emerald Publishing Limited

Reprints and permissions service

Contact: permissions@emeraldinsight.com

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, transmitted in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without either the prior written permission of the publisher or a licence permitting restricted copying issued in the UK by The Copyright Licensing Agency and in the USA by The Copyright Clearance Center. Any opinions expressed in the chapters are those of the authors. Whilst Emerald makes every effort to ensure the quality and accuracy of its content, Emerald makes no representation implied or otherwise, as to the chapters' suitability and application and disclaims any warranties, express or implied, to their use.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-78714-774-4 (Print)

ISBN: 978-1-78714-773-7 (Online)

ISBN: 978-1-78743-931-3 (Epub)

ISSN: 1042-3192 (Series)



ISOQAR certified
Management System,
awarded to Emerald
for adherence to
Environmental
standard
ISO 14001:2004.

Certificate Number 1985
ISO 14001



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

CONTENTS

<i>List of Contributors</i>	<i>vii</i>
Editorial Introduction <i>Robin James Smith and Sara Delamont</i>	<i>1</i>
Chapter 1 Periwig in Prague: The Opera Project We Never Did <i>Sara Delamont and Paul Atkinson</i>	<i>17</i>
Chapter 2 Remarks from a Lost Engagement with the Engaging Ordinarity of Parkour <i>Robin James Smith</i>	<i>31</i>
Chapter 3 Losing Bigfoot <i>Jamie Lewis and Andrew Bartlett</i>	<i>47</i>
Chapter 4 A Sociological Case of Stand-up Comedy: Censorship, Offensiveness and Opportunism <i>David Calvey</i>	<i>65</i>
Chapter 5 Researching Underwater: A Submerged Study <i>Susie Scott</i>	<i>79</i>
Chapter 6 Flat Claps and Dengue Fever: A Story of Ethnographies Lost and Found in India <i>Sally Campbell Galman</i>	<i>95</i>
Chapter 7 Losing the Students in a School Ethnography: Anthropology and the Puzzle of Holism <i>Martin Forsey</i>	<i>109</i>
Chapter 8 What Happens When You Take Your Eye Off the Ball? Reflecting on a ‘Lost Study’ of Boys’ Football, Uneven Playing Fields and the Longitudinal Promise of <i>Esprit De Corps</i> <i>Dawn Mannay</i>	<i>123</i>

Chapter 9 Exorcising an Ethnography in Limbo <i>Katy Vigurs</i>	<i>133</i>
Chapter 10 Finding the Lost Thing under the Binds of a Neglected Thesis Cover <i>Janean Robinson</i>	<i>147</i>
Chapter 11 The Edges and the End: On Stopping an Ethnographic Project, on Losing the Way <i>Katie Fitzpatrick</i>	<i>165</i>
<i>Index</i>	<i>177</i>

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

Paul Atkinson is Emeritus Professor of Sociology at Cardiff University, UK. His current interest is the work of artists and craft workers. His books include: *Thinking Ethnographically* (Sage, 2017), *For Ethnography* (Sage, 2014), *Everyday Arias* (AltaMira, 2006), *Interactionism*, co-authored with William Housley (Sage, 2003) and *Key Themes in Qualitative Research*, co-authored with Amanda Coffey and Sara Delamont (AltaMira, 2003). Sara Delamont and himself were the Founding Editors of the journal *Qualitative Research* (Sage). He co-edited the *Sage Handbook of Ethnography* (2001). He is a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences and a Fellow of the Learned Society of Wales.

Andrew Bartlett is a Sociologist of Science at the Universities of York and Sheffield, UK. He has published papers on psychiatric genetics, bioinformatics and public engagement, and is conducting research on epigenetics and gene editing. Perhaps relevant to a (lost) ethnography of Bigfoot, he has also written about the collectivities of 'fringe' physics.

David Calvey is a Senior Lecturer in Sociology at Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU), UK. Prior to working at MMU he held teaching and research positions at the University of Manchester, Liverpool John Moores University, The Open University, in the UK, and was a Visiting Fellow at the University of Queensland, Australia. His publications and research interests span ethnography, covert research, humour studies, martial arts, ethnomethodology, organisational creativity, interpersonal violence, private security and the night-time economy. He is a member of the British Sociological Association and a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. His recent book is *Covert Research: The Art, Politics and Ethics of Undercover Fieldwork* (Sage, 2017).

Sara Delamont, FAcSS, is a Reader Emerita in Sociology at Cardiff University, UK. She currently conducts fieldwork on *capoeira*, the Brazilian dance-fight game, and *savate*, the French kickboxing martial art. Her most recent book is Sara Delamont, Neil Stephens and Claudio Campos, *Embodying Brazil: An Ethnography of Diasporic Capoeira* (Routledge, 2017). Her previous books include *Feminist Sociology* (Sage, 2003), *Key Themes in the Ethnography of Education* (Sage, 2014) and *Fieldwork in Education Settings* (Third edition, Routledge, 2016). Together with Paul Atkinson she was Founding Editor of the journal *Qualitative Research* (Sage). She was one of the Editors of the *Sage Handbook of Ethnography* (Sage, 2001). She is a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences and a Fellow of the Learned Society of Wales. She is the recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Awards from the British Sociological Association and the British Education Research Association.

Katie Fitzpatrick is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Auckland, New Zealand. Her research and teaching are focussed on issues of health education, physical education and sexuality, as well as critical ethnographic and poetic methods. She is particularly concerned with the experiences of diverse youth in schools at the intersection of health, physicality, ethnicity, place, social class and gender/sexuality. She has published numerous articles and book chapters in these areas, as well as an international award-winning sole authored book *Critical Pedagogy, Physical Education and Urban Schooling* (Peter Lang, 2013). She has also co-edited an international collection on health education in schools (*Health Education: Critical Perspectives*, Routledge, 2014). Katie is currently a recipient of a five-year Rutherford Discovery Fellowship from the Royal Society of New Zealand.

Martin Forsey is an Educational Sociologist/Anthropologist with particular interests in the social and cultural effects of schooling and tertiary education. An award-winning teacher, Martin has an abiding interest in the scholarship of teaching. He also has an extensive list of research publications including books on neoliberal reform of government schooling and school choice and a range of papers reflecting his interest in qualitative research methods, social change, schools and society and education and mobility. His profile also reflects a strong commitment to interdisciplinary research.

Sally Campbell Galman is a Professor of Child and Family Studies at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, USA, and Co-Editor in Chief of *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*. As an anthropologist of childhood and a visual artist, her arts-based ethnographic research focusses on the study of childhood, gender and schooling, especially among young transgender or gender nonconforming children. Her ethnographic research has been supported by the Spencer Foundation. Her website is www.SallyCampbellGalman.com

Jamie Lewis is a Lecturer in Sociology at Cardiff University, UK. His research interests coalesce around the sociology of science and technology studies, public understanding of science and medical sociology. He has published papers on bio-informatics, psychiatric genetics, stem cell research and public engagement.

Dawn Mannay is a Senior Lecturer at Cardiff University, UK, with an interest in class, inequalities and education. She edited the collection *Our Changing Land: Revisiting Gender, Class and Identity in Contemporary Wales* (University Wales Press, 2016) and authored *Visual, Narrative and Creative Research Methods: Application, Reflection and Ethics* (Routledge, 2016). Her most recent edited book with Dr Tracey Loughran is titled *Emotion and the Researcher: Sites, Subjectivities and Relationships* (Emerald, 2018).

Janean Robinson is a Research Associate at Murdoch University, Australia. She was a Secondary School Teacher for 30 years with the Western Australian Education Department before completing her master's in Education on which her chapter is based. She continues to publish scholarly work that advocates for

the social justice of teachers and students within government schools including her PhD, *'Troubling' Behaviour Management: Listening to Student Voice* (2011), *'Sent Out' and Stepping Back In: Stories from Young People 'Placed at Risk'* (2016) co-authored with John Smyth and *Rethinking School-to-Work Transitions in Australia: Young People Have Something to Say* (Springer, 2018) co-authored with Barry Down and John Smyth.

Susie Scott is a Professor of Sociology the the University of Sussex, UK. She specialises in the microsociological perspectives of symbolic interactionism and dramaturgical theory, as applied to aspects of self-identity, social interaction and everyday life. Susie is the author of *Shyness and Society* (Palgrave, 2007), *Making Sense of Everyday Life* (Polity, 2009), *Total Institutions and Reinvented Identities* (Palgrave, 2011) and *Negotiating Identity* (Polity, 2015). She has also published articles on shyness, total institutions, mental disorder, performance art and swimming. Susie's current research creates and develops a new area, the 'sociology of nothing' (Routledge, 2019).

Robin James Smith is a Senior Lecturer at Cardiff University, UK, where he teaches sociology, ethnomethodology and qualitative methods. His research interests coalesce around a concern with mundane and professional interactions and practices in public space and, more recently, mountainous areas. He has published a number of articles from an ethnographic study of outreach work with rough sleepers, on qualitative research methodology and studies of membership categorisation practices. He is currently Editor of *Qualitative Research*.

Katy Vigers is an Associate Professor of Career and Higher Education at the International Centre for Guidance Studies, which is based in the University of Derby, UK. Prior to this, she was an Associate Professor of Professional and Higher Education at Staffordshire University, UK. She is an experienced social researcher, with an interest in educational inequalities and social justice, particularly in relation to the context of higher education and graduate employment. She was an Elected Convenor of the British Educational Research Association's Social Justice special interest group between 2013 and 2016. She has carried out research projects funded by the Office for Students, the Sutton Trust, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, the Department for Education, The Careers and Enterprise Company, the Gatsby Foundation, HEFCE, OFFA and the Society for Research into Higher Education.

This page intentionally left blank

EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

Robin James Smith and Sara Delamont

This collection is an unusual addition to the autobiographical or ‘confessional’ literature by ethnographers: that is, those publications in which researchers report on what they experienced and learnt whilst trying to conduct a piece of ethnographic research. Our title ‘Lost Ethnographies’ is not to be taken literally. In this introduction we draw out the lessons of our contributions, ‘trouble’ the categories of ‘lost’ and of ‘ethnography’, and of the confessional genre of text itself. There are a good many collections of such ‘confessions’ and autobiographies, and the genre has been analysed by [Van Maanen \(1988\)](#), who contrasted three varieties of such *Tales of the Field*, whilst [Atkinson \(1992\)](#) and [Delamont \(2009\)](#) used the scholarly work on Russian folklore by Propp to convey the narrative structure of confessional tales about American urban ethnographies and fieldwork amongst feminist witches. However, the authors of the conventional autobiographical or confessional pieces choose to constrain their stories – and there are conventions which are widely observed – their authors are generally successful.

The conventions of the genre mean that the authors recount problems and obstacles that they overcame, on their way to their academic career. The ethnographer of the ambulance crew or the coven of feminist witches or the factory floor or the Newfoundland fishing village tells how she finally got good, publishable data: the scholar gets the PhD, publishes the book and the papers, obtains a job. Such accounts are always useful and often entertaining. Readers learn about access, or field relations, or theoretical sampling, or handling ‘trouble’ or managing risks. They also learn that real researchers manage to do projects even though the methods do not proceed as the textbooks suggest they should. Dimensions of research roles, such as race, gender, age, class or sexual orientation, are explored. Ward (2016) for example, presents 10 papers that reflect on gender identities and research relations.

This collection is different. The projects described here never happened, or fell apart or went seriously off track. The scholars reflect on what might have been.

The Lost Ethnographies: Methodological Insights from Projects that Never Were
Studies in Qualitative Methodology, Volume 17, 1–15

Copyright © 2019 by Emerald Publishing Limited

All rights of reproduction in any form reserved

ISSN: 1042-3192/doi:[10.1108/S1042-319220190000017001](https://doi.org/10.1108/S1042-319220190000017001)

One recurrent theme in the book is absence or absences. This has three meanings here. First there is an emphasis on the *lacunae* in the existing ethnographic canon: what has not been studied, written and remembered. Second there is a focus on the absences in the ethnographies that we do have: the taken for granted things the authors have not drawn attention to. Third there is the injunction that good research is frequently generated by focussing on what is absent in the fieldsite, in the narratives of our informants, in our own fieldnotes, our own writing. There is one general lesson: nothing is ever wasted.

We do not summarise our contributors' chapters in great detail in this introduction, because all our authors speak eloquently for themselves. The projects have been 'lost' in many different ways and at various stages of their existence from grant application to publication. Some were never begun; some produced a thesis but had no life beyond that, others did not achieve the form their author wanted. The ethnographers have mixed emotions about them. The actual, or potential, projects were, or would have been done, in different settings from a swimming pool in the south of England, via the forests of the West Coast of the USA and the streets of Prague, to South Auckland and the west coast of Australia. The key informants were, or would have been drawn from groups and settings across the age range, the class structure, the racial hierarchies and the political spectrum of their societies: marginal young people and affluent opera lovers. Some studies were, or would have been, close to the researcher's home, others distant, 'exotic' and unfamiliar.

When we were recruiting potential authors, we were pleased that everyone we approached thought the collection would be useful and entertaining. The refusers were of three main types: some people said they did not have a lost project in their attic or biography, others told us that they did not want to publish about research they still hoped to do, and a few scholars told us privately of an eligible investigation that they did not want to discuss in print – those ethnographies remain 'lost', for now. Interestingly enough, one of the more senior ethnographers that fell in to the first category, noted that they did not have a lost ethnography, because in their day, they just 'did what they wanted to do'; we return to some of the constraints on the contemporary ethnographer below. Some people in the second category were prepared to write, but we mutually agreed that the future prospects for that study could be damaged by its inclusion here; that is, we all agreed that we shared the hope they would be able to conduct that study in the future. 'Call no project "lost" until all hope is gone' was our philosophy.

Precisely because this is a rather different collection of confessional or autobiographical chapters, and because of those scholars who decided they did not wish to write about their last ethnography, we have thought carefully about the potential reception of the volume.

RECEPTION(S)

One recurrent problem with the autobiographical or confessional tale from the field is the way(s) in which it is read. Long ago [Becker \(1967\)](#) warned that any

study of a 'deviant' or subaltern population attracts the criticism that it must be both a study of an immoral or even wicked subculture and an inaccurate report, precisely because it does not repeat the majority view of the dominant culture (i.e. the prisoners' view of prisons and the pupils' view of schools) rather than the prison officers' view of prisons, or the teachers' view of schools. He focussed in that famous and much re-visited paper on settings that were then 'political' – such as prisons and policing, and posed the question 'Whose side are we on?' (see [Atkinson, Coffey, & Delamont, 2003](#), chapter 3, for a discussion of that question).

Amongst the current issues raised by that 50-year-old paper is that the sociological ethnographer is no longer the 'we' that Becker envisaged: straight American men who are white protestant or Jewish. Additionally there are no longer any research sites which can be treated as *not* politically changed. Since Becker's reflections on the politics and ethics of ethnographic fieldwork qualitative sociology has had the epistemological rupture or paradigm change, commonly called the literary or rhetorical turn precipitated by the publication of [Clifford and Marcus \(1986\)](#). The naive ethnographer might believe that everyone's reading has become more self-consciously reflexive and that autobiographical or confessional texts would be recognised and then read as rhetorical performances in a well-established genre. However, the reception of Subhir [Venketash \(2008\)](#) and Alice [Goffman \(2014\)](#) shows that is not true. Our contributors have all recognised that their chapters may be read naively and literally, rather than by 'well-informed' or 'expert' readers.

The acceptable style and content of autobiographical or 'confessional' tales has changed over the past 50 years. Early autobiographies were rare, but those that did appear were published under pseudonyms and seen as quite separate from the academic literature even being sold as fiction. Laura Bohannon, for example, published her confessional autobiography under the pseudonym Eleanor Bowen (1954). Contemporary authors who choose to reach out to a non-academic audience with ethnographic novels and stories no longer feel they need to use pseudonyms. Laurel [Richardson \(1990, 1994\)](#) and Alma [Gottlieb \(2016\)](#), for example, both celebrate publishing in two genres. They both write conventional ethnographic texts, use alternative genres and write novels, all with their real names on them. Richardson both writing alone and with her husband Ernest Lockridge, a novelist ([Richardson & Lockridge, 1991, 1994, 1998](#)). She has been an active campaigner for using more types of text as ways to communicate findings. Alma [Gottlieb \(2016\)](#) an anthropologist reports a similar collaboration with her husband, also a novelist, Phillip Graham ([Gottlieb & Graham, 1994, 2012](#)) writing about the *Beng* people of the Côte d'Ivoire. The 1994 book with her husband sold many more copies than the monograph based on her doctoral thesis. It is noticeable that these textual advances have occurred separately in sociology and anthropology and neither Richardson nor Gottlieb cites the others' publications.

In the academic reflections since the 1970s on what [Coffey \(1999\)](#) called *The Ethnographic Self*, the choices made about what to reveal about themselves and their ethnographic research has changed a great deal. Contemporary scholars feel much freer to reveal details of their lives, their dilemmas and their mistakes in

public. This is particularly noticeable in the confessionals by ethnographers who have studied supernatural phenomena such as modern neo-paganism (Delamont, 2009) and the African-origin cultures of the Americas.

In the introductory essay for the four-volume set on *Ethnographic Discourse* (Atkinson & Delamont, 2008a), Paul Atkinson and Sara Delamont (2008b) have illustrated the changes in what is 'acceptable' when writing about fieldwork today, compared to the 1930s or 1950s, with a brief comparison of monographs about the African-origin religions of Brazil, Cuba and Haiti (Candomblé, Santería and Voodoo) produced in the 1930s, 1960s and post-1986. That showed, amongst other things, that monographs published since 1986 all report that the ethnographer has been initiated into the religion, and therefore the authors ground their authenticity claims on their status as initiated believers and practitioners. Whereas the monographs published before 1970 reported the dispassionate, outsider, observations of first world white men about poor, black 'believers' in an alien religion. Ruth Landes' (1947) *The City of Women* is a notable exception to the work of the pre-1970 period, and her exclusion from the canonical texts of the 1940s reinforces our argument about that canon. Those published in the past 30 years are written by 'insiders', who share the possession experiences and ecstasy of the devotees. These authors include women and men of colour, but the white men also describe their research in an entirely different way from their predecessors.

Rethinking 'Failure' and the Contemporary Academy

This collection is also published at a moment when academics are re-considering 'failure' in the context of the increasing pressure on academics to 'perform'. For example, Johannes Haushofer, of Princeton University, published a 'CV of Failures'¹ detailing posts he did not get, grants that went unfunded and rejected papers. He begins the CV thus:

Most of what I try fails, but these failures are often invisible, while the successes are visible. I have noticed that this sometimes gives others the impression that most things work out for me. As a result, they are more likely to attribute their own failures to themselves, rather than the fact that the world is stochastic, applications are crapshoots, and selection committees and referees have bad days.

Indeed, Haushofer's 'CV' captures something of a moment in academia – in no small way enabled by social media and 'academic Twitter' in particular – when academics are far more openly 'outing' their failures and frustrations. The 'smooth narrative' of an academic career is now more visibly disrupted by public announcements of rejected papers, failed job applications and unfunded research grants. Whilst we are not presenting ethnographic work gathered in this collection as failures, we recognise that they could be considered 'failed projects' in the current climate of metricisation and key performance indicators.

The intention of this collection is not to follow in Haushofer's lead by making failure visible, but, instead, to make visible some of the frustrations and challenges of ethnographic research through honest and open reflections drawn from research that never was. The chapters also describe the recovery of the seeds of research, that did not, for one reason or another, flourish in to fully-fledged

projects and publications. Each chapter outlines how the ethnography in question, whether it be at the planning, fieldwork or writing stage, was in one way or another 'lost'. Ethnographers have, of course, long recognised that any study is not the final polished version. The monograph, like the map, is not the territory.

Most readers of this book will also recognise how all ethnographies are replete with false starts, frustrations in the field, missed opportunities and missing data, and straight forward misfortune from which the ethnographer must 'make do'. Gary Alan Fine, for example, lost a month or two's worth of fieldnotes from his fieldwork with mushroom pickers (Fine, 1998) when he mailed them to himself after taking them to Europe for coding and had to reconstruct the detail contained therein (G. A. Fine, personal communication, 2018). Stories of lost fieldnotes and the complete typescripts of monographs abound in social anthropology, including Franz Steiner's book on taboo lost during his escape from the Nazi invasion of Austria, reconstructed in London and left on the Underground, and Edmund Leach's fieldnotes from Burma lost in the Japanese invasion. It is said that Erving Goffman researched and completed an ethnography of gambling (and winning at gambling) in Las Vegas that was never published: a text we are sure many readers would love to read, and that Las Vegas house bosses would gladly see remain lost. There is also the 'lost' version of *Sidewalk* that sits in Mitch Duneier's archives, a version he rewrote in its entirety for what became the published version. And there are the countless ethnographies that, in another sense, are lost due to being forgotten or subjected to disciplinary amnesia.

The projects in this collection – and the reasons that found them 'lost' – coalesce around key themes of thwarted fieldwork, the frustrations of funding, difficulties in writing up and projects that simply had to give way to others. The difference, here, is that their 'lostness' is directly engaged with, rather than left as footnote or anecdote. As noted above, we leave the telling of the specific reasons projects became 'lost' to the individual authors. There are, however, a number of key themes within and across the chapters the point to what we see as the pay-off from writing and reading about projects that never were.

LOST AND FOUND

In introducing this volume, we suppose any (argumentative) reader might point out that none of the ethnographic studies described herein are 'lost'. They are, after all, now published. They are of a different status than the myriad other studies that have never seen light of day or, indeed, have been forgotten. Nevertheless, the inspiration for the collection was a discussion around the notion that there is something worth exploring, methodologically, in ways that the projects and their authors became lost, as well as the practice and experience of recovering and finding them again. We do not explore 'getting lost' as a methodology in itself. The Situationists did this, physically, for example. Patti Lather (2007) does so epistemologically and politically, in her writings on feminist ways of critiquing certainty and mastery of knowledge. In that text, Lather is careful to avoid the discussion of getting lost as in some way providing a corrective, retaining the possibility of

mastery through lessons learnt along the way. We think that the chapters in this collection echo something of that spirit in discussing ‘loss’ and being ‘lost’ in a humbler manner than claiming to prescribe mastery; we are hardly in a position to so, drawing on projects that did not take place or went wrong! We do, however, reflect here and across the collection, upon the some of the methodological insights to be gained from the relationship of doing ethnography to getting and being lost. Projects are lost in the sense of never proceeding past the planning stage, fieldworkers are lost (and sometimes literally), phenomena are shown to be lost in overly theorised existing projects, knowledge is lost through elements of projects that were not pursued or not written up, voices are lost in the writing.

On Being Lost

Something we might note, initially, is that for something to be considered lost it must, in some way, be considered owned in the first instance. And in this way, not all things can be considered lost and, or, be considered found when encountered. An attractive pebble on a beach – to borrow an example from Harvey Sacks (1995: 385) – can be discovered and picked up and put in a pocket, becoming someone’s pebble. It could only *then* be lost. Conversely, something odd would be occurring if someone handed a pebble in to lost property. In this sense, then, objects are viewed in relation to persons and categories of persons. Certainly, here in this collection, there is a clear sense of ownership, of personal connection to the lost projects and, indeed, of the projects being lost as experienced as a loss. In this way, the chapters illustrate how ethnographies are not simple objects. A lost project is distinct from losing and finding a set of keys or a pair of glasses. A lost ethnography is a loss of potential knowledge, of new ground covered. And certainly, losing an ethnography, or becoming lost in the midst of an ethnography, can be a painful personal experience. The recovery of a lost ethnography can, as some of our authors note, be a difficult experience too. At the same time, there is also the sense of what is to be gained in becoming lost. Beyond any immediate difficulties or discomforts, getting lost can be an instructive experience. We do not want to over stretch the oft-repeated metaphor that an ethnography, and indeed an academic career, is a ‘journey’. Engaging in a field work project, however, can be experienced as such. Perhaps David Calvey (this collection) is correct in calling it the ‘academic adventure’; and the best adventures regularly feature, or indeed begin with, getting a little lost.

In *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*, Rebecca Solnit (2005) writes that to become lost is to have ceased paying attention to your surroundings, to the landscape you have moved through. The condition and experience of being lost is thus embedded within relations of movement (a journey *to* somewhere, physically or intellectually) and landscape (the context of the journey). Academic projects are, in this way, at risk of becoming ‘lost’ in the sense that they must get somewhere. Solnit observes how one cannot be lost on a journey without itinerary or defined end-point, or a fixed schedule. She cites Daniel Boone, the American pioneer and frontiersman, who remarked ‘[I was] never lost in my life ... although I was once confused for three days’. The distinction, notes Solnit, between Boone’s confusion

and being fully lost is significant. Boone was comfortable with inhabiting that confusion and unthreatened by it. He was, as Solnit has it, literate in the language of the landscape in which he moved.

For ethnographers, many of whom operate at some form of frontier themselves, there are increasing and multiple pressures for projects to reach a destination, and a particular form of destination, increasingly quickly. Patti Lather (2007, p. 6) notes how moves to certainty are spurred on within the audit culture. Time spend lost, or even confused, is judged to be wasted time. Yet, a sure way to lose your way, and your sense of direction, is to hurry so much that you cease paying attention to your surroundings. More haste than speed. Mountain Rescue teams call this 'target fixation'. It is a mode of movement that must be guarded against by search and rescue parties who, upon locating and hurrying towards one missing person or casualty, run the risk of not seeing others and other hazards, along the way. We think that the papers in this collection show how an attentiveness through an ethnographic journey, and resisting fixation, is an important matter for ethnographers too.

Being lost is not simply a geo-locational matter, but is about becoming disoriented to the point where one is not simply a little confused but disconnected from where one is and where one came from. Those reading this book at the early stages of their first ethnography may recognise well the feeling of not quite knowing where they are, or how to get to where they thought they were heading when they set out. Adele Clarke's (2005) situational mapping methodology is one way in which ethnographers can keep a sense of where they are in the journey in and through a complex field. It is one way of becoming comfortable with being lost in data. There are also many tales of the field where the ethnographer has become lost in the world of their informants – one of the criticisms levied at Alice Goffman. Warnings of becoming 'too close' and 'going native' abound.

Those who have supervised budding ethnographers will recognise that something of the difficulty of teaching ethnography is bound up with helping the student become comfortable, for a while, with being lost. Indeed, Katy Vigurs (this collection) reflects on the entanglement of fieldwork experience with supervisory practice. Such work involves allowing, perhaps even encouraging, the student to reach a point where they do not necessarily know where they are headed. Being lost in the early stages of a project – in reading, in data, in ideas – can be productive. The job of the supervisor being, later, when the time is appropriate, helping the student select from the diverging paths identified in the course of fieldwork.

Objects and things also become lost in relation the movements of their owner; unknowingly dropped on the way somewhere, misplaced or mislaid, or somehow hidden in plain sight – there all along, under one's nose. Oftentimes, an object only becomes 'lost' when one goes to use it. Other objects are 'found' in the course of a person's becoming lost; being lost means being somewhere new, or perhaps seeing somewhere one has been before in a new way. One inevitably encounters new places, new people and new experiences in being lost. Things can become discovered, 'found'; things that one was not aware one was looking for. This is the problem faced by the ethnographer and recalls Meno's Paradox (also discussed by

[Solnit, 2005](#), p. 6). Meno asks: 'How do you go about finding the thing the nature of which is totally unknown to you?' We return to this paradox, from the perspective of the ethnographer below.

Suffice to say, for now, that we intend the discussion of these lost projects as instructive in how 'being lost' figures in ethnographic work, and how lost things are and can be found. The collection provides less of a route map of the type found in most methods textbooks, and more of a rough guide to 'lostness'. The discussion of these lost, and found, ethnographies is intended to throw some light on how to keep moving, how to recover one's self and one's projects, and to assist in becoming literate.

In different ways, the chapters gathered in this collection each address a different sense of 'lost' and, also, of things being found. The chapters reveal something of the penumbra of ideas and inspirations and failed attempts at projects that surround an academic career. In terms of the projects that never happened at all, traces of the sparks of the ideas that, for whatever reason, never caught alight, can be found in other forms, in other projects. In other chapters, projects are discussed that would have led the author down another path entirely. In other cases, the author discusses how they became lost in some way; in the course of fieldwork or in the course of tackling the writing up of the data. In the following section, we outline something of the lessons drawn from the chapters gathered herein.

IMAGINED JOURNEYS AND ROUTE PLANNING

The first section of chapters in this collection focusses on research that was planned but never happened at all. Viewed negatively, and within the academic audit culture, these projects 'failed' before they began. They are projects that required funding to be carried out in the first place, due to demands on travel or time. Consequently, these planned projects made way for other research that took their place on the author's career path. Perhaps by virtue of them not having been completed, and thus only able to outline speculative findings and potential contributions, the chapters here are better able to outline matters of inspiration and design that are often only briefly specified in substantively focussed papers. These projects, as with a number throughout the collection, point to the kind of 'blue skies' ethnography that may struggle to gain funding. We see them less as 'blue skies' projects and more as interesting ethnographic projects sparked by the intellectual curiosity of the authors and an awareness and attention paid to opportunities that emerge on a journey somewhere else. The lack of available opportunities for more speculative and exploratory research of that kind is, we suggest, more to do with the narrowing of the imagination of funding bodies, than with the failing of ethnographers to produce 'meaningful' research. More positively, we hope readers will also gain something from the discussion of the emergence of projects and their initial conception in a way that goes beyond standard descriptions found in methods textbooks.