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Exchange across Difference: The Production of Ethnographic Knowledge

The Natives Are Gazing and Talking Back: Reviewing the Problematics of Positionality, Voice, and Accountability among "Native" Anthropologists

ABSTRACT In this article, a linguistic anthropologist reviews the growing literature on the possibilities and problematics of under-standing "native" anthropology and its implications for the construction of ethnographic knowledge. The author examines the cen-trality of language for "native" scholars in negotiating their legitimacy in the field. Confessions of failure by native scholars and their dilemmas with translation illuminate the dialogic and political nature of ethnographic inquiry, particularly when research is conducted in "home" communities. Moreover, native ethnographers' critical reflexivity regarding their subject positionings and "voice" may con-stitute a counterhegemonic rhetorical strategy for negotiating multiple accountabilities. Self-identification as a native scholar is seldom a means through which researchers "play the native card" via a noncritical privileging of their "insider" status. Instead, claiming native status may act tactically as both a normalizing and an exclusivizing endeavor, as well as a signifier of the decolonization of anthropo-logical thought and practice. The author considers these and other critical implications of native anthropological research in relation to her own multisited research on African American linguistic and cultural practices focused on hair care. [Keywords: "native" anthropol-ogy, language, representation, reflexivity, translation]

T HE LAST THREE DECADES have witnessed a critical evaluation of dominant ideas within the social sci-ences. Within anthropology, this "experimental *moment*" (Marcus and Fischer 1986) extends even further and has, as Rosaldo notes, been driven by "enduring, not transitory, ethical and analytical issues" (1989:38). The ongoing re-figuration of social thought (Geertz 1983; Tedlock 1991) within anthropology is reflected in the interrogation, evo-lution, and even wholesale abandonment of concepts pre-viously considered central to the discipline. Fundamental concepts such as "native," "culture," and "the field" have been reframed by some scholars to represent the con-structed and dynamic nature of notions such as identity, culture, and place (Appadurai 1988; Casey 1996; D'Amico-Samuels 1997; Narayan 1993).

LOOKING INWARD: A REFLEXIVE ANTHROPOLOGY

Additionally, though certainly not without critique (see discussion in James et al. 1997; Washburn 1998), research-ers are increasingly practicing gradations of a "reflexive anthropology" (Hymes 1999; Myerhoff and Ruby 1982). This approach is rooted in the premise that ethnographic fieldwork is an *intersubjective* process that entails an inter-action of various subjectivities (Briggs 1970; Geertz 1971; Rabinow 1977). These subjectivities include those of re-searchers, armed with the theoretical perspectives of their discipline, and the perspectives and representations of study participants (Srinivas 1966, 1979). Being reflexive enables researchers to critically consider their own cultural biases and negotiate various ways of seeing while investi-gating and "translating" culture(s) (Geertz 1971). A reflexive perspective is also particularly sensitive to the socially con-structed nature of knowledge production.

The practice of reflexivity and the reevaluation of major tenets in anthropology have been welcomed by many schol-ars as a means of confronting the historical role that our discipline has played in Western colonialism and its crea-tion of "Third World" territories (Foucault 1980; Harrison

1997a; Marcus 1998; Minh-ha 1989; Said 1989; Ulin 1991). A critically reflexive approach has contributed to descriptions of peoples belonging to what Anderson (1991) terms "imagined" or socially constructed communities. This approach has also highlighted the fact that research participants have always acted individually and communally, traveled (Appadurai 1991; Clifford 1992; Kaplan 1996; Olwig 1997), and theorized about their own cultural identities and ideologies (Clarke 1970; Gwaltney 1993; Harrison and Harrison 1999; Kenyatta 1965; Rosaldo 1989).

Notable changes can also be observed in the ways in which ethnographers conduct fieldwork and present their findings. Anthropologists today have largely shunned the term *natives* as one that connotes a monolithic group of peoples confined to a distant exotic space (see Appadurai 1988, 1990; Clifford 1988; Gupta and Ferguson 1992, 1997; Olwig 1997). Researchers are increasingly expected to account for how their own positionalities (Kondo 1990; Narayan 1993) and ways of asking (Briggs 1994; Page 1988), seeing/interpreting (Dwyer 1982), and speaking (Whitehead 1986; Woof and Wiegman 1995) influence their production of "partial" representations of their engagements in the field (see also Abu-Lughod 1991; Clifford 1986; Haraway 1988; Okely and Callaway 1992; Rosaldo 1989). Anthropologists are also devoting considerable attention to the varied influences that their presence and scholarship may have on the peoples whom they study (Jackson 1989; Marcus and Fischer 1986). More broadly, the field has also been reconfigured as inclusive of such modern settings as the urban village (Passaro 1997), media (Appadurai 1990; Marcus 1996), fashion and theater (Kondo 1997), and global villages in cyberspace (Herring 1996; Morley and Robins 1995; Weston 1997). Anthropologists and other social scientists are increasingly conducting fieldwork in unprecedented places (Clifford 1997b; Garber et al. 1996; Powdermaker 1966), including their own communities.

THE CHANGING FACE OF ANTHROPOLOGY

The move by some anthropologists to conduct fieldwork at "home" is a fundamental break from the classic tradition of what Rosaldo (1989) characterizes as the "Lone Ethnographer" riding off into the sunset in search of the native. But for the last three decades and beyond, so-called Native/Other(s) have been duly observed *gazing and talking back* as researchers, students, and lay critics of academic presentations and published scholarship (Agar 1996; Caulfield 1979; Duranti 1997; Gullahorn-Holecek 1983; Hale 1991; hooks 1989; Marcus 1998; Narayan 1993; Paredes 1984; Reed-Danahay 1997; Tedlock 1991).

Much of this scholarship has been produced by anthropologists working within their own non-Western villages or within ethnic minority communities in the United States (e.g., Aguilar 1981; Altorki and El-Solh 1988; Clarke 1970; Fahim and Helmer 1980; Gordon 1998; Haniff 1985; Hurston 1979; Kenyatta 1965; Messerschmidt 1981a, 1981b; Okely 1996; Page 1988; Paredes 1984; Rosaldo

1985; Srinivas 1966; Whitehead 1992; Yang 1945, 1972). Although this scholarship reveals variation among native and "indigenous" scholars concerning their positionalities as cultural "insiders" and the reflexive nature of their scholarship, a great majority of these researchers coalesce around the goal of decolonizing Western anthropology through more reflexive modes of representation and critique (Basso 1984; D'Amico-Samuels 1997; Harrison 1997c; Harrison and Harrison 1999; Minh-ha 1989; Tedlock 1991). Several themes that typify this "corrective" agenda (Gwaltney 1993) include the following: examining the historical legacy of anthropologists' role in the subjugation, exploitation, and exoticization of people of color throughout the world (Amory 1997; Collins 1990; Jones 1970; Nelson 1996; Paredes 1984; Willis 1999); incorporating the experiences and voices of research participants in ethnographic texts (Christian 1990; Collins 1990; Page 1988; Smith 1999); and returning something of value to the researchers' host communities (Alvarez 1996; Fahim 1979; Whitehead 1992; Williams 1996; Zavella 1996). For many scholars working in their own or diaspora communities, this has necessitated abandoning academic jargon (Mihesauh 1988) and various research methods that might be alienating and intrusive to participants (Hennigh 1981; Medicine 2001; Messerschmidt 1981a; Mufwene 1993; Rampton 1992; Willis 1999), such as the use of I.Q. tests (Baugh 1983), tape recorders (Harrison 1997b; Page 1988), written surveys (Gwaltney 1993), and specific sampling techniques (Paredes 1984; see also Labov 1998). In such ways, anthropologists working at home embrace some of the major tenets of postcolonial and postmodern scholarship.

This, however, is not to suggest that all (or only) native researchers practice a politically engaged anthropology (Tedlock 1991), nor is it meant to imply that anthropologists who self-identify as working within their own societies have not deconstructed their identities as native scholars—trained in the West—or their host sites as home sites (e.g., Abu-Lughod 1988; Chow 1993; Jones 1970; Kashoki 1982; Kondo 1990; Mihesauh 1988; Minh-ha 1989; Rosaldo 1985; Srinivas 1966; Zavella 1996; Zentella 1997). For example, Narayan (1993) notes that accounts by "native anthropologists" that solely celebrate the privileges associated with being an insider fail to expose the negotiation of identity and legitimacy that is necessary of all anthropologists, including those working within their own cultural communities (see also Ong 1995; Trouillot 1991). Similarly, Nelson (1996) argues that native anthropologists are seldom considered insiders by default; instead, they experience various "gradations of endogeny" throughout the course of their fieldwork.

CENTRAL THEMES

This article examines these and other complexities of native anthropology and is centered on four main topics. The first topic, following Narayan (1993), is an analysis of the question *How native is a native anthropologist?* This

discussion synthesizes commentary by several native scholars that interrogates the integrity and fortitude of their indigenous backgrounds as authorizing carte blanche status in the field. Their arguments expose the fallacy of presuming commonalities with research participants based on their shared ethnic, gendered, and class backgrounds: All scholars, particularly native ones, must diligently strive to negotiate legitimacy in the field.

A second topic is the centrality of language and discourse knowledge for native scholars working in their home communities. "Knowing the language(s)" of a research population is a mantra to which all ethnographers are socialized before conducting fieldwork. For native scholars, an awareness of cultural rules for verbal and nonverbal engagement can be essential to negotiating cultural legitimacy and trust; further, communicative missteps by native ethnographers can serve to impede research efforts. For example, verbal blunders committed by African American researchers during the initial stages of their fieldwork can invoke distrust and disdain among their research participants and make researchers vulnerable to the label of "educated fools."

The third topic concerns native scholars' confessions of "failure" in the field and dilemmas of translation beyond the field. To the extent that wisdom is gained from failure, scholars' reported shortcomings tell us much about the representational politics that emerge across engagements in native fields. Moreover, dilemmas of translation characterizing native scholarship further underscore the representational politics that color native ethnographers' discursive presentations of self, methodologies, and published reports.

Finally, this review concludes by considering the political stakes inherent in native scholars' ethnographic work in places that they, in some way, consider to be home. Native researchers, perhaps more than others, often experience pressures to "translate" their work so that it is accessible to both lay/communal and academic audiences. This task, however, can be difficult for native ethnographers to reconcile because each constituency has multiple, and often contradictory, standards governing how to ask and how to say things (and what) in published reports.

Throughout the article, I invoke insights gleaned from my six-year multisited study of language and cultural practices associated with hair in the English-speaking diaspora. Within the cultural context of black women's hair care, the "kitchen" is both an intimate space wherein females' socialization into cultural hair-related practices often originates and an in-group term characterizing the hair at the nape of a black woman's neck where hair is typically curlier (Gates 1994; Jacobs-Huey 1996a; Smitherman 1994). Several experiences associated with "making it to the *kitchen*" are offered to augment and extend discussion about the centrality of language in negotiating identity and legitimacy in and beyond the field. The intimate and provocative nature of both hair-related sites has increasingly sensitized me to the implications of "airing

dirty laundry" about the politics of black women's hairstyle choices. I discuss how my necessary negotiation of hair-related politics evidences some of the complexities of translation and representation in native scholarship, particularly the dilemma of reconciling accountabilities to disparate audiences.

INTERROGATING THE *NATIVE* IN *NATIVE ANTHROPOLOGIST*

In her influential article, "How Native Is a 'Native' Anthropologist?" Narayan (1993) exposes the complexity of assigning native status to scholars who, like she, are of multiple cultural backgrounds and work within communities that they consider to be home (see also Abu-Lughod 1988, 1991; Kondo 1986, 1990; Limon 1991). Drawing from her fieldwork in India and the Himalayas, she also highlights the important role played by research participants in the choreography of ethnographic inquiry. Research participants affect the people and places to which ethnographers have access during fieldwork, thus influencing their research in substantial ways (Mohanty 1989; Page 1988). Research participants' self-concepts may also be influenced through their interaction with researchers (e.g., Williams 1996). Moreover, study participants may ascribe to researchers particular identities and cultural roles based on their particular gender, caste/class, educational status, age, family relations, marital status, and so on (e.g., Harrison 1997b; Smith 1999; Whitehead 1986). In such cases, native scholars may face various challenges in negotiating their dual identities as community members and researchers.

The complexities of negotiating identity in the field are highlighted in accounts by other native scholars who, for various reasons, were ascribed such social roles as "dutiful" (Abu-Lughod 1988) and "prodigal" daughters (Kondo 1986), honored guests (Fahim 1979; Shahrani 1994), "skinfolk" but not "kinfolk" (Williams 1996), and "friends" (Kumar 1992). The task of negotiating one's identity is further complicated by the fact that participants may attribute certain identities and roles to researchers for strategic purposes. Brackette Williams's (1996) description of her fieldwork among Afro-Guyanese, for example, reveals the competing loyalties and expectations of the lower- and working-class individuals with whom she interacted from the "backdam" (the section of the fieldwork community farthest from the seaside community and nearest to the community's farmland; also part of a plantation that historically housed slave quarters) and her middle-class hostess from the "waterside" (the section of the community nearest the seaside and public highway; also part of the plantation where slave owners and overseers had been located). There was obvious symbolic and status significance inherent in these spatial distinctions. Although initially unbeknownst to Williams, her own social position as an educated African American scholar served to bolster her hostess's affluence and self-ascribed elite status. Williams's

frequent treks to the backdam to interact with Afro-Guyanese of lower-class backgrounds symbolized a public threat to her hostess's self-concept. Yet Williams's visits also served to her own advantage by mitigating backdam residents' suspicions that she was pompous. Williams's hostess protested her excursions to the backdam in overt and subtle ways throughout her fieldwork, forcing Williams to constantly negotiate her time with, and loyalties to, the two communities.

As a "partial" native anthropologist in the African diaspora (see also Mufwene 1993), Williams has status as a college-educated African American woman, which served to promote as well as threaten her hostess's social face (Goffman 1959). Williams's affiliation with a woman whose social class positioning had, in recent years, diminished became a way for that woman to reestablish herself as a member of the upper class. As such, Williams was pressured to restrict her movement to the "riverdam." The process whereby native scholars are attributed particular social roles—along with their subsequent attempts to comply with or contest these positionalities—illuminates how *native/insider* is an insufficient descriptor for the manner in which scholars negotiate multiple identities in the field (Narayan 1993; Rosaldo 1989).

LANGUAGE AS A MEANS OF ESTABLISHING LEGITIMACY AT HOME

The tenuousness of native status is also foregrounded in accounts by native scholars concerning language and discourse knowledge as a central means of negotiating their identities in the field. As with perhaps all researchers, a native scholar's degree of *communicative competence* (Duranti 1994; Hymes 1972)—the ability to use and interpret home speech varieties appropriately across various cultural contexts—plays a significant role in his or her ability to enter a community and develop a rapport with research participants (Bernard 1994; Paredes 1984). For native scholars, fluency in home speech varieties and discourse styles is particularly important given the role of language as a mediator of a speaker's cultural identity (see Basso 1979, 1996; Gumperz and Cook-Gumperz 1982; Medicine 2001; Ochs 1992) and cultural "authenticity" in the eyes of discriminating research participants. For example, accounts by various native scholars indicate that the display of communicative competence can sanction one's identity as both a researcher *and* a community member (Baugh 1983; Zentella 1997), whereas ignorance can subvert one's research efforts by marking one as culturally challenged or detached (Foster 1996; Rickford 1986).

In my research on linguistic and cultural practices centered on black hair, I have conducted participant-observations in beauty salons (Jacobs-Huey 1996a, 1996b), regional and international hair expos, training seminars for lay and licensed stylists (Jacobs-Huey 1998), bible study meetings of a nonprofit group of Christian cosmetologists, a computer-mediated discussion about the poli-

tics of black hair (Jacobs-Huey n.d.), and, more recently, a cosmetology school in Charleston, South Carolina (Jacobs-Huey 1999, 2001). In all of these contexts, I have learned that while my status as a native anthropologist can serve to my advantage, it by no means guarantees my acceptance as a trustworthy researcher in African American communities. Moreover, demonstrated knowledge and use of African American discourse styles, such as *indirectness* and *signifying*, have been critical in gaining the trust of prospective research participants.

To negotiate my access into highly intimate cultural spaces, for example, I have relied on an assortment of verbal and nonverbal strategies. In face-to-face conversations with women in beauty salons, I have strategically employed African American Vernacular English (AAVE) and cultural discourse styles during intimate conversations in which such styles were already in use or would be appropriate. In e-mail conversations, I have disclosed my racial identity to unseen prospective participants who appeared to be ambivalent about my background and intentions. I have also revealed other strategic information, such as my own hairstyle and the fact that my mother is a hair stylist. In all contexts, I have also found it necessary to be able to "signify the signifier" (Williams 1996)—that is, I have had to pay particular attention to participants' responses or "refusals to speak" (Visweswaran 1994)—when I have asked certain questions about hair or other sensitive matters.

For example, when I asked another African American woman via e-mail for access to previous computer-mediated discussions about black hair, she asked me several questions prior to consenting. One of these questions, "BTW, How do YOU wear your hair?" was crucial—both as an attempt to control access to the discussion and as an indirect means of ascertaining my racial identity and, presumably, my cultural footing (Goffman 1981). Given the status of black hair as a controversial index of cultural authenticity (Mercer 1994), I interpreted her question as an attempt to identify me racially and determine my sense of cultural consciousness, particularly because she herself was strictly opposed to hair straightening among all (and especially black) women. My imputed degree of cultural consciousness and, indeed, my success in gaining access to the posts preceding the computer-mediated hair debate rested on my ability to properly interpret her question, cloaked within a discourse style frequently used by African Americans to test and challenge a speaker's social face and expressed intentions (for an exposition, see Morgan 1997).

In my reply, I revealed that my own hairstyle has ranged from a straight perm to other more natural hairstyles, such as an Afro, braids, and twists. Because she might have interpreted my hairstyle at the time of our correspondence (i.e., a curly perm) as an indication of self-hatred, I stressed my history with a diverse range of "natural" hairstyles. Later, after successfully gaining access to the hair debate, I also observed that African American women generally employ a range of cultural discourse strategies and cultural hair terms to police the boundaries of the conversation

and negotiate who has a "right" to speak on the topic (Jacobs-Huey 2001, n.d.). In my ongoing ethnographic observations, language and hairstyle have been a consistent and significant means through which clients, cosmetology students, and hair stylists constructed their cultural and professional face and identities.

Displaying competence in African American speech varieties in terms of use and interpretation has been central for many native ethnographers in earning the trust and cooperation of their African American research participants (e.g., Baugh 1983; Gwaltney 1993; Mitchell-Kernan 1971; Nelson 1996; Williams 1996). As Morgan (1994) argues, language is a form of symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1991) within African American speech communities through which speakers of diverse class backgrounds construct their racial consciousness. An ethnographer's ability to use and understand AAVE and cultural discourse styles such as *indirectness* and *signifying* (Gates 1989; Mitchell-Kernan 1972, 1973; Morgan 1996, 1997) can, thus, significantly affect a researcher's ability to establish a rapport with AAVE speakers (Baugh 1983; Mitchell-Kernan 1971; Nelson 1996).

The ability of native scholars to demonstrate communicative competence in African American speech varieties can also assuage widespread concerns among African Americans about "being studied" (see Baugh 1983; Jones 1970; Page 1988). In the late John Gwaltney's collection of ethnographic interviews with African Americans, one participant told him, "I think this anthropology is just another way to call me a nigger" (1993:xix). Another participant cautioned Gwaltney, "I'll talk to you all day long, Lankee, but don't interview me" (1993:xxiv). Despite such concerns, many African Americans were compelled to participate in Gwaltney's research for several reasons. These reasons include Gwaltney's avoidance of "talking like a man with a paper in his hand" (1993:xxiv) and participants' desire to support a fellow African American's career aspirations.

African American scholars who strictly speak mainstream varieties of English may be at a disadvantage in their attempts to develop a rapport with their research participants (Williams 1996). African American scholars have observed that failure to display communicative competence in African American speech varieties may mark one as an "educated fool"—one whose affiliation and identification with African American culture have, by virtue of his or her education, class positioning, or posturing, become suspect (see also Baugh 1983; Gwaltney 1993; Naylor 1988; Nelson 1996; Page 1988; Williams 1996). Michéle Foster's (1996) research on African American ideologies concerning effective educators illuminates several social consequences that may result from a researcher's failure to display competence in African American speech varieties. Foster reports that several participants voiced concerns about talking to her because they believed she did not "sound black" over the phone. Additionally, some of the participants who were notably skeptical of her "in-

siderness" resolved this by having Foster stay at their homes for closer observation. Given participant responses to her speech and urban background, Foster reports feeling like both insider and outsider throughout various stages of her research.

Communicative competence entails not only a facility in the multiple speech varieties that characterize a particular speech community but also an awareness of rules governing the proper and contextual interpretation of cultural discourse styles. Linda Nelson (1996) underscores the importance of discourse knowledge in establishing trust among her African American research participants. Nelson employed a cultural discourse style known as *call and response* to align with an informant who was also her childhood friend. Nelson views her own, and her conversation partner's, use of this cultural discourse style as marking their solidarity as oppressed minorities. On the broader subject of shared culture and communicative codes, she states, "Although the native and the researcher look alike, *speak the same language, and share many of the same beliefs and customs*, the researcher still approaches the natives to observe them.   The ease of access and the quality of rapport are constantly negotiated as the researcher and informant construct their identities in this intrinsically hierarchical relationship" (1996:194, emphasis added). For Nelson, the salient differences between indigenous researchers and their informants seem to lie not at the level of language or cultural beliefs but, rather, in the power differentials that exist between the "observed" and the "observer" (see also D'Amico-Samuels 1997). Foster's field experiences, described above, suggest that native anthropologists are not always equally sensitive to context-dependent discourse protocols, and this can seriously affect their "success" in the field. Nelson further suggests that native anthropologists bring to their work a significant characteristic that exogenous investigators do not:

> When she turns off the recorder and removes the cloak of the investigator, she goes home to a community she forever shares with natives. Their fundamental beliefs, as well as their struggles and triumphs are deeply woven into the fabric of her own existence. This profound reality acts as a relentless urging, provoking her continuous attempt to liberate the fact from romanticization. Ironically, she cannot hope to accomplish this . . . unless she is willing to closely examine the community as a system of shared values and beliefs, as well as to examine the subtle but significant distinctions among its members. [1996:198, emphasis added]

Nelson's rendering of a native anthropologist who symbolically sheds his or her identity as a researcher on the trek home cautions against romanticization but fails to expose *home* as a socially and culturally constructed (Lemelle and Kelley 1994), imagined (Anderson 1991), and desired concept (Kaplan 1996; Martin and Mohanty 1986). Nelson's description of the native scholar's transformation also belies attempts by native scholars to reconcile multiple allegiances and accountabilities to their ethnic and academic communities. Rather than bifurcating their identities as researchers and members of the communities

they study, native and reflexive scholars have, over time, as Tedlock (1991) and Nelson concede, increasingly grappled with what it means to reconstitute themselves from former subjects of anthropological investigation to native researchers working in the present (Kondo 1990; Narayan 1993). Reports of failure by several native researchers critically address these and related questions, illuminating the many ways scholars negotiate their place and purpose across lay and scientific communities (see also DeVita 1990, 1992).

CONFESSIONS OF FAILURE IN THE FIELD

Nelson divulges her own failed attempt at establishing a rapport with Mrs. Jones, an African American participant in her study. Upon greeting Jones at her home, Nelson remarked of her rural surroundings, "How nice it is back here" (1996:189). When Jones retorted, "What do you mean by back here?" (1996:189), Nelson realized that she had unwittingly offended her. More specifically, Jones apparently interpreted Nelson's remark as an act of signifying, wherein her innocuous reference to "back here" was actually a veiled satirical critique of Jones's rural surroundings. Nelson's subsequent efforts to repair the unintended slight were for the most part futile; she reports that Jones continued to eye her suspiciously. Nelson is acutely aware of the cultural implications of this and preceding encounters and notes the relevance of her earlier introduction to Mrs. Jones by Jones's daughter, who was Nelson's former student. Nelson was introduced as a "teacher friend,' as opposed to the less qualified and more familiar title "friend" (1996:189). The foregrounding of her educated status risked associating her with the status of educated fools (see also Baugh 1983; Foster 1996; Gwaltney 1993; Smitherman 2000; Williams 1996). Nelson's misstep demonstrates the intricacies and importance of language as a means of constructing legitimacy and cultural authenticity among native anthropologists, as well as the complex notions of home and speech community membership. Her conversational failure with Jones also recalls testimonies by other native researchers whose language facility, especially adherence to discourse rules, marked them as outsiders during fieldwork at home (see Kondo 1990; Rickford 1986).

The moments of discursive awkwardness experienced by Nelson and Foster elucidate some of the challenges faced by native anthropologists in negotiating their cultural integrity in the field. Failure by indigenous researchers to establish legitimacy among participants can be particularly unsettling, suggesting that they are "one of them but not of them" (Obeyesekere 1981). Because the researcher–participant relationship is, to a degree, reciprocal, with both parties fulfilling a variety of social needs and roles for the other (Narayan 1993), the realization or apparent erasure of difference between the observer and the observed can entail a range of emotional consequences for both groups.

For example, during her fieldwork in Japan, Dorinne Kondo (1986, 1990) observed that her participants placed her in a number of meaningful cultural roles, ranging from daughter, student, guest, young woman, to prodigal Japanese. Many of Kondo's cultural mentors became quite invested in the task of enculturating Kondo into a Japanese lifestyle, which, in their eyes, befitted her gender, educational level, youth, and shared heritage. Initially, Kondo perceived her hostesses and friends to be impatient of her social, linguistic, and cultural inadequacies. Later, and to Kondo's pleasure, they became more approving of her progress in several domains of Japanese culture.

Kondo embraced and, at times, contested her various ascribed identities and social roles to the point of exhaustion. Ultimately, she became so steeped in the cultural graces of Japanese working women that one day she could not differentiate her own reflection (in a butcher's display case) from that of the young Japanese housewives whom she had frequently observed. Troubled that she had been complicit in her own apparent "collapse of self,' Kondo returned to the United States for a month to reground her identity as a U.S. researcher.

Similarly, in his reflection on the study of one's own community, Ohnuki-Tierney (1984a, 1984b) confesses that he felt himself crossing a boundary that separated him from his ethnic "kin" in Kobe, Japan. As with Kondo, Ohnuki-Tierney's subsequent return to the United States enabled him to regain his perspective as a researcher. Optimistic about the practice of native anthropology, Ohnuki-Tierney suggests that research by native anthropologists is indeed possible, although the researcher may occasionally require moments of solitude and critical reflection.

Interestingly, Ohnuki-Tierney further suggests that native anthropologists might even be more effective researchers because they "do not have informants perform for them" until their presence becomes less conspicuous (see Paredes 1984). As a result, he asserts that the ethnographic observations of the nonnative scholars tend to become "negotiated realities" between the participants and the anthropologists. Yet native researchers also produce "negotiated realities" during and after their fieldwork (Page 1988; Tedlock 1991; Visweswaran 1994). Ethnographers' confessions of isolation and failure during fieldwork underscore this point by illuminating the gradations of endogeny that arise from their degree of linguistic and cultural "competence" (Mufwene 1993; Rickford 1986). Moreover, experiences by Kondo and others emphasize how participants and researchers co-construct the native researchers' identities, roles, and research agendas in overt and subtle ways (see also Dua 1979; Narayan 1995; Rabinow 1977; Whitehead 1986).

Failures in the field can also have significant implications beyond the field—that is, for how native scholars envision the broader anthropological enterprise. Kamala Visweswaran's *Fictions of Feminist Ethnography* (1994) recounts various moments of failure in her fieldwork in

which several research participants rejected her line of inquiry. Fashioned in dramatic form, her book contains three acts portraying interviews with two women named Uma and Janaki. Visweswaran's theatrically structured narrative is radical (Morrison 1995) as it illuminates how participants' identities and personal accounts are constructed and partial and how agency can be performed through such means as silence.

Visweswaran's (1994) ethnographic fieldwork entailed collecting life histories from Indian women imprisoned during the Indian nationalist movement, in addition to information gleaned from historical documents. In one of her initial interviews, Visweswaran learned that Uma, a participant, had only been married once. Yet Uma's friend, Janaki, later exposed Uma's "lie" by noting that Uma had been married twice and was, in fact, widowed in a prior arranged marriage in her youth. Janaki's stories to Visweswaran, though, *also* had discrepancies. Janaki reported that when she was younger, she used to pretend that she was married, but Visweswaran later discovered in archives that Janaki, as a child, had been arranged to marry a man of a non-Brahmin regional caste. Strikingly, Janaki's "secret" was revealed in the presence of Visweswaran, in large part, by Tangam (a mutual friend), who tried, unsuccessfully, to compel Janaki to tell the "truth" while vouching for Visweswaran's loyal motives as a researcher. Janaki asked Tangam abruptly, "Why does she want to know these things?" (Visweswaran 1994:46) and then withdrew her gaze and became silent. The emotional toll experienced by Janaki in the pursuit of these "hidden facts" led Visweswaran to reflect more deeply on the nature of disciplinary knowledge and the relations of power between the observer and the observed.

Visweswaran (1994:60) argues that such instances of "lies, secrets, and silence" bring to the fore the inevitability of failures in a feminist ethnography that presumes commonalities among all women, including herself as observer and Uma and Janaki as two of the observed. The series of betrayals, first Janaki's and later Tangam's betrayal of Janaki (albeit unwittingly staged by Visweswaran), exposes the unequal power relations characterizing the process of ethnographic inquiry and the production of knowledge (see also Hale 1991; Nelson 1996). Viewing such betrayals as an allegory for the practice of feminist ethnography, Visweswaran envisions Janaki's refusal to be subject(ed) to her inquiries as a struggle to reclaim the integrity of her personal and familial secrets.

Visweswaran's fieldwork compelled her to search for the tactics that a feminist ethnography can deploy to develop a different type of ethnography. A new ethnography, Visweswaran asserts, can be actualized by ethnographers' increased consideration of their own or others' shifting identities, interpretations, and silence over time. As Visweswaran further explains, the process of ethnographic inquiry is itself dialogic and complex. So, too, are the positionalities of researchers and participants, which are themselves multiple and situation specific (Rosaldo

1989). Knowledge produced in the process of ethnographic inquiry is also situational and, hence, temporal/provisional (Cohen 1992). In grasping "partial" truths (Abu-Lughod 1991; Clifford 1986; Haraway 1988; Rosaldo 1989) scholars must avoid superimposing collective or nationalistic narratives on individual narratives as the sole means of explaining subject positioning (Chow 1993; Limon 1991). Ethnographers must also look for agency and resistance in participant silence or "refusals to speak" (see also Minh-ha 1990; Page 1988). A feminist ethnography and, arguably, native anthropology (Gwaltney 1993) should listen to, and measure, such silence in order to understand the multiple messages that may be conveyed therein (Basso 1970).

DILEMMAS OF TRANSLATION BEYOND THE FIELD

Visweswaran's use of failure to interrogate her presumptions of feminist ethnography is similar to Ruth Behar's poignant discussion of the politics of representation and accountability. In her 1995 essay, "Writing in My Father's Name," Behar discloses the pain, betrayal, and failure that she and her parents feel toward her release of an autobiographical piece about herself and her participant, Esperanza (see 1993). Behar shares information that some members of her family considered secrets. These "secrets" evoked public criticism of the way her father expressed his anger toward Behar when she was a child. Although Behar's family members are admittedly integral to her life, her father resented having been included in her reflexive manuscript (see also Page 1988). He asked Behar why he was not consulted about his inclusion in her autobiographical publication, raising larger questions about one's right to represent one's kinfolk and the nature of that representation. Behar's narrative highlights the sorrow and guilt that are experienced when one's work is undesirable to one's family and research participants.

Behar's predicament also illustrates the dilemmas of translation that native scholars may experience while negotiating accountability to multiple audiences—which are often inclusive of the academy and the communities in which they work (see Christian 1990; Gwaltney 1993; Jones 1970; Nakhleh 1979; Nelson 1996). Decisions about representation, including whose, and which, voice(s) to incorporate in published reports, entail "cultural brokering,' that is, reconciling disparate views about *how* and *to whom* one should represent the intricacies of everyday life among individuals within a community. Although this is a challenge that is, to some extent, shared by all social scientists (see D'Amico-Samuels 1997; Duranti 1997), managing the politics of representation may entail additional challenges for native scholars. For example, native researchers must be especially sensitive to the dangers of disclosing cultural secrets or airing what community members may consider "dirty laundry" (Behar 1993, 1995; Nakhleh 1979; Visweswaran 1994; Whitehead 1986, 1992). Given native scholars' presumed communal ties, negative

perceptions and consequences of such admissions may be more acutely felt by native researchers and their participants; further, missteps may make it more difficult to return home. Native scholars who accommodate publication or manuscript requests by their study participants must also be mindful of the accessibility of their rhetorical strategies—if published reports are so technical as to be impenetrable, lay readers may suspect the ethnographer of being evasive or elitist. Ironically, attempts by native scholars to "translate" their research so that it is accessible to lay audiences, and incorporates naturally spoken language from home communities, may, similarly, be viewed as suspect by research participants.

The latter has been true, for example, in my own attempts to translate, in both a culturally sensitive and a methodologically sound way, findings from my ethnography of hair-related discourse and practice in African American communities (Jacobs-Huey 1996a, 1996b, 1998, 1999). Both hair and language are controversial signifiers of identity and cultural consciousness in African American speech communities (Boyd 1993; Gibson 1995; Grier and Cobbs 1968; Jones 1994; McGee and Johnson 1985; Mercer 1994; Morgan 1994). As such, my observations of women's hair care and analysis of naturally spoken discourse about hair have aroused both suspicion and concern among African American respondents.

For example, some African American respondents were skeptical of presenting such intimate information for the scrutiny of predominantly white academic audiences. Other African American women, within and outside the academy, have appealed to me to use my research to critique black women's hair-straightening practices, which they view as indicative of self-hatred or an unhealthy reification of Eurocentric standards of beauty. Understanding the personal hair care experiences that compel such perspectives, I nevertheless explain that my ethnographic observations of African American women's hair care beliefs and practices have rendered such generalized interpretations inconclusive: Black women who straighten their hair do so for a range of economic, social, and personal reasons (Banks 2000; Boyd 1993; Mercer 1994; Rooks 1996). Furthermore, many straightened hairstyles worn by African American women evoke an urban flair and sensibility, which, when appropriately contextualized, have very little to do with a reification of white standards of beauty. Responses of this sort, though, do not always appease my African American (largely female) respondents. Indifferent to the disciplinary guidelines framing my study, these circumspect reviewers often have different views about the ideal format and objectives of my work on hair.

Several respondents have also questioned how published transcripts depicting their speech during hair-related conversations might be interpreted by academics (see also Page 1988). More specifically, some readers were concerned that transcribed excerpts of their speech would become fodder for derogatory assessments of AAVE and themselves as AAVE speakers. In several cases, these fears

were likely exacerbated by controversial national debates about "Ebonics" in early 1997 (see Rickford 1997, 1999) and the stigma attached to AAVE in educational and professional contexts.

My response to these understandable concerns has entailed describing the critical and objective way in which language scholars try to evaluate naturally spoken discourse; the focus of linguistic anthropologists, I argue, is not on minority languages as substandard or stigmatized as much as it is on the complex forms of language and its relationships to speakers' identities. This explanation reassures some lay readers. At other times, however, my response has only managed to trigger African American respondents' concerns about my own naïveté as a native scholar.[1]

My own challenges with translation reflect seemingly indelible incongruities between lay and academic research agendas. These agendas often pose conflicting standards for ways of asking and representing findings. At times, these agendas also place differential value on research for the pursuit of knowledge and, alternatively, research for the purposes of community uplift. Although these dual goals need not be considered mutually exclusive, pursuing them may nevertheless be difficult for native ethnographers to reconcile. Scholars who conduct research for the sake of the betterment of home communities, for example, must first decide what the "betterment of the community" means and to whom. This goal can impose constraints on the practice of "native" ethnography, particularly in communities wherein the acquisition of "new" knowledge, in and of itself, is deemed insufficient. Research that complies with the political agendas of a community may also require native researchers to ask loaded questions and pursue them in ways that are at odds with their disciplinary training.

Native and indigenous scholars report a range of conceptual and practical strategies for resolving dilemmas of translation. Kondo (1997) observes that some scholars working at home envision ethnography as a means of unsettling the boundaries between ethnography and minority discourse, using their texts as a means of writing their individual and communal identities. In the quest for accessibility and accountability to the communities in which they work, other scholars advocate an indigenous or explicitly non-Western methodology that preserves native ideologies and cultural traditions (e.g., Medicine 2001; Smith 1999). Indigenous methods and interpretive frameworks also seek to minimize differentials of power among the observer and the observed; yet defining the terms of this postcolonial research agenda has, at times, entailed gross and idealistic generalizations about what *indigenous* means or should mean.

In this regard, Chow (1993) poignantly argues that native scholars who feel obliged to engage in a reflexive or corrective anthropology should write not only "against culture" (Abu-Lughod 1991:138) but also against the "lures of Diaspora" (Chow 1993:99). Understanding that the

cultural identity of native scholars lends a certain type of authenticity to their texts, Chow admonishes Western Chinese intellectuals, in particular, to acknowledge, rather than repress, the inequalities inherent in the discourse between themselves and their research subjects (see also D'Amico-Samuels 1997). Such transparency, she argues, will enable them to write against the crippling effects of both Western imperialism and Chinese paternalism. Similar admonitions against romanticizing peoples and cultures have been made by other native scholars (see Adorno 1994; Aguilar 1981; Gwaltney 1981; Jones 1970; Kashoki 1982; Nakhleh 1979; Page 1988; Rosaldo 1987, 1991 [critique of Parades 1958, 1978]; Smith 1999; Srinivas 1979; Visweswaran 1994; Willis 1999)—who occupy their own unique native positioning(s) as either indigenous self-trained Westerners, non-Westerners who were trained in the West, or those occupying the equally ambivalent spaces of the border or diaspora.

PROFESSIONAL STAKES OF NATIVE ANTHROPOLOGY

Attempts by native scholars to reconcile the politics of translation and accountability are further confounded by the need to confront the professional consequences of their native status and, particularly, their confessional accounts (see Tedlock 1991). Chow (1993) asserts that native research about women, particularly by Chinese anthropologists residing in the West, risks being ghettoized within the discipline (see also Harrison 1997a, 1997b). For example, native researchers who openly grapple with their positionality or failures in the field are more susceptible to being labeled "navel gazers,' axe grinders, politically motivated, "hypersensitive" (Rosaldo 1989; Smith 1999), or, ironically, not native enough. Additionally, native scholars are particularly vulnerable to accusations of having "gone native," a perception that undermines their authority and reinforces a tendency to view native scholars as novices and not experts (Chow 1993; Narayan 1993; Paredes 1984; Weston 1997). Likewise, confessions of failure by native ethnographers such as Kondo, Ohnuki-Tierney, Behar, and others can subvert their professional authority, placing them at further risk for dismissal within their academic communities.

Ironically, native researchers' discussions on the intersubjective nature of their fieldwork may, in fact, constitute a tactic for circumventing such stigmatizing characterizations. Insofar as discussion of one's positioning in the field engages key anthropological questions around the dialectics of fieldwork, native scholars situate themselves and their work well within a rigorous analytical paradigm. Similarly, critical reflexivity in both writing and identification as a native researcher may act to resist charges of having played the "native card" via a noncritical privileging of one's insider status. Admittedly, self-identification as a native/indigenous anthropologist may risk unduly foregrounding difference to the exclusion of membership or kinship within a broader community of anthropologists. However, it may also constitute a space for the creation and validation of *native* as a signifier of the postcolonial repositioning of the subject and *native anthropology* as a more general means of evoking the decolonization of anthropological thought and practice (see also Gwaltney 1981).[2] In this sense, claiming native, indigenous, or "halfie" status can be a tactical endeavor of critical self-positioning against the mainstream (e.g., *native* anthropologist) or a normalizing endeavor of self-positioning within the mainstream (e.g., native *anthropologist*). Each stance provides native researchers with an empowering means of self-identification and alignment within multiple and internally complex (e.g., lay, academic) constituencies and research paradigms. Native scholars and other marginalized groups may deploy these different subject positions and ideologies for strategic purposes (e.g., Clifford 1997a; Gordon 1998; Jacobs-Huey 2001; Moore 1994; Sandoval 1991). In actual practice, native investigators also negotiate the various meanings and sociopolitical implications of these viewpoints—not simply in grand anthropological debates about postcolonial theory but also in everyday interactions that pose the opportunity or need to move between inclusive and exclusive subject and ideological positionings.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This article speaks to ongoing transitions taking place within anthropology and other fields in which informants are increasingly recognized as research *participants* who actively influence ethnographic texts (Page 1988) and ethnographers include their own voices in published reports. Amid this continuing reconfiguration of social thought and practice (Geertz 1983; Tedlock 1991), some native scholars have been vigorously gazing and talking back, attempting (by way of critical reflexivity in writing, self-positioning, and other politically engaged orientations) to redress exotic representations of their communities.

Scholarship by and about native anthropology/ists has also critically examined what these categories mean in theory and actual practice. Their reports illuminate the fact that native scholars negotiate and experience different positionalities in the field stemming from their ethnic, linguistic, gendered, educational, and class/caste backgrounds, as well as their degree of communicative competence. Communicative competence—the ability to appropriately use and interpret speech varieties and discourse styles within home speech communities—involves more than simply learning the language of one's research population (Duranti 1994; Hymes 1972; see also Clifford 1992). Rather, this concept entails fluency in the multiple languages and discourse styles characterizing a speech community, as well as an ability to adhere to specific discourse rules. Linguistic proficiency and discourse knowledge are, likewise, important prerequisites for ethnographic fieldwork at home or abroad.

My own research encounters in and around the "kitchen" further suggest that while fluency in speech varieties may figure prominently as a marker of belonging for native scholars during fieldwork, it may also translate into a marker of exclusion depending on the context (e.g., postfieldwork) and the presumed auditor(s). More specifically, African American scholars' fluency in AAVE might be used to negotiate familiarity and legitimacy in the field. Beyond the field, however, the representation of authentic conversations may incur apprehension and overt disapproval from minority constituents whose language and hair have been subject to popular disparagement. Moreover, the politics surrounding language and translation often require native scholars to anticipate the representational contingencies of their linguistic and cultural analyses for both lay and academic audiences, both of which manifest their own inherent diversity and complexity. When working at home, scholars must also recognize the ways in which mainstream public sphere debates may have an impact on fieldwork experience—and later representations of that experience—for the communities in which they work.

Further insight into native anthropology as a signifier of postcolonial ideology and subject positioning can be gleaned through an analysis of researchers' rhetorical strategies throughout multiple phases of ethnography. Investigators' confessions of failures experienced during fieldwork, for example, illuminate some of the power differentials characterizing the process of ethnographic inquiry, even among researchers who share the same demographic or racial/ethnic profiles as their participants (e.g., Page 1988). Dilemmas in translation, such as the ones experienced by Behar and myself, further expose several representational challenges facing native scholars, many of whom write and speak to diverse audiences that do not always share the same standards toward how one should write against culture. Scholars, who not only work within their ethnic communities but also are critically reflexive about their positioning/positionality, must be mindful of the transparency and translatability of their published reports. In particular, researchers need to ensure that their ethnographic products do not alienate research subjects (who may be especially interested in research findings) or alienate themselves (as researchers) within their specific disciplinary cohort (Behar 1996; Harrison 1997a; Mihesauh 1988; Minh-ha 1989; Motzafi-Haller 1997; Smith 1999); these can be difficult goals to accomplish in tandem and may require native anthropologists to adopt creative and nontraditional ways of envisioning themselves and their work.

As with feminist, postcolonial, or reflexive researchers, many native ethnographers have found it necessary to write against monolithic or romantic notions of culture (Abu-Lughod 1991; Tedlock 1995) and in a manner cognizant of the provisional nature of interpretation (Cohen 1992; Geertz 1971). Moreover, scholars who self-identify as native ethnographers, or situate their work within a long-standing tradition of native anthropology, may do so

not as a noncritical privileging endeavor. Instead, foregrounding *native* in relation to anthropology, or oneself as a *native* anthropologist, can act as an empowering gesture and critique of the positioning of natives in the stagnant slot of the Other. It can also be a strategy for increasing the validity and reception of native scholarship within a broader community of anthropologists, with the ultimate goal of engendering a more representative, translatable, and accountable anthropology.

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NOTES

1. The Tuskegee Syphilis Study (1932–72), wherein 399 African American males were deceived by U.S. Public Health Service officials and denied treatment for syphilis, has generated skepticism among African American communities about the intentions of scientists (Freimuth et al. 2001).

2. For a similar discussion in regard to "minority art," see Mahon 2000.

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