

## **Preface**

As a practicing anthropologist for over 30 years, I apply anthropological concepts to real-world problems on a daily basis. This applied background influences my discussion of ethnography from the first step to the last. This bias has helped me delimit the vast topic of ethnography to a few bare essentials. Ethnography is more than a 1-day hike through the woods. It is an ambitious journey through the complex world of social interaction.

This book represents one of many paths on this journey. Its purpose is to enable other researchers to enjoy their journeys and to reach their destinations. This is not a simple how-to book. It is a companion volume for the practicing ethnographer. Like a travelogue, it identifies and discusses the major landmarks every ethnographer and potential ethnographer encounters. Ironically, reaching a destination in ethnography often means taking false paths, coming up against dead ends or detours, and sometimes losing the way altogether. I hope this book will be a useful guide for the initiate, a valuable tool for the teacher, and an enjoyable refresher for the experienced ethnographer.

This edition takes the next step into a vast frontier—the Internet. The Internet is one of the most powerful resources available to ethnographers. This edition provides insight into many uses of the Internet, including conducting online surveys, constructing collaborative Web-based word-processing documents, creating collaborative Web sites, videoconferencing, and accessing online journals and related materials. Web-based tools are indispensable to ethnographers today.

The Web, however powerful, is merely an extension of the human instrument. The human instrument is only as good as the values and concepts guiding it. I have used ethnographic concepts and tools throughout my life in both the pursuit of ethnographic research and daily life. Many years ago, at my cousin's wedding, I remember explaining to my aunt what I did for a living. I told her I was a methodologist, as that is how I thought of myself and my work, specifically, in the areas of ethnography and ethnographic evaluation. Her response in retrospect was predictable: "Does this mean you aren't Jewish anymore?" I clarified my explanation, reaffirmed my religious and cultural commitments, and apologized for the confusion. However, methodological concerns ranging from the emic perspective to a nonjudgmental orientation were so integral to my way of thinking and being that my response was actually an accurate reflection of my conception of my own professional identity at that time (see Fetterman, 2004b).

Applying the values of respect and honesty to daily life is readily apparent. However, less obvious may be the power of culture, contextualization, and triangulation to make sense of everyday life. Applying a cultural interpretation and soliciting the *emic*, or insider's, perspective have helped me to be sensitive to the needs, fears, and aspirations of people around me. These insights have helped me make sense of miscommunications and maladaptive behavior. They have also helped me construct alternative solutions to real-world problems. Ethnography continues to be more than a methodological approach. It is a way of life.