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## ETHNOGRAPHIES OF POWER

### The Promise of Ethnography

What is the use of ethnography for the students of politics and power?<sup>1</sup> Whilst the question must strike a political anthropologist as odd, political scientists, whose majority is accustomed to working with other methods, have frequently posed it. The answer depends on the aim of the research project, the specific ontological assumptions about social/political reality, and the particular conception of ethnography. Since it is impossible to consider all possibilities in a chapter, the scope of these remarks will be limited to two *problématiques* that are central to the comparativist enterprise, both in comparative politics and in anthropology: the significance of the cultural aspect of social reality and the consequences of the turn from macro- to microlevels of analysis in political science (Elster 1985; Geddes 2003; Kalyvas 2006; Weinstein 2007).

The relative utility of ethnography is closely related to our understanding of politics. March and Olsen (1989: 47–48) typify a commonplace, *materialist-institutional* understanding by suggesting, “The organizing principle of a political system is the allocation of scarce resources in the face of conflict of interests.” This is a time-honored way of thinking about politics, for, as they observe, “a conception of politics as decision making and resource allocation is at least as old as Plato and Aristotle” (1989: 47–48). Yet they are keenly aware of a significant shortcoming of this conception: “Although there are exceptions, the modern perspective in political science has generally given primacy to substantive outcomes and either ignored symbolic actions or seen symbols as part of manipulative efforts to control outcomes” (1989: 47). Not all politics can be reduced to competition over material resources; indeed, much of it concerns the struggle over collective identity, including

often deadly contests over the meaning of symbols signifying this identity. Dirks, Eley, and Ortner develop this thought further:

Politics is usually conducted as if identity were fixed. The question then becomes, on what basis, at different times in different places, does the nonfixity become temporarily fixed in such a way that individuals and groups can behave as a particular kind of agency, political or otherwise? How do people become shaped into acting subjects, understanding themselves in particular ways? In effect, politics consists of the effort to domesticate the infinitude of identity. It is the attempt to hegemonize identity, to order it into a strong programmatic statement. If identity is decentered, politics is about the attempt to create a center. (1994: 32)

Such centers emerge and disintegrate as a result of specific actions by concrete actors who propose, disseminate, and interpret cultural meanings encoded in a variety of symbolic ways. To study such processes, social scientists—at least those who recognize that any attempt to propose and propagate a vision of collective identity, thus any “cultural” effort whose aim is endowing human (particularly collective) action with meaning, is par excellence political—must move beyond the *materialist-institutional* perspective and employ a *symbolic-cultural* approach.<sup>2</sup> And within such an approach, “the researcher should ask whether the theory is consistent with evidence about the meanings the historical actors themselves attributed to their actions” (Hall 2003: 394). For researchers who embrace ontologies that include the “meaningful” layer of reality, ethnographic approaches emerge as indispensable tools for studying politics (Bevir and Rhodes 2015, Bevir 2010).

If we understand politics as, in some important measure, *locally* produced, we again might turn to ethnography. Indeed, attention to the microlevel of analysis constitutes an important trend in today’s study of politics (Geddes 2003; Weinstein 2007: 351–65; Wood 2003). Game-theoretic ambition to develop a concise theory of politics (Bates et al. 1998) and a more sociological quest to identify microlevel or mesolevel mechanisms governing social and political life (Tilly 2001) both share an assumption that progress in the social sciences is more likely when our analytic gaze is focused on the concrete details of interactions rather than the workings of “large” structures.

This turn to the local coincides with renewed interest in observing “actual” human behavior: students are increasingly admonished to focus on the “real-life” interactions of people in “real time,” rather than on interactions of variables in abstract theoretical spaces.<sup>3</sup> Hall captures this perspective:

The systematic process analyst then draws observation from the empirical cases, not only about the value of the principal causal variables, but about the processes linking these variables to the outcomes. . . . This is not simply a search for “intervening” variables. The point is to see if the multiple actions and statements of the actors at each stage of the causal process are consistent with the image of the world historical process implied by each theory (2003: 394).

This attention to the *symbolic-cultural* and to the *local*, microscale, and “actual” should make political scientists hungry for more ethnography, a research tool well suited for addressing such concerns. An important paradox needs to be noted here, however: when some political scientists have begun turning toward ethnography, anthropologists<sup>4</sup> have thoroughly reevaluated, and often scathingly critiqued, the method that traditionally is the *raison d’être* of their discipline (see Wedeen 2010 on some complexities of this situation).

But we need to pause to consider the intellectual, philosophical, and epistemological origins of the long and tangled traditions of ethnographic inquiry before we can appreciate ethnography’s potential value for the study of politics. Most writers posit participant observation as the defining method (or technique) of ethnography (Bayard de Volo & Schatz 2004: 267; Tilly 2006: 410).<sup>5</sup> In Wacquant’s words ethnography is “social research based on the close-up, on-the-ground observation of people and institutions in real time and space, in which the investigator embeds herself near (or within) the phenomenon so as to detect how and why agents on the scene act, think, and feel the way they do” (2003: 5).

Below, I investigate the usefulness, if not indispensability, of ethnography for studying a reality that is construed as meaningful (ideal), processual (diachronic), and interactive (Abbott 2001a:61). Suffice

it to note here that ethnography's usefulness for studying "constructed" realities has been demonstrated in sociology (Burawoy 1998; Tilly 2006; Lauren, Mahler, and Auyero 2007) and anthropology (where it is the principal tool) and should be thus examined by political scientists, particularly comparativists, who are often admonished to take culture seriously (Chabal & Daloz 2006; Harrison & Huntington 2000; Norton 2004; Rao & Walton 2004b).<sup>6</sup> In sociology, it supplements various interpretive techniques (for example, content or textual analysis) in studies that treat cultures as assemblages of (broadly understood) texts; in anthropology, it is indispensable for studying culture in action.

But ethnography obviously can and has also been employed by more positivistically oriented researchers. It is thus imperative to outline the differential uses of ethnography in positivistic and interpretivist research programs (see also Rhodes 2016). Let us begin in ethnography's "maternal" discipline, cultural/social anthropology. To be sure, culture is not the only object of this discipline that is composed of several, partially separate intellectual traditions, to some extent overlapping with "national" schools.<sup>7</sup> An exhaustive discussion is beyond our scope, but it is worthwhile to highlight one distinction: while the British have developed *social* anthropology, the Americans have created *cultural* anthropology. Beyond semantics lie fundamental ontological, epistemological, and methodological issues. In a nutshell, while at least initially the British tended to focus their efforts on studying *social structures* and their "political" dimension (usually in non-Western societies), the Americans began by construing the object of their studies as *culture(s)* and the multiple ways in which it interacts with power. These different definitions have had consequences for the nature of specific projects, their conceptualizations, and methodologies. But, at the same time these two traditions have something in common: they both approach politics as an aspect of social relations that needs

to be studied in practice, *in statu nascendi*, through extensive fieldwork centered on (preferably long-term) participant observation.

What ethnographers observe (via participation) depends on the particular school or research tradition. Importantly, both “structure” and “culture” can be, and often are these days, defined in a constructivist manner. It is enough to consider Giddens’s theory of *structuration* or Bourdieu’s theory of *practice*—par excellence constructivist conceptions of social structure. Moreover, at least since the wave of postmodern critiques, we know that “objects” of study do not exist out there, in an “objective reality,” ready to be “discovered”; rather, they are co-constituted by the two (or more) participants in a *research interaction*.

*Ethnography as a method* (participant observation), therefore, is not limited to the study of culture. Just as many interpretive studies of politics rely on participant observation, noninterpretive studies use the same method (e.g., studies of organizational structures, informal networks, economic exchanges, etc.). At the same time, not all interpretive studies of power and politics are ethnographic (Bayard de Volo & Schatz 2004: 267). In fact, most are not. Table 1 illustrates these distinctions, based on examples drawn mostly from comparative studies of politics.

Table 1. Location of ethnographic studies in the studies of power and politics  
(with examples)

		Preferred ontology of the social and the attendant epistemology/methodology	
		Meaningful/ Interpretivist	Natural/Positive/ Noninterpretivist
Research Technique	Participant Observation	Aronoff (1993); Kertzer (1996); Wedeen (1999)	Laitin (1998); Fortes & Evans-Pritchard

			(1940)
	Nonparticipant Observation	Kubik (1994); Edles (1998); Bonnell (1997); O'Neill (1999)	Przeworski et al. (2000); Acemoglu and Robinson (2006); Haggard and Kaufman (1995)

First, most research in political science is based on a naturalist ontology of the social and does not rely on participant observation; Przeworski's and his collaborators' work (2000) on the relationship between economic development and the survival of political regimes is exemplary. Such work is also practiced to great effect in the broadly defined area of "political culture"; consider the large  $n$  studies of Inglehart and his collaborators who survey "values" of the world's population. Also, most work in game theory is noninterpretive, as it is built on deductively derived models of purportedly universal motivation mechanisms. Some game-theoretic work is sensitive to local contexts and is "ethnographic" in its tenor, although it does not typically use participant observation. (Petersen's work, for example, deals with past events, as I discuss below). The second category features naturalist/positivistic works that rely on participant observation but do not provide interpretive accounts of the social worlds actors live in. Much of classical British social anthropology belongs to this category. Most influential works in comparative politics that rely at least partially on participant observation belong to the naturalistic, noninterpretive genre, though some—such as Laitin's influential study (1998)—are close to the boundary between interpretive and noninterpretive types of work.

The third type includes works that are interpretive but do not use participant observation. Bonnell's (1997) analysis of Soviet posters as tools of power, Edles's (1998) work on the symbolic dimension

of Spanish democratization, or Kubik's (1994) study of Polish "Solidarity's" symbolic challenge to the hegemonic power of the Communist Party belong to this type. Finally, works belonging to the fourth type combine interpretive epistemology with participant observation as the main method. Consider M. Aronoff's (1993) study of the inner workings of the Israel Labor Party, Kertzner's (1996) detailed reconstruction of the Italian Communist Party cell's operation in a local setting, or Wedeen's (1999) analysis of everyday, counterhegemonic challenges to Hafez Al-Assad's power in Syria. Krzyżanowski (2011a) analyzes the relationship between ethnography and critical discourse analysis, an important interpretive method.

To summarize: as a method of research, ethnography is used to study culture (meaning systems) or other aspects of the broadly conceived social, such as economy, power (politics), or social structure. Its essence is participant observation, a disciplined immersion in the social life of a given group of people. Ethnography is sometimes erroneously equated with (1) in-depth interviewing (opposed to administering surveys), (2) case studies (opposed to large-n statistical studies), (3) process tracing (opposed to finding correlations), and (4) interpretation of meaning (opposed to the "naturalistic" study of "objective" social facts). Studies based on these four methods are not necessarily ethnographic; they become so when they rely on participant observation of considerable length.<sup>8</sup>

But ethnography is more than a method of research. The term *ethnography* refers to at least three overlapping yet sufficiently distinct types of intellectual activity and research practice: (1) data collecting, (2) modeling of social reality, and (3) genre of writing. The essence of ethnography as a specific method of data collecting is, of course, *participant observation*. Second, ethnographic *models* are built around specific *theoretical assumptions* about "reality"—or its fragment—to be observed (for example, *holism* of the social system in early, functionalist, ethnographies). Finally, ethnography is a

*genre of writing* (or, to be more precise, a set of genres) the author employs to narrate the reality in a manner that is different from presentations of formal or statistical models. The literary tropes of these genres can and often are subjected to intense scrutiny, for example, with the help of methods borrowed from literary criticism (Clifford and Marcus 1986; for an important critique see Spencer 1989 and for useful review Rumsey 2004). The evolution of ethnography often progressed simultaneously along all three dimensions. Consider Malinowski, who pioneered the method of extensive fieldwork, formulated the principles of holistic analysis of social systems, and had a powerful influence on the literary style of the whole enterprise.<sup>9</sup> Parenthetically, the study of the relationship between *theoretical models* and the *literary tropes* “modelers” utilize, has a long tradition in history (White 1978), sociology, and anthropology (Rumsey 2004). In political science, such investigations are rare (but see Patterson and Monroe 1998), though it should be noted that David Laitin (2004) championed narrative as one of the three forms of modeling reality in studies on politics.

### **Five Types of Ethnography**

An answer to the question “What is ethnography good for (in the study of power and politics)?” depends primarily on the definition of ethnography. The problem is that there are at least five types of ethnography: traditional/positivistic, interpretive, postmodern, global (multisited), and paraethnography. Each of them is characterized by a specific combination of the three elements listed above: type of participant observation, principal model of (the aspect of) reality selected for study, and genre of writing. An effort to find a firmer place for ethnography in political science is going to be more effective and precise if we remember that there are several distinct types of ethnography and that each of them needs to be considered in three dimensions (see Table 2). In this



study I focus, however, almost exclusively on ethnography as a method of research, only occasionally remarking on the model of reality or genre of writing. It is nonetheless worthwhile to provide a simple sketch of the terrain a more comprehensive investigation would need to cover. I do so in Table 2.

Table 2. Five types of ethnography<sup>10</sup>

		Type of ethnography				
		Traditional/positivist	Interpretive	Postmodern	Global/multisited	Paraethnography
Dimension of ethnography	Dominant fieldwork method	Participant observation of the “totality” of social life	Participant observation of semiotic practices <sup>11</sup>	Reflexive participant observation (usually of semiotic practices)	Multisited participant observation of social practices	Reconstruction of (formal and informal) semiotic practices
	Dimension of “reality” selected for the study and its principal characteristic	Social system approached holistically albeit composed of identifiable segments	“Web of meanings” i.e., a (relatively coherent) semiotic system	Mosaic of various dimensions of semiotic reality	System of interconnected localities, often in different parts of the globe	Discourses developed by “symbolic” specialists (particularly in supranational institutions)
	Literary trope/genre of writing	Realistic prose	Interpretive essay	Collage (sometimes poetic) “Messy” text Polyvocal text	Realistic prose	Multivocal interpretive essay
	Exemplars	Malinowski	Geertz	Tyler	Burawoy	Marcus and Holmes

The contributions of five types ethnography-as-a-method are the main topic of this chapter. Here I sketch brief characterizations of each type's ontological assumptions and most representative genres of writing. The traditional (realistic, positivistic) ethnography, pioneered by Malinowski, was designed to produce knowledge about a social system treated as a whole composed of functionally related elements; its results were written up in realistic prose. The main goal of interpretive ethnography, most famously represented by Geertz, is to interpret "the fabric of meaning in terms of which human beings interpret their experience and guide their action" (1973: 145). That "fabric" or "web" of meaning constitutes (often loosely) integrated semiotic system. Interpretations are presented to the reader in the form of a densely written interpretive essay, in which the voice of the "author" is clearly dominant. Postmodern ethnography also focuses on the semiotic dimension, but drops the assumption of systemicity and instead privileges a mosaic-like model of reality that needs to be accessed from several angles via a collaborative effort of the researcher and his/her "subjects," now reconceptualized as partners. The voices of the "subjects" should be heard as clearly as the voice of the "ethnographer" (Tyler 1986).<sup>12</sup> Global or multisited ethnography is developed to "fit" the multiple realities in a globalised world in which people are no longer primarily attached to a single location, but are increasingly mobile in the increasingly interconnected world. But the genre of ethnographic writing returns to the canons of realistic prose, characteristic of the early "realist" style. Finally, paraethnography is a research strategy whose goal is to reconstruct both formal and informal modes of reasoning and writing in major (particularly supranational) institutions. It is often not based on participant observation but rather on close reading and interpretation of available written sources.<sup>13</sup> The focus is on discursive practices and the preferred genre of writing tends to be multivocal interpretive essay. Let's now move to the more systematic analysis of five types of ethnographic method of "data gathering" as it contributes to the study of power and politics.

## **Ethnography in Realist (Positivistic) Political Anthropology**

Ethnography can benefit positivistic research agendas at least as well as it can contribute to interpretive ones. Political anthropology is a sub-discipline with a distinguished tradition of realist inquiry that is based on the assumption of that human world(s) can be studied roughly in the same manner as the natural world (naturalism). The beginning of “modern” political anthropology is routinely dated to publication of M. Fortes and E. E. Evans-Pritchard’s *African Political Systems* (1940). All studies collected in that volume were based on extensive ethnographic fieldwork, but, by contrast to today’s anthropologists—who would emphasize the cultural specificity of each case—the editors made an explicit effort to strip all social processes of “their cultural idiom” and reduce them “to functional terms” to generate comparisons and arrive at generalizations (Vincent 1990: 258). At the time of the volume’s publication, anthropology (including political anthropology) was still predominantly characterized by its focus on non-Western, “exotic,” or at least “marginal” societies. As Vincent (1990: 24) notes, “Not until the 1950s, in the face of challenges from other disciplines on the eve of their massive intervention in the anthropological domain, did anthropologists make manifest that ‘anthropology is characterized by a set of methods rather than bound by a subject matter’ (Bohannan 1967: xiv).”

### **Ethnography and the Study of Power**

Long before Foucault made such practices fashionable, ethnographers were tracking down the exercise of power within the interstices of official structures, behind the veil of various officialdoms, and in ostensibly apolitical spaces and domains. But, perhaps more important, there is no other method that can allow researchers to study power in *statu nascendi* in all settings, formal and informal,

and—particularly—to reconstruct the *informal workings of formal power structures*. Ethnography is thus used to map out the multiple layers of power within and behind complex bureaucratic structures and to complement if not supersede reconstructions of “modern” power generated by other methods. For example, Scott (1985) examines in great detail the “weapons of the weak”—various strategies of resistance to the state among the Malaysian peasants; Wedel, Shore, Feldman, and Lathrop (2005) detail the anthropology of policy making in complex, modern organizations; Abélès dissects the workings of the European Parliament (1992) and the European Commission (2004); M. Aronoff (1993) explores the Israel Labor Party; Bailey (1983) unravels the politics of various committees (at parliaments, governments, universities, etc.); Wedeen (1999) reconstructs the intricate mechanisms of resistance in authoritarian Syria; and Gaventa (1980) exposes the politics of inequality in an Appalachian Valley.

Likewise, ethnography seems indispensable to the study of collective action; no other method can better expose mechanisms of the important, early stages of mobilization (Auyero, Lapegna, and Page Poma 2009; Blee & Currier 2006). Petersen (2001) uses an “ethnohistorical” approach to reconstruct the mechanisms of anti-Nazi mobilization in Lithuania in the 1940s. He begins by modeling the sociological mechanisms and group features that help to explain why individuals in certain communities (at certain times) rebel against oppressors while others remain passive or collaborate. His model specifies such attributes of the community as: (1) the initial distribution preferences and constraints concerning the risk of rebellion, (2) the types of norms (of honor or family obligation, for example) that define the types of subgroups, and (3) the distribution of those subgroups within the larger community. Petersen divides mobilization into two stages: (a) from passivity to resistance and (b) from resistance to rebellion. Then, he considers separately the problem of rebellion’s sustainability. For each stage or problem he identifies a different set of mechanisms and shows how

they reinforce each other, propelling the process forward (to rebellion) or backward (to collaboration).

Since Peterson studies past events, he cannot employ participant observation, but he collects and interrogates his data *as if* they were generated by such a method. The ethnographic tenor of his study does not come, therefore, from participant observation, but rather from an *ethnographic problematization and framing* of the work.<sup>14</sup> He sets out to study the minutiae of community organization and uses all available information not only to reconstruct actors' views and preferences, but also to map out their actions within the local structures that both empowered and constrained them and to identify the mechanisms that make mobilization possible. His is a quintessentially ethnohistorical, indeed ethnographic, project.

### **Ethnography and Game Theory**

Ethnography is particularly well suited to test the limits of rationality in game-theoretic models, which otherwise run the risk of circular reasoning. As Morrow proposes: "Rational behavior means choosing the best means to gain a predetermined set of ends. It is an evaluation of the consistency of choices and not the thought process, of implementation of fixed goals and of the morality of those goals" (1994: 17). But, to determine whether such consistency exists, researchers often infer both the *intention* to employ certain means and their *actual employment* from observing ex post facto the very same action. In order to determine an actor's rationality, one would have to: (a) infer that an actor *intended* to employ certain means to achieve a given goal, (b) observe the *actual* means employed, and (c) *compare* the two. Such tests of rationality are rare, perhaps because the ethnographic method is seldom used in studies relying on game-theoretic models.

## **Ethnography and the Study of Social Structure**

Any full understanding of power requires an understanding of the social structure, which is both a product of and a constraint on individual and collective action. This is the area where the holistic tenor of traditional ethnography is most clearly visible: politics is analyzed as embedded in social structure(s). Traditional ethnography makes at least three contributions to the study of social structure, much of it relevant for the study of politics. First, while focusing on small-scale phenomena, ethnography allows the researcher to see the way social structure actually works in people's daily lives (say, how a position in class structure influences one's life choices; see Willis (1977, 2000) or Sider (1986). Second, it contributes empirical material to the study of one of thorniest problems of social theory: the relationship between structure and agency. By observing people up close, ethnographers can gauge the "structural" limitations actors face, reconstruct the range of strategic choices they have, observe their actual action, and assess its possibly transformative impact on structure. Third, ethnography is the best method of studying the complex interplay between (formal) social structure and (informal) social organization.<sup>15</sup>

Political scientists should carefully appraise ethnography's contribution to the study of the relationship between formal and informal institutions. After all, this relationship has been one of the hallmarks of new institutionalism, an influential approach. In a path-breaking study, the economist Douglass North shows how economic behavior is shaped by both formal and informal institutions (1990: 4).<sup>16</sup> Positing that economic performance is determined by a complex interplay of three factors—demography (human capital), the stock of knowledge (including everyday beliefs), and the formal institutional framework—North warns that "we know very little about this interaction" (1997: 14). Participant observation is well suited to studying the complex interplay of such factors.

## Ethnography and the Study of Social Process

Research methods typical of political science, such as opinion surveys, periodic collection of economic statistics (usually aggregated on a yearly basis), or pooled expert opinions on institutional changes (also routinely aggregated and reported yearly; see the World Bank or Freedom House, etc.) *register the occurrence of change*; they do not *specify the mechanisms of change*. As political science faces increasing calls to turn from macro to micro and to study actual mechanisms, the value of ethnography should become apparent. As Trickett and Oliveri (1997: 149) argue, “ethnography can capture the dynamic of change in ways that snapshot surveys using pre-established dimensions and response categories cannot.” Ethnography allows researchers to reconstruct the manner in which large-scale social processes (say, postcommunist transformations) actually occur and how they constrain or empower people in their daily lives. It is, after all, the reproduction and transformation of daily lives that are observable, not “structural change.”

Ethnography can also detect how the macro- and microdynamic of change may be out of step.

Introducing a collection of ethnographies about postcommunist transformations, Burawoy and Verdery opine:

Our view of the relation between macro structures and everyday practices is that the collapse of party states and administered economies broke down macro structures, thereby creating space for micro worlds to produce autonomous effects that may have unexpected influence over the structures that have been emerging. . . . It is precisely the sudden importance of micro processes lodged in moments of transformation that privileges an ethnographic approach. (1999: 3)

Importantly, they do not merely signal the differential rhythms of macro- and microchanges; they claim that the often ignored (or/and unintended) microprocesses may influence, derail, or even halt

macrochanges. Such observations dovetail with recent writing on the mechanisms of social change in historical sociology and historically oriented comparative politics.<sup>17</sup>

Finally, ethnography is critical, if not indispensable, for identifying and dissecting the mechanism of impending or actual social change. Norton (2004: 41) notes that, since change often comes from the periphery, it is important to “recognize the power of liminal, or marginal, groups. . . . Because they stand on the boundaries of identity, they are often central to debates over those boundaries.”

### **Ethnography and the Study of Political Economy**

Bird-David observes, “A diversity of exchange forms had been reified by anthropologists into either ‘gift’ or ‘commodity,’ while in the concreteness of social life—among indigenous people as among Westerners—there are multiple kinds. These have to be studied, too” (quoted in Herzfeld 2001: 111). To study economic transactions in isolation from their cultural and social contexts entails a risk of serious distortion. Aware of this, most anthropologists rely on ethnography to advance what has come to be known as the “substantivist” conception of economy (as distinct from the “formalist” view derived from neoclassical economic theory).

While many people subscribe to some version of an evolutionary paradigm, believing that societies move from a substantivist to a formalist phase, ethnographers have problematized this claim. For example, anthropologists who study postcommunist transformations have shown that the “progress” from ex-communist substantivism to neocapitalism formalism at best is uneven, slow, and full of reversals. Moreover, to survive under adverse conditions, people create and maintain complex networks that can be conceptualized as “economic” only at a risk of serious conceptual stretching. The extensive and empirically convincing literature on this phenomenon is found mostly



in anthropology (Humphrey 2002; Burawoy & Verdery 1999; Buchowski 1997; Rakowski 2016, but also sociology (Stark & Bruszt 1998) and political economy (Woodruff 1999; Blyth 2002).

These insights about postcommunist transformations follow on the heels of a long anthropological tradition of recognizing complex relationships between economy and culture. Beginning in the 1960s, anthropologists using ethnographic evidence wrote books with titles like *Political Economy and Culture of . . .* showing, for example, that while in practice economic relations tend to be complex and multistranded, in ideology (of capitalism or communism), they appear as separate and single stranded. In a sophisticated ethnography of family firms in Italy, Yanagisako (2002: 13) performs a similar service, showing that even today, “Family and kinship processes, relations, and sentiments are crucial for the production and reproduction of all forms of capitalism, whether family capitalism or non-family capitalism”—in spite of a prevailing discourse that normatively separates “family” from “business” relations. It is hard to imagine how such a demystification of the dominant view of economic activity could have been accomplished without ethnography. Importantly, this realization has already filtered to the World Bank, as a path-breaking volume indicates (Rao & Walton 2004a and b).

From the onset of anthropology (political anthropology in particular), ethnography has been successfully employed to locate power in hardly accessible or atypical places, beyond the world of formal institutions. And as cultural/social anthropology has come to be defined by its method rather than object, its preoccupation with marginal or peripheral phenomena has continued. Thus, the major contribution of traditional positivistic anthropology—via ethnography—is to the study of power and politics *outside* of centers and mainstreams, within a complex *interplay* with economic and

cultural processes, and in locations and crevices where the exercise of power or authority is often *invisible* to other disciplines.

Having tools to observe such “invisible” political and economic phenomena has tremendous theoretical and practical significance when it comes to the study of corruption. As Torsello (2011, 2016) argues, ethnography is indispensable to reconstruct and demystify the informal mechanisms—as well as their origins, functions, and consequences—of corruption and yet it has begun to be utilized in this area on a broader scale only recently. For example, many researchers contributing to *The Global Encyclopedia of Informality*<sup>18</sup> use this method. A group of ethnographers has also shed new light on corruption and illicit economic practices in postsocialism (Hening and Makovicky 2016). Ethnographically-oriented approaches to corruption help to see this phenomenon in its fuller cultural contexts and understand it, for example, as a coping mechanism or a culturally accepted strategy of building social capital (Gupta 1995). By doing so, ethnographers are in a position to examine Western ethical standards often employed by researchers to condemn “corruption” without sufficient self-awareness and attention to the context.

### **Interpretive Ethnography: The Study of Meaning (Culture) in Action**

Wittgenstein should perhaps be declared a patron saint of the ethnographic study of meaning, as he emphasized that the meaning(s) of a sign (word, picture, and sound) is best determined through studying its use, its employment in social practice. As I demonstrated earlier, ethnography and interpretation are not necessarily paired; quite often they are not. But their combination allows for the reconstruction of how culture (the meaning-creating machine) operates in practice and how the

actual production and interpretation of meaning are practical activities, often central to both power struggles and economic maneuvers, and shot through with emotions.

There are many definitions of culture; ethnographers need one that goes beyond treating it merely as a symbolic structure. The Comaroffs, for example, speak about meaningful or symbolic practices that constitute culture construed as a

semantic space, the field of signs and practices, in which human beings construct and represent themselves and others, and hence their societies and histories. It is not merely an abstract order of signs, or relations among signs. Nor is it just the sum of habitual practices. Neither pure langue nor pure parole, it never constitutes a closed, entirely coherent system. Quite the contrary: Culture always contains within it polyvalent contestable messages, images, and actions. (1992: 27)

Contests within this semantic space are by their nature political, as they often constitute attempts to achieve legitimacy or to establish collective identities (nation, class, gender, race, etc.) and endow them with an aura of naturalness. Can societies and their politics, permeated by such symbolic struggles, be studied in the same manner as “natural systems” examined by the “hard” sciences? The answer depends on the ontological stance: naturalists say yes, antinaturalists say no. The latter—as we show in chapter 1—cannot do without interpretation that they see as a replacement for (radical interpretivists) or complement to explanation (moderate interpretivists).

Interpretivism in cultural anthropology had its heyday in the 1970s and the early 1980s. The masters of interpretive or symbolic anthropology—Clifford Geertz, Victor Turner, Marshall Sahlins, Edmund Leach, David Schneider, and Mary Douglas—proposed rich and multifaceted theoretical frameworks for studying the complex relationship between the political and the symbolic; the essence of this relationship was captured by the title of Abner Cohen’s seminal *Two-Dimensional Man: An Essay on the Anthropology of Power and Symbolism in Complex Society* (1974). Through careful

conceptualization and detailed ethnographic fieldwork, these (and many other) scholars showed that culture is not an immutable, monolithic terrain composed of structured configurations of symbols and signs, available for (contemplative) interpretation; it is rather a complex set of signifying practices via which humans collectively create the worlds they inhabit and within which they compete for power and material advantages.

Since the 1980s, interpretivism has changed, mostly under the impact of the postmodern challenge, but it has retained its viability as a research program not only in cultural or political anthropology (e.g., Kwon 2006), but also in other disciplines, including political sociology (Ashforth 2005; Wagner-Pacifici 1986) and political science (Bevir and Rhodes 2015; Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2006; Chabal & Daloz 2006; Edles 1998; Fernandes 1997). The relationship between interpretive methodologies, such as critical discourse analysis, and ethnography continues to be carefully studied and produced increasingly precise methodological directives (Krzyżanowski 2011a, 2011b).<sup>19</sup>

### **Ethnography of Nation Building**

Much of the competition for symbolic power and cultural hegemony remains inscrutable for such standard methods of political science as surveys or institutional analysis. Interpretive ethnography offers a solution. Take, for example, the study of nation building, one of the central preoccupations of today's comparative politics (Smith 2004). It is hard to imagine a method other than ethnography that would highlight and clearly demonstrate that national-level meaning formation and similar, local-level processes are often incongruous and, if related, their relations are complex.<sup>20</sup> Herzfeld (1997) investigates the relationships between national and local levels of identity formation and shows that there is no single logic that would apply to the formation of "national identity" in all

locations where this process takes place. Gagnon (2004) shows how ethnic identities of “Serbs” and “Croats” are formed, re-formed, and deformed through a series of mobilizations and demobilizations whose local and national rhythms vary considerably. Interpretive ethnography can capture this variation.

### **Interpretive Ethnography and Democratization**

Interpretive ethnography has also made critical contributions to the study of democratization. For example, by showing that “democracy” is interpreted and thus practiced in many different ways that depend on local cultural contexts (Paley 2002; Wedeen 2004; Schaffer 1998), ethnographically inclined researchers help us understand why democracy-promotion projects built on decontextualized, universalistic assumptions are beleaguered by often insolvable problems.

Ashforth’s (2005) nuanced and multilayered ethnography shows that the fragile legitimacy of South African democracy is seriously threatened by the persistence of witchcraft. As the country undergoes rapid political and economic change, many people, particularly in poorer areas such as Soweto, feel increasingly insecure and unsure why the benefits of the post-Apartheid development are sparse and slow in coming. They also feel jealous of those whose life fortunes have improved. To deal with insecurity and a growing sense of injustice, they look for explanations offered by their own culture in which personal misfortunes are attributed to evil acts of witches. This culture also suggests a remedy: affected individuals or communities need to enlist the help of traditional healers. But the healers’ authority challenges the efforts of the new, democratically elected and “modern” government to achieve legitimacy. As Ashforth puts it:

Belief in witchcraft presents severe challenges for the project of democratic government within

a modern state. A democratic regime cannot acknowledge the legitimacy of 'informal' efforts to seek justice in the face of witchcraft, but if authorities prevent communities from securing their own forms of justice while refusing to address the underlying problem of occult violence, they open themselves to the charge that they are either ignoring the dangers facing the community or in league with evil forces themselves. (2005: 314)

Ashforth's (2005) study demonstrates that the "top-down" *political* logic of democratizing projects often clashes with the "bottom-up," usually local, *cultural* mechanisms that dictate the meaning of democratization for the "target" populations. Insensitivity to such localized cultural understandings often derails or deforms even the most promising democratization projects.

### **Interpretive Ethnography and the Politics of Collective Memory**

Kwon (2006) provides another example of the clash between national- and local-level logics in a study examining collective memory and its impact on regime consolidation in Vietnam. Again ethnography proves indispensable. The Vietnamese, whose society had been ripped apart by devastating wars, engaged in the rebuilding of their country's social and cultural tissue. In a society whose edifice rests on a scaffolding of multigenerational kinship regulated by elaborate rituals, this is a particularly demanding task. The ritual reconstruction of lineages that were destroyed by "bad deaths" that occurred "in the streets," while the proper location for dying is "at home," is fraught with difficulties. Death outside of the culturally legitimated locations disrupts the viability of family units grounded in the cult of ancestors. Given that family units are the building blocks of social order, a society that lost hundreds of thousands of its members in ritually uncontrolled conditions, either as soldiers on battlefields or victims of killing fields, is unbalanced. Reburying under the "proper" conditions can "re-fit" ancestors into their "rightful" ritual locations and thus restore social order.

This is exactly where the state's politics and the culture of lineage and community clash. The communist authorities of Vietnam, although reluctantly supportive of society's self-healing efforts, are also interested in the victims of the foreign invasions. Reburying can become a political ritual that promotes the regime's interests; the dead are splendid candidates for hero worship. But the cultural logics of hero worship, championed by the regime, and cults of the ancestors needed by the families, are at odds. Engaging in the latter can undermine the regime's claims to legitimacy and weaken the nation-building potential of official heroism.

Kwon (2006) contributes to the literature on the relationship between the politics of memory formation and the struggle for political legitimacy (Davis 2005; Bernhard and Kubik 2013) and confirms that the study of their relationship is seriously flawed when cultural mechanisms involved in it are abstracted away. He insists that collective memory is always formulated according to specific cultural rules in concrete social locations and constructed on several levels, at different scales, often simultaneously. The political and cultural logic that governs this construction at the national level, where it contributes to the regime's self-legitimizing efforts, can be undermined or annulled by the local, regional, or familial processes of collective memory formation.

### **Interpretive Ethnography and Comparisons**

What about the relationship between (ethnographic) interpretation and comparison, a chief task of comparative politics? While within traditional positivistic anthropology, participant observation was seen as a reliable and unproblematic tool for collecting data that was directly fit for comparisons and generalizations, the interpretive turn undercut this methodological optimism. As Holy (1987: 4–5), aptly puts it, while in positivistic anthropology “generalization was seen as problematic, description was not,” “subjective” or “interpretative” anthropology problematized description as it moved from

“the theory of social facts as things to a theory of them as constructions.” Constructivism made comparisons dubious, and the word “comparison has completely disappeared from the vocabulary of methodological discourse” (Holy 1987: 6–7).

Such a conclusion may sound ominous to the practitioners of comparative politics, but in all fairness many of them have articulated similar concerns (Bowen & Petersen 1999; Chabal & Daloz 2006; Smith 2004; Wedeen 2004, 2010), prefigured in the work of a philosopher who once took a good critical look at their practices (MacIntyre 1978). Comparativists, whose field has been stretched—in Collier’s seminal formulation (1993)—between case studies and large *n* studies, used to search for a “scientific” salvation in the direction of an “ever larger *n*.” These days, however, many of them opt for a method of “small scale controlled comparison,” which promises that “through a focus on process and mechanism within the detailed study of the cases, much of the complexity of political life can be addressed while maintaining an ability to generalize” (Bowen & Petersen 1999: 11). To summarize: interpretive ethnography based on participant observation of semiotic practices delivers important and original bodies of knowledge for research programs founded on three commitments: (1) *constructivism/interpretivism* (interpret—not just explain—actions that are “meaningful” to actors), (2) *ontological realism* and an attendant epistemology (focus on actual actions of real people, rather than variables),<sup>21</sup> and (3) *microscale* (observe actual, “small-scale” settings and reconstruct relevant mechanisms).<sup>22</sup> These three commitments undergird a research agenda that is indispensable in a world that stubbornly refuses to be rationalized and homogenized and in which the politics of identity is pervasive.

### **Postmodern Ethnography and Beyond**



With the postmodern turn, ethnography has acquired new tasks and its role in the study of power has had to be examined afresh. But, a “reformed” ethnography has remained just as relevant to the study of power as ever (for a strong articulation of this point see Borneman and Hammoudi 2009). Wedeen (2010) has admonished political scientists not only to open up more fully to new ways of studying political reality brought about by postmodern self-awareness (discussed below), but also to sit at a dinner table “where the ethnographer questions the very terms of debate that prevail, where epistemological reflexivity trumps personal therapy, and where underlying assumptions among both positivist political scientists and interpretivists are subject to vigorous interrogation” (2010: 267).

The reexamination of ethnography’s utility has been propelled by a double engine of *postmodernism* and *globalization*. The former cast doubts on the epistemological adequacy of social scientific methods, particularly their claims to “objectivity,” “detachment,” and the possibility of “accurate” representations of reality (Bevir and Rhodes 2015); the latter accelerated a reconceptualization of the object of study by discarding earlier conceptions of “ethnographic” realities as isolated and self-enclosed systems.

Debate about the relative (de)merits of “ethnographic” representations of reality has been particularly heated since the publication of *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Clifford & Marcus 1986), whose authors examine ethnography as a literary genre belonging to a broader category of “scientific” writing. Crapanzano, for example, criticized Geertz for being too domineering and not allowing enough space in his narrative for the natives’ unfiltered voices:

Despite his phenomenological-hermeneutical pretensions, there is in fact in “Deep Play” no understanding of the native from the native’s point of view. There is only the constructed understanding of the constructed native’s constructed point of view. Geertz offers no specifiable evidence for his attributions of intention, his assertions of subjectivity, his declaration of experience. (1986: 74)

Postmodernists challenge the authorial authority of the interpreter, the hero of the interpretive turn. They posit that ethnographic texts should be polyvocal, allowing the “natives” to speak in their own voices and to represent (textually, narratively) themselves.<sup>23</sup> While very few scholars would completely relinquish control over their texts, the idea that the work should allow the reader to “hear” the natives’ own conceptualizations of reality is not alien to many practitioners of today’s comparative politics (Ashforth 2005; Laitin 1998; Schaffer 1998; Wedeen 1999, 2010). It is, however, clear that the postmodern critiques of ethnography as a genre of writing have not changed fundamentally the way most social science narratives are composed. Nor have they diminished interest in ethnography as a research method, although globalization has called for its overhaul.

Trouillot (2003) argues that the conceptualization of ethnography as a method focused on the study of small, relatively homogenous communities has prevented anthropologists from achieving the proper understanding of the relationship(s) between the broader *world* (however it is conceptualized) and specific *location*. This blinded them to the phenomena that need to constitute the bread and butter of social science in the globalizing world: the expansion of capitalism and its “local” consequences, colonialism and postcolonialism, migrations, and the rise of megacities. Postmodern and global sensitivity demands that location be construed not as a relatively bounded and separate whole, but as a place where various flows (of people, commodities, and ideas/discourses) intersect.

According to Marcus, postmodern ethnography needs to be sharply distinguished from what he calls positivistic or “realist” ethnography. Specifically, three dimensions of ethnographic inquiry need to be reconceptualized: the spatial, the temporal, and the perspective or voice (1998: 62). First, the concept of community “in the classic sense of shared values, shared identity, and thus shared culture” (Marcus 1998: 62) needs to be replaced with the concept of “multi-locale, dispersed

identity” (1998: 63) constructed, often simultaneously, by often mutually independent flows of cultural material, complex political configurations, and economic relations. Marcus argues, “It is the burden of the modernist ethnography to capture distinctive identity formations in all their migrations and dispersions” (1998: 63).

Second, to “[post]modernize” the temporal dimension of ethnography, Marcus asks that we replace dominant “Western historical metanarratives” that have routinely served as a historical background for many scholars with local histories and carefully reconstructed local collective memories. He contends, “The past that is present in any site is built up from memory, the fundamental medium of ethnohistory” (Marcus 1998: 64).<sup>24</sup>

Finally, the traditional ethnographic perspective, heavily indebted to the concept of structure (social or semiotic), needs to be replaced with the concept of “voice.” For Marcus: “Voices are not seen as products of local structures, based on community and tradition, alone, or as privileged sources of perspective, but rather as products of the complex sets of associations and experiences which compose them” (1998: 66). As I understand this postulate, today’s increasingly mobile people need to be studied as members of (several) networks and participants in (several) flows, rather than products and producers of clearly identifiable structures. Table 3 summarizes Marcus’s distinctions.

Table 3. Three dimensions of the ethnographic subject

	<b>Space</b>	<b>Temporal</b>	<b>Perspective</b>
<b>Realist Ethnography</b>	(Relatively closed) community of shared values (culture)	“Western” metanarrative as a background story	Structure (social or semiotic)

<p><b>Modernist Ethnography</b></p>	<p>Multi-locale, dispersed identity</p>	<p>Localized collective memory</p>	<p>Voice</p>
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### **Identity, Postmodernity, and Globalization**

Most political scientists and anthropologists who are sympathetic to Marcus’s theorizing or share his concerns accept at least some postmodern insights about the constructed and increasingly fluid makeup of identity. Yet many of them know that from time to time ethnographic studies reveal the emergence of pretty “solid” entities: dispersed and incongruous identities become communities, localized collective memories captivate us as metanarratives, and voice freezes into structure. They warn, however, that this needs to be empirically demonstrated rather than a priori theorized. It is therefore helpful to conceptualize politics in such a manner that the struggle for identity becomes as central to it as the struggle for scarce resources.<sup>25</sup> This new concept of politics is most powerfully articulated by Dirks, Eley, and Ortner, quoted earlier, who posit, “If identity is decentered, politics is about the attempt to create a center” (1994: 32). Sometimes such a center is formed; sometimes it is not. It has also become clear that “resistance in the struggle to establish identity does not rest on some nostalgic bedrock of tradition or community, but arises inventively out of the same deconstructive conditions that threaten to pull it apart or destabilize what has been achieved” (Marcus 1998: 74).

The postmodern turn makes the task of studying such processes of invention and stabilization even more demanding: the formation of identity needs to be caught *in statu nascendi*, as various flows

intersect in a single locale and/or are traced down through several locations/locales. Again, it is hard to imagine a method better suited for such a task than ethnography, perhaps pursued at multiple sites, as I discuss below.

### **Global and Multisited Ethnography**

In the increasingly globalized world, researchers face a methodological challenge: ethnography, designed to study the structuring of social life, power, and the formation of identity in “small” locations, has proved inadequate for studying the reality of (fast) global flows of goods, services, and information; migrating populations; and shifting meanings. As the Comaroffs observe:

The economies of signs and practices have to be situated in the intimacy of the local contexts that gave them life. At the same time, they require to be inserted into the translocal processes of which they were part *ab initio*: processes—commodification, colonization, proletarianization, and the like—composed of a plethora of acts, facts and utterances whose very description demands that we frame them in terms of one or another Theory of History. (2003: 161)

The “terrain” ethnographers are supposed to investigate needs to be reconceptualized so they can situate the principal object of their study (not necessarily a small community, but relatively small sets of people) within a translocal field of political, economic, and cultural forces. The work to address this need already began in the 1970s. Paradoxically, as some political scientists began moving their discipline from macro (structural historical studies) to micro (game-theoretical work on the individual calculation and the growing interest in the small-scale mechanisms of politics),<sup>26</sup> anthropology in the hands of many of its leading practitioners was already traveling in the opposite direction.

By and large, this movement from micro to macro in anthropology has had two major phases:<sup>27</sup> (a) the *world-system phase*, inspired mostly by Wallerstein (1974) and Frank (1969), and arguably culminating with Eric Wolf (1982); and (b) the *globalization/postmodern phase*, epitomized most

distinctly by the critical works of Clifford and Marcus (1986) and Marcus (1998). The theoretical tenor of the first phase was decisively materialist, (neo-) Marxist, while the second wave was primarily culturalist, as its practitioners pushed the interpretive turn in the social sciences to its limits (and perhaps beyond). During this phase, anthropologists set out to demonstrate how local structures and cultures are influenced and shaped by larger structures, such as the states, class structures, and the world system of (mostly economic) interdependencies.

The second phase was marked by the theoretical implosion of the whole repertoire of such “traditional” concepts as the binaries of micro-macro, system-worldview, or center-periphery; and the concept of a clearly bound cultural whole. Accordingly, ethnography and fieldwork had to be reinvented again. In Trouillot’s words: “The problem is not fieldwork per se, but the taking for granted of localities upon which the fetishization of a certain kind of fieldwork was built and the relationship between . . . supposedly isolated localities and supposedly distinct cultures” (2003: 125). To answer this challenge, methodologists and practitioners propose ethnography that is *postmodern*, *global*, and *multisited*.

Building on his earlier work on the extended case study method discussed below, Burawoy (1998; 2000: 26–28) articulates four methodological guidelines of global ethnography: (1) “the extension of the observer to the world of the participant” (the essence of participant observation), (2) “extension of the observations over time and space” (following subjects through complex and increasingly global networks), (3) “extending from micro processes to macro forces” (relying on a theoretically informed model of the external forces whose contingent character needs to be grasped), and (4) “extension of theory” (avoiding the “straitjacketing” power of theory by the incessant, mutually correcting dialogue of theory and data).<sup>28</sup>

## **Globalized World: From Structures to Flows, Networks, and Fragments**

The image of structure in today's social science has lost its once formidable luster as it has been challenged by the images of networks (Castells 1996), assemblages (Sassen 2006), flows, and scapes (Appadurai 1990). This has put a new set of demands on the methodology of empirical investigation. What should we do, for example, with a time-honored, grand binary opposition, system versus life-world (Habermas), that echoes Marx's own distinction between the base and superstructure? Marcus astutely observes:

The distinction between lifeworlds of subjects and the system does not hold, and the point of ethnography within the purview of its always local, close-up perspective is to discover new paths of connection and association by which traditional ethnographic concerns with agency, symbols, and everyday practices can continue to be expressed on a differently configured spatial canvas. (1998: 82)

Such a perspective produces an image of social reality as a flat plane, composed as a mosaic of pieces of various sizes, complexly interconnected, and subjected to increasingly rapid recombinations; the older, Marx-inspired, vision of a hierarchically ordered reality (a "causally" weighty base at the bottom and a somewhat less consequential superstructure at the top) is passé. The globalizing world is sometimes conceptualized as a world of friction between specific local communities and the forces of globalization. Communities are simultaneously increasingly *fragmented* by the universalizing pressures of neoliberal governmentality and *reinvented* by people's resilience (Tsing 2005, Biehl and McKay 2012). One consequence of this remapping is a call for ethnography to focus on complex interactions of economic, social, political, and cultural processes initiated both at the local and global levels, without a priori privileging causally any of them.

## **Power in the Globalized World**

In a path-breaking formulation, Foucault proposed that the study of power needs to focus on its exercise or actualization(s) “in the complexities of everyday practice” (Herzfeld 2001: 122). This premise has long guided ethnographers and has produced eye-opening results; the postmodern situation has added a layer of complexity. Having been asked to look for power literally everywhere, ethnographers now face the task of tracking it down inside extensive, often hidden, networks that connect actors through increasingly *globalized webs* of influence, dependence, and assistance. As localities have become increasingly discourse based and “virtual,” actors can escape (at least partially) the exercise of power by their direct “local” superiors by engaging in Internet-empowered, transnational networks (see Tarrow 2005 for an overview). Ethnographic studies of such networks are not easy, but they are much needed.

### **Multisited Ethnography**

For Trouillot, multisited ethnography is an improvement on earlier incarnations of the method, since it is “a partial answer to the ethnographic trilogy (one observer, one time, one place)” (2003: 125). But, how would one conduct a multisited ethnography? Marcus proposes seven strategies: (1) follow the people, (2) follow the thing, (3) follow the metaphor, (4) follow the plot, story, or allegory, (5) follow the life or biography, (6) follow the conflict, and (7) conduct a strategically situated (single-site) ethnography (1998: 89–99). There is no room here to characterize them all; instead I briefly illustrate their usefulness by reconsidering one of the key tasks of ethnography: tracking down power in unusual and marginal places (for example, among the subaltern).

Echoing Scott (1985), Marcus suggests that the primary task of cultural/political anthropology is the reconstruction of a complex dialectic of *resistance and accommodation* as marginal or subaltern people try to come to terms with the pressures of political and/or economic globalization. This framework,



in his mind, has served realist ethnography well, at least since the first “wave” of globalization of anthropology in the mid-1970s. The postmodern world, however, calls for its retooling. Most importantly, the multisited ethnography that traces multiple loci of action undermines the binary conceptualization of the dominant versus the marginal (subaltern). It not only calls for a more systematic focus on the powerful (and on ethnographic studies of what they actually do and think), but, more importantly, it prods the researcher to look for as many sites of power and counter-power exercise as possible (see also Gledhill 2000). As a result “questions of resistance, although not forgotten, are often subordinated to different sorts of questions about the shape of systemic processes themselves and complicities with these processes among variously positioned subjects” (Marcus 1998: 85).

Studying politics in a world inhabited by increasingly mobile and globalized populations calls for new concepts and methods. Ethnography that is multisited, global, and sensitive to postmodern concerns is an intriguing new tool. But it seems that is particularly effective when it combines new concerns and sensitivities with the tested techniques of traditional positivistic and interpretive ethnographies.

### **The State and the Local in the Globalized World**

The study of the state seems to be an area where such a combination works particularly well. Ethnographers of the state, such as Gupta and Björkman, set up their investigations understanding perfectly well that the state is a multifaceted and often disjointed set of institutions and discourses, rendered even more complex by the forces of globalization. They also know that in the minds of the citizens the state functions as a discursive construct whose actual shape is at least partially dictated by the themes of local cultures from within which people “imagine” what the state actually is. Gupta

(1995, see also Sharma and Gupta 2006) proposes that “studying the state ethnographically involves both the analysis of the *everyday practices* of local bureaucracies and the *discursive construction* of the state in public culture” (2006: 212). Accordingly, his ethnographic work proceeds on two tracks: he observes interactions between state officials and locals in an office, and he reads newspapers, often consulting his interpretations of with the locals. What emerges is a picture of a complicated strategic terrain and intricate discursive field within which various actors construct their actions and develop/verify their conceptions of the state.

Björkman, who also works in India, tackles another controversial theme: the role of money (bribes) in elections. She shows that in order to understand how money actually works one needs intensive fieldwork. In her case she discovers that cash is not used to buy votes but to: (1) assure broader participation at election rallies, (2) harden campaign workers loyalty, and (3) build networks of reciprocity. She then argues convincingly that ethnography is indispensable for the student of elections and electoral “bribery” to show “how relations of representation are differently constructed in particular semiotic and strategic contexts” (2014: 632). In general, Björkman’s rich ethnography responds to “Ajantha Subramanian’s call to ‘provincialize democracy,’ to see it ‘not as European but as always the product of particular cultural histories’ (2009: 22)”.

Ethnography is also indispensable to untangle very complicated sets of relations that emerge at the borders of unstable states. To grasp the situation at such borders the researcher must study not just formal regulations and institutions but also informal transactions and cultural understandings prevalent among local populations, and underpinning strategizing by their leaders (Levi-Sanchez 2016).

## Paraethnography

Holmes and Marcus (2005a, 2005b, 2006) try to formulate the rules of yet another form of ethnographic method: paraethnography. They study highly professionalized, “technical” environments in which “experts” need to comprehend instantaneously what is happening around them, *now*, in what Holmes and Marcus call the “contemporary.” They also need to formulate effective strategies of action and implement them. In such situations the type of knowledge experts/professionals call “technical expertise” that relies on highly complex, processed, and usually numerical types of data, fails. The reason is simple: “precise,” technical, *quantitative* reports often arrive on the decision makers’ desks *after* the deadline by which the effective decision must be made. To wait for such data is often not an option. What is needed, therefore, is another kind of information, a specific vernacular knowledge that comes from long practice, extensive experience with specific types of situations (both formal and informal), and access to very “down-to-earth,” often *qualitative* information provided the practitioners “on the ground.” This kind of knowledge is often loosely articulated, does not have explicitly formulated rules, but nonetheless is concrete and practical. It is a kind of knowledge a “native” develops of his or her culture (2005a: 236).<sup>29</sup> But it is also a kind of knowledge that the ethnographer seeks to develop. As the result, the distinction between the subject and the object of investigation disappears; rather the ethnographer and the “natives” become “intellectual partners, interlocutors with whom a critical conversation can unfold thus anticipating a collaborative engagement” (Holmes, personal communication).

But paraethnography is more than that. The method is particularly useful in the studies of specific institutional settings in which “thin data” of existing accounts is available and in which the “subjects” themselves are involved in some form or “research.” This includes the locations of

central importance in today's increasingly globalized world. Holmes and Marcus argue that in the past such locations were usually located at the points where "encroachments" (2006: 35) of the West on local cultures were materializing. Focusing on such "interface" locations afforded an opportunity for the mutual reinforcement of two intellectual tasks: the scrutiny of the way people subjected to the encroachments of the West conceptualize their predicament (a long-standing ethnographic interest) and the "critically reflexive examination by anthropologists of their own discipline" (2006: 35).

In today's world of "fast capitalism" (2006: 34) the center of action has, however, shifted to the central institutions of the emerging global system (the IMF or the bureaucracies of the European Union).<sup>30</sup> They have become, therefore, the "fieldwork sites" that need to be subjected to paraethnographic studies.

So, how can one study the locations where people who are immersed in and defined by specific professional cultures make critical decisions that influence the lives of millions? How can we learn about the generation and impact of this kind of knowledge? It is often generated in institutional settings to which ethnographers have no direct access. Participant observation is impossible. Instead, the authors propose to rely on the existing accounts of the decision-making process. A careful, critical reading of such sources, "reviewing enormous volumes of this kind of austere technocratic data, scrutinizing precisely those artifacts that Bruno Latour . . . describes as 'the most despised of all ethnographic subjects'" (2006: 36), may reveal the "secrets" and nuances of the actual process. Holmes and Marcus describe their work as being "preoccupied with how highly refined, technical documents—thin data—can serve as the material out of which we can create contexts and preconditions for 'thick' description." Thick description of the decision-making process reveals that

decisions are often made in a “paraethnographic” manner,<sup>31</sup> that is, “symbolic analysts” and decision makers swiftly develop and utilize complex, synthetic knowledge that can be seen as “a kind of *social thought*—expressed in genres such as ‘the anecdotal,’ ‘hype,’ and ‘intuition’—within institutions dominated by a technocratic ethos” (2005b: 1104, emphasis in original). As Holmes and Marcus explain:

The para-ethnographer is an expert subject like the genetic engineer who is perplexed by the significance of his or her own cognitive practices and who, in the shadow of his or her formal knowledge work, creates intricate *cultural* narratives that might never be fully voiced but nonetheless mimic the form and the content of an ethnographic engagement with the world. (2005b: 1104)

Paraethnography is a research practice in which both the “ethnographer” and the “key informants” collaborate to the degree rarely practiced in the earlier versions of ethnographic encounters. They are partners not just in generating mutually agreeable portrayals of reality, but, more fundamentally, in developing common standards determining what constitutes valid knowledge.

### **Five Ethnographies: Conclusions**

The usefulness of ethnography for comparative politics and political science in general cannot be assessed without realizing that there is no single ethnography, but several different types of ethnography. In this chapter we outline five such types: traditional/positivistic, interpretive, postmodern, global (including multisited), and paraethnography. Each is associated with a different ontology of the social, and each can help political scientists in different tasks.

In reference to power, the central object of interest for both political scientists and political anthropologists, both positivistic and interpretive ethnographies are indispensable for studying: (a) *overlooked* (informal dimensions of) power (Abélès 2004; Pachirat 2011), (b) *hidden* (faces of) power (Lukes 1974; Gaventa 1980), (c) *inaccessible* (mechanisms of) power, for example in early stages of

protest mobilization (Bayard de Volo & Schatz 2004: 269), (d) ostensibly *inconspicuous resistance* to power (Scott 1990), (e) *ambiguous* (effects of) power exercise (Wedeen 1999), (f) *cultural construction* of agents and subjects of power (Mahmood 2005), and also violence (<http://www.upenn.edu/pennpress/series/EPV.html>).

Additionally, interpretive ethnography is crucial for exposing the relations between power and meaning in concrete situations. In other words it is a powerful approach for studying the relationship between political and semiotic practices. Its significance for political analysis has become clearer as a growing number of political scientists—particularly in comparative politics—work within a constructivist paradigm and design their research programs around such principles as: (1) ontological realism,<sup>32</sup> (2) constructivism/interpretivism, and (3) microfocus on “small-scale” mechanisms.

Postmodern ethnography is central for capturing the dynamics of power and identity in an increasingly interconnected and globalized world. Global and multisited ethnography, attentive to the novel (gradually more virtual) ways of constructing collective identities and focused, inter alia, on the increasingly transnational and translocal nature of political and economic transactions, is a promising addition to the methodological armamentarium of today’s social science.

Paraethnography, continuing the self-critical, reflective tradition of postmodern ethnography, is designed to penetrate the decision-making processes in the centers of “fast capitalism” and other hardly accessible locations of power in the rapidly globalizing world.

### **Case Study and Its Relation with Ethnography**

While ethnography comes to political science from the outside, the case study method has belonged to the basic tools of political analysis since the inception of the discipline. In recent years there has been a remarkable intensification of methodological work that helped political scientists achieve an unprecedented level of sophistication both in the self-awareness of the method and the improvement in actual research practice. In this section, however, I will not offer a thorough analysis of the case study method; I will merely sketch some remarks on its relationship with ethnography. Anthropologists—since Gluckman—talk about “the extended case study.”<sup>33</sup>

As David Snow and his collaborators argue, the case study is best seen not as a single method, but rather as a combination (triangulation) of methods, some of which can be quantitative, some qualitative. In this formulation, which I accept, ethnography is just one of several tools available to the case study scholars. Snow and his collaborators define the case study method as:

A research strategy that seeks to generate richly detailed, thick, and holistic elaborations and understandings of instances or variants of bounded social phenomena through the triangulation of multiple methods that include but are not limited to qualitative procedures [particularly ethnography—JK]. (Snow and Trom 2002: 151-2. See also Snow and Anderson 1991.)

Over the last several years several students of qualitative methods in political science have generated a sophisticated body of writing that dramatically improved the ability of qualitative scholars to understand the nature of their work and the value of their contributions to our understanding of politics.<sup>34</sup> Before I discuss the extended case study method, then, I will briefly review the recent advancements in the case study methodology in political science.

In political science qualitative work is usually associated with the case study methodology whose features are most clearly delineated by setting a systematic comparison with the variable-oriented

methodology. The former is related to the ontological stance that views the world as “a bowl of jelly” rather than a “bucket of shot,” indicating at least a mild emphasis on the “wholeness” and “systematicity” of social phenomena (Danto 1989). Charles C. Ragin, in his seminal *The Comparative Method* (1987), provides a precise examination of both approaches and offers an original way of combining them in a single empirical study. For him, the case-oriented strategy in comparative studies is “evidence oriented,” while the variable-oriented approach is theory centered. It is less concerned with understanding specific outcomes or categories of outcomes and more concerned with assessing the correspondence between relationships discernible across many societies and countries on the one hand, and broad, theoretically based images of macrosocial phenomena, on the other (Ragin 1987: 53).

The beginning of the twenty-first century witnessed an explosion of sophisticated studies of the case study methodology in political science (Brady and Collier 2004; George and Bennett 2004; Gerring 2004). In Gerring’s view, “For methodological purposes a case study is best defined as an in-depth study of a single unit (a relatively bounded phenomenon) where the scholar’s aim is to *elucidate features of a larger class of similar phenomena*” (2004: 341, emphasis added). Importantly, he sees ethnography as one of the types of the broadly understood case study methodology (Gerring 2004: 342). His ontological stance is clearly positivistic as his focus is on the specification of cases construed as the smallest units of analysis (“bucket of shot”) and the reconstruction of causal relationships among them through the analysis of *covariance*, even within a single observable unit.

While Gerring’s extremely useful analysis shows that case study can be “disciplined” by aligning it with the “positivistic” ideals of the variable-oriented methodology, others pushed the analysis of this method in two different directions: away from the language of “variables” toward the disciplined,



albeit narrative reconstruction of “social dramas” and “situations” or, more radically, away from the positivistic ideals toward what Burawoy (1998) calls *reflexive science*. He builds on the earlier work in anthropology, particularly coming from what is known as the “Manchester School.” Its practitioners offered the method’s initial elaboration and established its credentials as the major tool of holistic analysis of social phenomena. The method is associated with what is called *situational analysis*, whose tenor is decisively holistic and thus closer to the image of “a bowl of jelly” rather than “a bucket of shot.”<sup>35</sup>

Max Gluckman, for example, classifies the use of ethnographic data by Malinowski and the generation of anthropologists who followed him as “apt illustration” because it was selected “for its appropriateness at a particular point in the argument. . . . There was no regularly established connection between the series of incidents in cases cited at different points in the analysis” (1967: xiii).<sup>36</sup> He contrasts this approach with the analysis of “social situations” in which “analysis treats each case as a stage in an on-going process of social relations between specific persons and groups in a social system and culture” (1967: xv). Gluckman baldly states that “many of the problems that are emerging, and that involve the basic problems of the endurance, stability, and different types of change in a social system existing in space-time, can only be tackled through the use of the extended-case method” (1967: xvii). In fact he is frequently credited with having launched the first extended case study in his “Analysis of a Social Situation in Modern Zululand” (1940), in which he showed “how individuals in certain key positions could create and exploit social situations in terms of their power and their culture, and yet how certain other processes, arising from the larger society, led to standardized but unplanned relationships and associations” (Gluckman 1967: xx). The ceremonial opening of the first bridge built in Zululand by the Native Affairs Department under a

new scheme of “Native” development became a means through which Gluckman analyzed much broader power and race relations in South Africa.

J. Van Velsen, while further developing “situational analysis,” emphasized “process,” which he contrasted with more static structural approaches (1967: 129). For example, he suggested that situational analysis is particularly suited to analyze “the discrepancy between people’s beliefs and professed acceptance of certain norms on the one hand and their actual behaviour on the other” (1967: 143). Situational diachronic analysis stresses the study of norms in conflict.

Michael Burawoy (1998: 4), a former student of Van Velsen, is arguably the most important advocate of the method in today’s sociology.<sup>37</sup> His work is also notable for an effort to add reflexivity to the arsenal of case study’s methodological precepts. For Burawoy, “The extended case method emulates a reflexive model of science that takes as its premise the intersubjectivity of scientist and subject of study. Reflexive science valorizes intervention, process, structuration, and theory reconstruction.” He considers it the Siamese twin of positive science—extracting the general from the specific by moving from the “micro” to the “macro.” Crediting the Manchester School of social anthropology for pioneering this “extending out” from the field, Burawoy (1998: 6) makes a significant contribution to the extended case method by bringing “reflective understanding” to the “level of explicit consciousness.” He boldly claims it is “an alternative model of social science” with “alternative explanatory and interpretive practices.” Burawoy examines its virtues, i.e., the ability to “discover multiple processes, interests, and identities” as well as its limits, e.g., the implication of its practitioners in colonial and postcolonial regimes of power (1998: 6–7).

Reflexive science is based on dialogue between the social scientist and those whom s/he studies. It involves a dialogue between social theory and folk theory. In an attempt to gain objectivity, positive science calls for a disposition of detachment between observer and the object of study. Burawoy summarizes the four prescriptive tenets of positive science as “the injunction against *reactivity*,” the principles of “*reliability*,” “*replicability*,” and “*representativeness*.” He suggests that while the extended case method violates these principles, survey research fails to live up to them because of the “irrevocable gap between positive theory and its practice” (1998: 11). Burawoy (1998: 14) proposes “a methodological duality, the coexistence and interdependence of two models of science—positive and reflexive.” Context effects pose impediments to positive science and constitute the basis of the principles of reflexive science.

*Intervention*, a vice in positive science, becomes a virtue to be exploited in reflexive science. In fact it is prescribed. Multiple meanings attached to responses to survey questions undermine the reliability of this research. “Reflexive science commands the observer to unpack those situational experiences by moving with the participants through their space and time” (Burawoy 1998: 14). The “aggregation of *situational knowledge into social process*” is the second principle (1998: 15, emphasis in the original). “*Structuration* is constituted by the autonomous external field that shapes and is shaped by the ethnographic locale. *Reconstruction* of theory that leaves core postulates intact,” and “that absorb anomalies with parsimony, offering novel angles of vision” is the fourth context effect. “Dialogue is the unifying principle of reflexive science” (1998: 16).

Burawoy codifies the extended case method as follows: (1) extending the observer to the participant, (2) extending observations over space and time, (3) extending out from process to force—“*tracing the source of small difference to external forces*” (1998: 19 emphasis in original), and (4) extending theory.

“Theory is essential to each dimension of the extended case method. It guides interventions, it constitutes situated knowledge into social processes, and it locates those social processes in their wider context of determination” (1998: 21). Context effects and the effects of power limit the extended case method as well:

1. The researcher cannot avoid dominating or being dominated. Inevitably he becomes trapped in networks of power.
2. Silencing of marginalized groups by those who dominate requires the researcher to listen for repressed voices.
3. Objectification, “that is hypostatizing social forces as external and natural, is an inherent danger of this approach” (Burawoy 1998: 23). However, we do not find this unique to the extended case method.
4. Normalization or “reconstructing theory is itself a coercive process of double fitting” (Burawoy 1998: 24). Complexity is reduced to parsimonious theory, and theory is recomposed to account for the anomaly.

In his discussion of the implications of the two models of science, Burawoy (1998: 25) suggests, “Positive science is limited by ‘context’ which supplies the foundation of reflexive science, while reflexive science is limited by ‘power,’ the hidden premise of positive science.” He discusses variants of the relationship between techniques of research and models of science and finds that certain variants of participant observation framed by grounded theory are within the positive model of science while the extended case method is the paradigm for the reflexive model of science. Burawoy also compared contrasting approaches to history: “The regulatory principles of positive science—reactivity, reliability, replicability and representativeness—define *procedural objectivity*, a *process* of gathering knowledge. . . . The regulatory principles of reflexive science—intervention, process, structuration, and reconstruction—rely on an *embedded objectivity*, ‘dwelling in’ theory” (Burawoy 1998: 28). Counterintuitively, he suggests that our commitment to one or the other model shapes the problems we analyze rather than the other way around:

Survey research most closely approximates positive goals the more the specifics of situations

and localities are destroyed. It works best in a reified world that homogenizes all experience. . . . Reflexive science, on the other hand, takes context and situation as its points of departure. It thrives on context and seeks to reduce the effects of power—domination, silencing, objectification, and normalization. . . . Reflexive science valorizes context, challenges reification, and thereby establishes the limits of positive methods. (Burawoy 1998: 30)

The case study method has been recently worked on in at least three scholarly communities. Political scientists have engaged in a massive effort to firm up the method's philosophical foundations, specify and codify its procedures, and delineate the area of its application, albeit within a general orientation Burawoy calls "positivistic" (George & Bennett 2004; Brady & Collier 2004; Gerring 2004). They see the method as a best tool for the *nonstatistical study of covariance* between separately conceptualized phenomena (Gerring 2004). In sociology, Burawoy and his collaborators proposed a "reflexive" reformulation of the method's premises and its mechanics. In their hands, the method is related to an *interactive* approach to social research that calls for *reflexivity*, and ultimately becomes a tool of *empowering* both the researchers and their interlocutors. In anthropology, where the method of ethnography is again the subject of intense critical reflection (online journal HAU) there are several strands of often sophisticated philosophical reflection on the post-postmodern sensitivity, partially reviewed for example by Wedeen (2010). For more practically oriented researchers who wish to employ ethnography, I suggest considering the extended case study method. The method's essence is: (1) *situational analysis* (the whole Manchester School), (2) approach to *social change* that takes *actors' own cultural perspectives* seriously (Turner 1969, 1974), and (3) sensitivity to the fact that data gathering via ethnography is based on a dialogue between the "researcher" and "respondent" (Burawoy's *reflexivity*). Arguably, the *ethnographic study of social dramas* is the best exemplification of this method (Turner 1974; Wagner-Pacifici 1986).

## Notes

1. This chapter is a revised and updated version of the text published earlier as (Kubik (2009) and Aronoff and Kubik 2013).
2. Aronoff (1993), Chabal & Daloz (2006), Edles (1998), Johnson (2002; 2003), Wedeen (1999, 2002). For an innovative marriage of formal modeling and interpretive/symbolic analysis in the field of international relations see O'Neill (1999).
3. Geddes (2003: 23) puts it well: "Although multiple regression is an excellent tool for testing hypotheses, it is not always a good image to have in mind when trying to explain something complicated, because it focuses attention on the identification of causal factors rather than on how the causal factors work."
4. Consult, in particular, works of Clifford and Marcus (1986) and Marcus and Fischer (1999).
5. Anthropologists Borneman and Hammoudi offer a sophisticated critique of textualism, whose practitioners often limit their ethnographic work to reading texts produced by the studied peoples/cultures. They call for the revival of ethnographic work based on actual living among the studied people, for intense "experiential encounters" whose essence is a "holistic" immersion in other people's lives and focus on "registering of sensory impressions in a (temporal) process of mutual subject-discovery and critique, an engagement with persons, groups, and scenes that takes into account the dynamics of our interactions as well as the differences between our locations and those of our interlocutors" (2009: 19). For a similar approach in political science see several chapters in Schatz (2009b).
6. For excellent overviews of up-to-date conceptualizations of culture see Swidler (1986), Sewell (1999), and Wedeen (2002).
7. One might identify specific characteristics of at least four schools: German, French, British, and American (Barth et al. 2005). But even if such a nation-based typology is rejected as simplistic,

the three distinct trajectories can be distinguished (Barnard 2000; Vincent 1990). Barnard proposes to isolate: (1) the French sociological tradition running from Montesquieu via Saint-Simon, Comte, and Spencer to Durkheim and Mauss; (2) the British tradition, founded by Ferguson and Smith and running, *inter alia*, via Maine, Morgan, Tylor, and Frazer to Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown and their students; and (3) the American tradition, also having its founding father in Montesquieu, but running through Humboldt, Grimm, and Bastian to Boas (the most influential thinker here), Kroeber, and Lowie (Barnard 2000).

8. Schatz (2009a) argues that some work that uses nonparticipant observation may nonetheless have an ethnographic *sensibility*, insofar as it focuses on “insider” perspectives. See, for example, my discussion of paraethnography below.
9. Malinowski’s literary style was clearly influenced by the work of his compatriot, Joseph Conrad (Korzeniowski) (Young 2004; Clifford 1988: 92–113). On earlier developments in the history of ethnographic monographs see Thornton 1988.
10. The table offers very preliminary, imprecise labels. The concept of ethnographic holism is critically discussed in Rumsey 2004. For a set of short, sharp remarks on this topic see also Leach 1976: 3. I take the notion of “messy text” from Marcus 1998 (see, in particular 187–89).
11. For a useful definition of semiotic practices see Wedeen 2002: 714. See also the section on interpretive ethnography below.
12. “A post-modern ethnography is a cooperatively evolved text consisting of fragments of discourse intended to evoke in the minds of both reader and writer an emergent fantasy of a possible world of commonsense reality, and thus provoke an aesthetic integration that will have a therapeutic effect” (Tyler 1986: 125). Tyler’s formulation is perhaps most extreme; other

“postmodernists” are less inclined to see their written products as instruments for evoking “fantasies.”

13. Oushakine’s study (2004) in which he reconstructs and interprets early Soviet practices designed to “form” new “modern subjectivities” is an excellent example of (para)ethnographic genre, though the author does not use the term.
14. This is akin to what Schatz (2009a) calls an “ethnographic sensibility” and related to paraethnography discussed later.
15. The distinction between social structure and social organization has been most famously introduced and analyzed by Raymond Firth (1951). On Firth see Vincent (1990: 331) and Barnard (2000: 125).
16. A similar idea is formulated in the work of historical institutionalists (Thelen & Steinmo 1992: 2–3) and in some game-theoretical analyses (Fearon & Laitin 1996).
17. See Abbott (2001b); Ekiert & Hanson (2003); Mahoney & Rueschemeyer (2003); Pierson (2004).
18. See: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/ssees/research/funded-research-projects/global-informality-project>
19. Krzyżanowski talks about discourse ethnographic approach (2011b: 2).
20. Yet, not long ago Wilson observed, “The dialogical relationships between the creation and re-creation of national and cultural identities and the same processes at local levels have too long escaped critical ethnographic investigation” (1990: 160).
21. Following Hall (2003), I understand realism as an ontological stance assuming that social reality is constructed out of actions of real people, not operations of variables. The attendant methodology requires that, as a minimum, values of variables are “translated” into actions of actual people in “real” contexts.



22. Moreover, ethnography is the best method to observe meaning production and meaning decoding via nonverbal mechanisms that are often employed to communicate and exercise power but also to challenge it through counterhegemonic displays and performances. As Trickett and Oliveri demonstrate, the “ethnographic approach can help discern the meaning of practices that people do not or cannot fully describe through verbal means” (1997: 149).
23. As Tyler explains, postmodern ethnography privileges “discourse” over “text”: it foregrounds dialogue as opposed to monologue and emphasizes the cooperative and collaborative nature of the ethnographic situation in contrast to the ideology of the transcendental observer (1986: 126). It is interesting to note that while the questions of textual representation of social reality have been seriously debated in history (White 1978), sociology, and anthropology (Clifford & Marcus 1986), political scientists seem far less preoccupied with studying the impact of the manner in which this reality is represented in their texts on their knowledge (though see Patterson & Monroe 1998).
24. This call to rethink the relationship between history and memory has been recently heeded by sociology, history, and cultural studies; there has been a renaissance of writing on historical memory (see, for example, Bernhard and Kubik 2014).
25. For an enlightening discussion on defining and measuring identity, see Brubaker and Cooper (2000) and Abdelal, Herrera, Johnston, & McDermott 2009.
26. See for example, Geddes (2003); Laitin (2004); Little (1998).
27. Marcus (1998: 79–80); Trouillot (2003: 120–21); Vincent (1990: 388–402).
28. Global ethnography needs to be distinguished from “world anthropologies,” a term introduced by Ribeiro and Escobar (2006) to refer to the diversity of ethnographic and anthropological

practices found around the world, particularly outside of the hegemonic academic institutions of the West.

29. Analyzing the work of Alan Greenspan, Holmes and Marcus discuss the difficulty of conducting and writing ethnography that needs to relate to both what “he experiences as much as a ‘pain in the stomach’” and his “thought out concepts” (2005a: 241).
30. Objects of study “are no longer on the border between the encroaching West and the transforming traditional, but are fully located within the shared, but differently situated and located, predicaments of contemporary life (Holmes and Marcus 2006: 35–36).
31. “Within the epistemic communities that we seek to explore, our subjects are fully capable of doing superb ethnography in their own idioms” (Holmes, personal communication).
32. By *realism* in this context I mean focusing on “real” people and their actions, not just variables.
33. This section relies heavily on the text co-written with Myron Aronoff and published in Aronoff and Kubik 2013.
34. Witness for example the emergence of the Qualitative and Multi-method Research Section in the American Political Science Association.
35. These metaphors come from Danto (1989).
36. Gluckman evaluates Malinowski as a fieldworker and theorist in the final chapter of his *Order and Rebellion in Tribal Africa* (1963).
37. In 2002 Burawoy “received a special award in recognition of 25 years devoted to teaching, practicing, and promoting ethnography at Berkeley. One could argue that he has single-handedly created a ‘Berkeley school’ of field research, with roots in Manchester by way of Lusaka, Chicago, Budapest and Syktyvkar in Northern Russia, mating the ‘extended case method’ of Jaap

van Velsen and Max Gluckman to the theoretical agenda of an epistemologically astute and empirically aware Marxism” (Wacquant 2003: 7).