

Reflexive Practice in the Ethnographic Text: Relations and Meanings of the Use of Heroin and Other Drugs in an Urban Community

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Key words:
reflexive
ethnography;
participant
observation; note-
taking;
investigator's
position;
subjectivity; heroin
use

Abstract: In this article I will illustrate the process of engaging in reflexive action research, to question the role of the researcher during data collection, data analysis, and in preparing a research article. I address reflexivity by way of an ethnographic study of drug use that was carried out in Barcelona, Spain, from 1994 to 1996. The socioconstructionist perspective that guides my work departs from two premises: 1) the researcher's approach to and relation with informants, as well as the emergent meanings that arise from this interaction constitute key elements of ethnographic reflexive practice (HAMMERSLEY & ATKINSON, 1995); 2) language is performative, which is to say that it has the capacity to produce action (AUSTIN, 1962) and, therefore, effects the construction of reality. It follows that the author of a text is implicated and takes on a commitment insofar as she or he is an agent situated between informants and readers. The positionality of the author gives rise to the need to experiment with a reflexive practice that can take into account ethical and epistemological criteria that will in turn affect the formation of any corresponding "academic" or "scientific" knowledge. The results of my investigations suggests four basic, interrelated dimensions that obtain with regard to demonstrating reflexive practice and the researcher's action: 1) micro-contextual descriptions, 2) dialogism (BAKHTIN, 1984), 3) the emergence of subjectivities, the researcher's positions, and possibilities for transformation, and 4) the rhetoric of the text.

Table of Contents

- [1. Introduction](#)
 - [1.1 The researcher-subject dimension](#)
 - [1.2 The micro-contextual dimension of the research site](#)
 - [1.3 The dimension of social discourses](#)
 - [1.4 The dimension of the writing and rhetoric of the text](#)
- [2. Methodology and the Research Context](#)
- [3. Results: Reflexive Practice and the Performativity of the Text](#)
 - [3.1 Micro-contextual descriptions](#)
 - [3.2 Discursive formations](#)
 - [3.3 The emergence of subjectivities and transformations](#)
 - [3.4 Rhetoric of the text](#)
- [4. Conclusion](#)
- [Acknowledgments](#)
- [References](#)
- [Author](#)
- [Citation](#)

1. Introduction

The issue of reflexive practice, or auto-reflexivity, has been addressed and elaborated by numerous scholars in many disciplines. Postmodern frameworks have prompted practitioners to include notions of contradiction, paradox, and subjectivity in their research. In a variety of disciplines including philosophy, anthropology, sociology, and other social sciences, ethical dilemmas are presented relating to the potentially harmful consequences of truth encountered by the authors in their own research (AHERN, 1999; BUTLER, FORD & TREGASKIS, 2007; BREUER, 2000; BREUER & ROTH, 2003; FINLAY, 2002; GANNON, 2006; HASKELL, LINDS & IPPÓLITO, 2002; MRUCK & BREUER, 2003; MURPHY & KRAIDY, 2003; RUSSELL & KELLY, 2002; STEIER, 1991; SWARTZ, 2006). However, research that reflects on itself or in which reflexive practice is evident remains relatively scarce. This is likely due to the profound influence of positivism on scientific practice (IBÁÑEZ & IÑIGUEZ, 1997). [1]

Positivist science has relied on the bivalence and unity of knowledge; that is, an idea or representation is either true or false, and truth can only be asserted univocally (RORTY, 1979). With the increasing influence of sociology of science, constructionism, semiotics, post-structuralism, postmodernism, among others, within the social sciences, the notions of truth and objectivity have been called into question; and it has been acknowledged that multiple discourses each create a reality. [2]

The myths of objectivity and truth are being exploded. There is no neutrality between the individual who produces knowledge and the knowledge produced, nor can the two be separated. Neither is there an omniscient entity that establishes the criterion of transcendental truth (T. IBÁÑEZ, 1994). Truth is reached by a consensus and is culturally negotiated; truth is not revealed but argued about and directed by values and only then transformed into objective scientific truth. Language performs reality. This means that words produce things and perform meanings immersed in language and culture (AUSTIN, 1962; DENZIN, 2003). Similarly, BUTLER (1997) considers the concept of performativity as a process through which identities and social realities are constituted through approximation with a series of pre-established normative and dominant social and cultural models, although she also incorporates the existence of all those failed acts or alternative versions that can take place in the process of repetition. To repeat means to produce once again normalized situations of everyday life. The act of repetition is never exactly the same—it is not mechanical or exact, and so there are always variations in that which is repeated. On one hand, the resulting imperfect copies manifest the constructed character of identities and social realities and, on the other, they produce disloyal versions, or subversive forms, of the normative model. [3]

Therefore, the concepts of objectivity and truth are questioned and science incorporates the conviction that social reality is constructed in social and relational contexts. It is here that researchers' commitment to their work; which is to say that although they may respect the normative model, they may also

construct alternative versions in which reflexive practice is converted into a tool for realization, while allowing for the opening up of multiple possibilities in the creative and political dimensions of the scientific domain. [4]

MARCUS (1994) defines reflexivity as: "... not so much a methodological issue, as an ideological one" (p.568). Rather than being interested in the theory or philosophy of her or his own reflexive practice, the researcher refers to the political complexity of theory (e.g. differing positions, implied interests) that is generated by postmodern discussion. MARCUS designates as a critical turn the position taken toward reflexive self-criticism, marking the opening of the ethnographic tradition to new possibilities that question objectivity, distance, and transparency of the reality of concepts, together with the need to explore ethical, political, and epistemological dimensions as characteristics that are integrated in the production of knowledge about others. [5]

Feminist epistemologies offer the practice of position, where a position is not an identity, but rather each site from which an individual acts or speaks. Thus, an individual may occupy different positions or sites of enunciation at different moments. These sites reproduce discursive formations (in a Foucauldian sense) or ideological formations, which are tied to certain identities, social categories, roles, and norms. For FOUCAULT a discursive formation is the group of relations that can unite, in a particular time, the discursive practices that give rise to sciences and formalized systems. Discursive formations may be isolated in local and specific contexts of the daily interaction between individuals, or in their daily practices. These are juxtaposed, complemented, counter-poised, etc. (FOUCAULT, 1971) depending on when they are activated. They establish a constant dialectic in people's actions, so they may also be modified through these actions. Reflexive practice uses the "position" as a source of knowledge. As HARAWAY (1991) asserts, objectivity and the possibility of being questioned and questioning oneself are only possible from a particular site, and not from a transcendent and supreme knowledge. [6]

ALBERTÍN (2008) identifies the use of reflexivity as a way to produce a text that is open to ethical and epistemological concerns. She offers two reasons for this approach:

1. Rational-epistemological: Consists of rendering an account of the conditions of the production of knowledge; that is, of the process. It offers understanding of the psychosocial situations that the researcher encounters, and at the same time is a source for exploring epistemological issues;
2. ethical-political: A form of resistance to dominant forms of psychosocial knowledge. It allows one to become more aware of the ethical and political dimensions of research, the objectification of other positions and discourses, the questioning (for what and for whom) that can lead to changes within the researcher, in a liberating sense or of "a practical reason that resists," and at the same time implicates and commits the researcher to that which sustains her or him. [7]

In the following review of the literature on reflexivity, I have identified four dimensions where there is a focus on applying a reflexive practice: 1) the researcher-subject, 2) the micro-context where the research is carried out, 3) the social discourses, and 4) the writing and rhetoric of the text. This categorization is a means of organizing the material, but it should be understood that in reality these dimensions are all interrelated in the reflexive analysis. [8]

1.1 The researcher-subject dimension

WOOLGAR (1988) defines reflexivity as the "text's ethnographer" (p.14). Jesús IBÁÑEZ (1994) treats reflexivity as the paradoxical process of "objectifying" the researcher. The subject-object is conceived as inseparable, to the degree that in the investigation of the object there are always traces of the subject, because the object is the product of the objectifying action of the subject. [9]

The researcher asserts his or her position as a subject by allowing his or her subjectivity to emerge in interactions with participants in the course of an ethnography during which different positions, such as subject or identity, may be at work. In this way, neither researcher nor informants are reduced to the status of objects; rather they are at once subjects doing research and objects of the research being undertaken. [10]

The ethnographer may also be seen as the translator of cultures. From this point of view, cultures cannot be communicated in an essentialist and determinist form, but can be known or apprehended through the ethnographer's attempts to comprehend the culture as an outsider (SAID, 1993; SPIVAK, 1985). Reflexivity requires focusing on the process of hybridization, that is, of mixtures of different cultures and social practices rather than the result of the hybridity of a given culture. Therefore, reflexivity focuses on the understanding of the researcher-researched relation, rather than the product of the research. [11]

Others, such as COFFEY (1999), note that the results of introducing the researcher's self in the account or narrated situation include:

1. Problematization of data (in the sense that we present a subjective experience in which our ways of doing, feeling, and thinking condition the findings);
2. re-conceptualization of the self in terms of different subjectivities, which depend on different contexts of action. Becoming aware is the basis for processes of change or personal transformations (RIBBENS & EDWARDS, 1998; HERTZ, 1997; REINHARZ, 1997). [12]

These perspectives recapture non-rational processes as fundamental to the reflexive practice: the actors' emotions (ELLIS, 1999): intentions, expectations, proximities, choices, desires, prejudices, etc. To make sense of what we see, or what people tell us, we have the richness of our common experience of feeling, a fundamental element that connects the author with the audience (CODE, 1995). For authors such as MCGOWAN (1994), the concept of reflexive agency is

located not in a unified subject, but in subversive corporeal acts in which the body becomes the site where agency is constituted. [13]

1.2 The micro-contextual dimension of the research site

Ethnographies of experimental laboratories focus on the context of action, or on the investigation and recording of the everyday scientific microcontexts in which subjects act and where interactions with objects as well as other subjects take place. This approach makes it possible to specify how knowledge is generated out of the particular visions and interests of institutions and researchers—out of moments, routines, and habits that are established and located in the context where the action emerges. The scientific strategy of objectivity and neutrality entails separating these productions from their "context of action or discovery" so that they can appear as generalized realities that transcend the micro-situational context in which their contingency is much more clearly evident (KNORR-CETINA, 1981; LYNCH, LIVINGSTONE & GARFINKEL, 1995). [14]

In contrast, ethnomethodology refers to a reflexivity that constitutes action and fixes its attention on locally observable sequences of conduct, in which the details of daily work and interactions are established, in which practical norms are produced that make possible correct courses of action (COULON, 1988). These norms are made observable to other members through their rational character. GARFINKEL (1967) uses actors' descriptions (categorizing objects in terms of classes, making formulations, showing or hiding details, making judgments, etc) as constitutive parts of their written claims; in other words, as parts that make the world intelligible and analyzable—that fabricate it. [15]

1.3 The dimension of social discourses

Reflexive practice requires understanding the pronouncements and positions of the subject in relation to discourses and the relations of power among them. FOUCAULT (1969) notes that power is related to the different systems of discourse that govern people's lives rather than through direct control. Discourses are a collection of pronouncements that describe objects, topics, and practices and are regularized in relation to a socially and historically determined system. Discursive practices are inseparable from other social practices. The appropriation of pronouncements or discourses depends on the subject's conversion of them into his or her own discourse, such that when the subject performs social practices, he or she does it from a site or position, which is the adherence to a discourse (or to different discourses, depending on the context where action occurs). Discourses or discursive forms are defined by their conditions of production, by the institutions from which they come and from the rules of the discourse. [16]

Categories of thought linked to collective representations are seen to be organized through the social structures of groups (BOURDIEU & WACQUANT, 1994). These collective representations are similar to the mental or cognitive structures of individuals because they are integrated as codes of individual

thought. Due to this collective organization of thought, we tend to analyze objective or social structures as if they were subjective dispositions. [17]

We may also add the dimension of critical reflection put forward by PARKER (1992). This includes the use of other discourses, especially through their internal contradictions, that will make it possible to raise questions pertaining to other discourses being addressed. This, in turn, changes and opens up different spaces of management and resistance. While acknowledging that these new possibilities can be created, PARKER does not suggest that they automatically entail any dismantling of discourses of oppression, as the act of becoming aware of such a discourse is not equivalent to rejecting or transforming it. Furthermore, both the discourse and the reflection upon it are historically and culturally circumscribed, which is to say that they are subject to their own conditions of possibility. [18]

1.4 The dimension of the writing and rhetoric of the text

ASHMORE (1989) suggests that reflexivity must appear in the text. LATOUR (1988) proposes an infra-reflexivity marked by a breach of standard methods; that is, a hybrid style in the mode of a literary and extra-academic style that more effectively connects the reader with the text, as compared to a scientific text with disciplinary boundaries. [19]

In reflexive practice different narrative styles are used that are appropriate for introspection, critique, and deconstruction (RILEY, SCHOUTEN & CAHILL, 2003). This procedure breaks with the norms of scientific writing (e.g. writing in the third person) and broadens readers' understanding (RICHARDSON, 1995; LEUDAR & ANTAKI, 1996). TRINH's proposal (as cited in DENZIN, 1997) is a reference for reflexive practice. For TRINH the text is the interpretive frame in the sense that it interrogates the realities it presents, it invokes the storyteller in the story it tells, it constructs the audience as responsible for its interpretation, it resists the temptation of becoming an object of consumption, it resists all dichotomies (e.g., man/woman), and it uses silence as a form of resistance. [20]

Postmodern anthropologists have become interested in textual rhetoric and new literary forms as ways of diluting authority in the ethnographic text. They redefine monographs as experimental ethnographies (MARCUS & CUSHMAN, 1982), characterized by their explicit concern with how the interpretations have been constructed and how to represent them textually (VAN MAANEN, 1995). They also address the use of rhetorical figures such as metaphor, allegory, evocation, collage, irony, and comparative contrasts, as ways for authors to better connect potential readers to their message. A scientific report, therefore, is a persuasive exercise, a rhetorical exercise of objectivity and also a version which should benefit from verisimilitude, rigor, and honesty (DENZIN & LINCOLN, 2000). [21]

My goal in this article is to identify and put to use rhetorical procedures and forms that constitute a reflexive practice. This reflexive practice has been embodied in an ethnography of drug use (predominantly heroin) carried out in an urban

community in Barcelona, Spain. I aim to show in the ethnographic text the processes followed to obtain data, negotiations with informants, the inter-subjective elements between the informants and the researcher, the narratives of selves, the socio-historical moment in which acts are carried out, the processes of selection and interpretation of the data, the values that drive actions, and the arguments that are inserted in the ethnographic account. [22]

2. Methodology and the Research Context

Between 1994 and 1996 I carried out an ethnographic study of a neighborhood in the city of Barcelona, Spain. I was given a grant from a research center (Instituto Municipal Investigación Médica) to estimate the number of heroin users in the city during that period (Spain had a high incidence of heroin users at that time) (BARRIO, DE LA FUENTE & CAMÍ, 1993; DE LA FUENTE et al. 2005; DOMINGO-SALVANY et al., 1998; PLAN NACIONAL SOBRE DROGAS [National Report on Drug Use], 1994). [23]

Ethnography was the chosen method because it allowed me to come into contact with the daily realities of the drug world through information obtained directly from users. I used both participant observation and in-depth interviews. Participant observation involved direct, continual contact with a broad group of heroin users in their social contexts and communities. Participant observation not only included observing the participant, it also involved listening to, asking questions of, and getting involved with the group or an individual while walking in the neighborhood or accompanying someone to acquire drugs, in order to understand how the participants viewed and interpreted the activities of their daily lives (AGAR, 1996; DENZIN & LINCOLN, 2000). [24]

Access to the arena of investigation was exploratory and open-ended, and carried with it an understanding of my own implication in the research, and the explicit aim of understanding what I observed in the participants' terms (HAMMERSLEY & ATKINSON, 1995). One of the project's objectives was to engage in the debate about observation itself, including whether the analyst should or should not become a participant in the social context being analyzed, and the need to establish sufficient analytical distance or not. In this sense, I sought to participate together with the informants in the process of knowledge creation, and to use critical psychosocial theories as points of departure for the ethnographic process and analysis (IBÁÑEZ & IÑIGUEZ, 1997). [25]

I began fieldwork with my first contacts in a treatment center for drug addicts. I did research at the center four days a week for two months, sitting in on office visits and therapeutic treatments with the users. After these two months I decided to go to the streets with the users, walk around with them and make contact with other users in everyday settings where they sought out and sold drugs. At the center were only users already seeking treatment who also felt compelled to answer my interview questions, given that the center's therapist asked them to do the interview with me. In addition, they often explained things whose meaning I could not really understand, such as the expression "when I try to stop using

drugs and I go out on the street, the others treat me [to drugs]." I asked myself how could it be that they treat him? [26]

The choice of neighborhood was determined by two factors: proximity to my workplace, and the high volume of heroin users in that area. The neighborhood was located near the sea, formerly a fishing community, and now sustained by small businesses and popular seafood restaurants. Its socioeconomic level was lower-middle class. [27]

I visited the neighborhood at different times of the day. Depending on the hour, I could make contact with particular users, or observe different types of activities (visits to the treatment center, selling drugs, and meeting just to talk). I also alternated among a variety of contexts (illegal or not, where I had a role of assistant or accomplice, where I was invisible because my presence was familiar to the users). In this way, I spent hours with them on the street, in their homes or those of their families; accompanied them to the doctor, or to find work; went with them to look for drugs in other neighborhoods; went to court with them, and visited them in prison. From my earliest contacts with them I noticed a clear difference between the users or consumers of heroin and users or consumers of methadone (synthetic opium used under medical supervision). Depending on the category to which they belonged, their ways of life were significantly different. [28]

I began this work as a grant recipient with a group of researchers studying the epidemiology of drug use and health policies. My role as a qualitative researcher did not have much status in the collective of epidemiologists, but they trusted me. I always felt a bit strange doing something for which I did not have a pre-established model; not knowing if I was following a proper method, or if what I observed and interpreted was outside of the academic canon, and above all, in a later phase, I had the feeling that what I explained about the people and places I studied was something of my own invention. I would have liked to compare my topic and method with those other researchers, but in my University department, in those years, there was no one doing ethnography. There were also not many translated books or articles (my English was terrible at the time). I was tremendously grateful that HAMMERSLEY and ATKINSON's (1995) manual, translated into Spanish in 1994 as *Etnografía: métodos de investigación* fell into my hands. [29]

My field work took place between December 1994 and December 1996, after which I maintained contact with some informants/friends. During the actual fieldwork I maintained a "triangulation" between different data sources, contexts, and techniques. This triangulation was based on:

- Confirming the testimony of the user in different phases of the study, as well as looking at what he/she said versus what he/she did to see if it was coherent;
- comparing information from different users about different issues;

- using testimonies from experts, or people connected to drug use without being users, who knew the neighborhood and the users (for example, health workers at the treatment center, the psychologist at the center, a community educator, volunteers, and neighbors with some relation to the users, family members of users, and the neighborhood business association);
- valuable information obtained through experience accumulated over time and I gained more knowledge about users. [30]

In 1997 I completed the write-up of my research and returned to the neighborhood to share my findings with some of my informants. Few informants participated because they were not interested in listening to and discussing my findings. Nevertheless I provided two of them with a copy of my work, and they read some of it and seemed to think it was acceptable, but we never set up an in-depth feedback session. I produced various field diaries (about 400 pages) and 43 audio-taped and transcribed in-depth interviews with users. My contacts with users allowed me to establish a network of 113 participants: 78 used heroin (61 men and 17 women) and 35 were in a methadone program (16 men and 19 women). All of the names of informants and institutions in this article are pseudonyms. [31]

At the end of the process, when I wrote and published an ethnographic account entitled *Using Heroin: Relations, Meanings, and Daily Life*, I questioned the role that I had taken as a researcher and, above all, the results I had acquired. This led me to explore the reasons and effects of that production, which immersed me, in turn, in a reflexive process that culminated in the writing of my thesis in 2000. [32]

3. Results: Reflexive Practice and the Performativity of the Text

In creating the ethnographic report, I have used reflexive practice in different forms. Using the theoretical framework reviewed in the introduction, I have worked in terms of the four dimensions I have identified: the subject of the research, the micro-context of the research, the social discourses, and the rhetoric and writing of the text. I have carried out my reflexive exercise by establishing four sections that correspond to these four dimensions, as follows:

- Micro-contextual descriptions: Those aspects related to writing foci based on narratives of context, interactive situations, and contingencies that appear in specific scenes among actors (informants-researcher);
- discursive formations: Aspects related to discourses that take hegemonic roles in the text, as well as their relation to other discourses that appear less frequently in the text;
- emerging subjectivities and transformations: Aspects related to different situated identities and selves (rational and emotional) that were produced, eliminated, and modified through daily experiences between informants and researcher.

- rhetoric of the text: The form that the writing takes, the versions of consumption presented, and the visibility of the interactions and the subjectivities produced. [33]

In the following analysis of these four interrelated sections, I use my fieldwork diaries, which include both my voice and the voices of my informants, to build a multi-vocal, or polyphonic text, and introduce a rhetorical approach that allows the reader to identify ethical and epistemological dilemmas and objectives as they arose in the research process. In this way, I attempt to create—or rather perform—a reflexive ethnographic text. [34]

3.1 Micro-contextual descriptions

The field notes, or participant observation notes, the descriptive fragments of the interactions and relations among participants, including the ethnographer, together with the contextual contingencies, reveal fundamental elements of a reflexive analysis. For instance, in the fragment below one can observe how the subjectivities, positions, intentions, and emotions are gradually defined and emerge in an encounter between Miguel (user) and the researcher:

"The following encounter with Miguel produced great anguish and grief in me. Every day that went by he looked worse and more dishevelled, then his comments ... 'Yesterday we did it, but today I have no money, I am hard put...though I prefer not to think about it a lot or it gets worse.' etc. I felt pity. I couldn't think of anything better to do than hand him the 1000 pesetas [coins in Spain until 2000]. I had on me. He was taken aback, did not expect the gesture, looked at the bill for a few seconds and took it saying 'all right but you shouldn't, it is a lot of money ... Thank you ... but don't get use to it ...'

I told him I would not get used to it, he offered to be interviewed that afternoon but I preferred not to plan too much in view of the lack of success on other occasions. Afterwards, I regretted my unthinking gesture: had giving Miguel the money been an error? Nevertheless, I thought to myself that a generous gesture like this could produce a significant response" (Fieldwork diary, p.109). [35]

As in GOFFMAN's (1987) theatrical metaphor approach, in our scene, the informants (other) become spectators and I (ethnographer) am observed, scrutinized, and analyzed in my own playacting (I am observed in my relation with them, and in my relation with other informants in the scene: therapists, family members, and neighbors). How I define myself depending on how I am perceived and how they value me becomes significant.

"Juan used to move quite independently in the neighborhood and when he did not have a need to address, he talked to me. In a way I appreciated that he was so explicit about everything, but in another way I had the impression that he tried to monopolize my attention: '*you are the only one here who I can talk to, the others are tattletales motivated by self interest*'—he would say to me. Then he started to ask me

things about my private life: if I had children, what car I had, where I lived ... I answered the questions without going into much depth" (Fieldwork diary, p.172). [36]

The contextual contingencies tied to the interests, expectations, and emotions of the actors produce rules, choices, decisions that become essential in setting out the trajectory of the course of fieldwork and ethnographic writing. [37]

In the following fragment I describe my decision to change the context of study; instead of doing interviews in the treatment center, I would do them in the street. To do this I would have to make new contacts, take on new roles as a researcher, and try to get over my fears, as the following suggests:

"After a time of studying the dynamics of the treatment center for drug abusers, I found it necessary to put myself in the drug user's 'natural context' to better understand some of the questions that were arising. I knew I was interacting with the users in the context of a health institution, such that it was inevitable to encounter only one type of users—the ones that were seeking treatment- but no others. It was impossible to establish an 'equal' or horizontal relationship with the users, because I was assigned the role of therapist and ... therapists were the ones who provided the users, the ones who requested service. What could I do? Obviously, the roles had to be inverted; or rather I had to "disperse" the authority of the researcher. 'Entering into their domain' could be very significant. Once on the street, it would be they who would show me, help me, or drive me around.

I had doubts about to how to do it. Could it be 'rather dangerous' to go into their neighborhood and go around with them, as some of the therapists and others suggested? 'How would I become accepted?' " (Fieldwork diary, p.151). [38]

The play of authority has also been relevant in the scene. My ethnographic authority is conditioned by the possibilities that the users wanted to provide: In what places can I observe them? What will they tell me when they get closer to me? What kind of relationship do they intend to have with me? I feel I cannot simply direct the investigation where I want; I have to constantly negotiate my interests in relation to theirs. [39]

Another reflexive element is to ask myself if I am an outsider-insider within the group of users. These limits became blurred late in the study, when there was a certain hybridization as I become competent enough to insert myself in cultural practices, while at the same time I represent the "other" or "non-user" in the world of drugs. In the following fragment I gather some impressions and feelings about my position in relation to the informants:

"The habit of 'thinking in the logic of a user' made me feel unsettled because I had the impression that I could not establish a 'distance' between their logic and that of the researcher analyzing the data. I felt my vision was biased by my affective relationship with the individuals so I tried to situate myself in an intermediate position between users and non-users. How? The confrontation between the discourses of users and non-users and, furthermore, the subsequent reflection and organizing of

the data were essential to finding this space. My feelings towards the users were very normalized in the sense that I felt as if they were people from my circle or environment, not strangers. There was emotion and friendship in some of my relationships with the users, and not in others. As users I saw them as people in charge of their own destiny and, in part, as victims of an oppressive social system that was [made manifest] in their bodies" (Fieldwork diary, p.130). [40]

Reflecting on different moments and situations in the fieldwork and the writing (before, during, and after) creates an understanding of how the different contexts have been generated among the participants. This temporal and relational continuity allows one to understand the meanings of many of the actions that took place in the ethnographic context. Focusing my analysis on the local—and located—knowledge of objects and subjects over time has allowed me to establish understandings of drug users' culture and nomadic identities without falling into essentialisms. That is, I have attempted to construct representations of cultures and identities that take into account their dynamic socio-historical and idiosyncratic dimensions, rather than creating fixed and purified categories and descriptions. In the following excerpt, I aim to portray the different moments of drug dependence or being hooked that the user goes through. These include more permanent changes as well as some elements that take place more dynamically:

"Kike got worse over time, always more 'hooked' on cocaine; I saw that his ability to communicate was also diminishing. He had started to get into debt with the black man who supplied him and defrauded other users and Luis, his best friend. The last time I saw Kike before he went to jail was one afternoon, as I was walking by The Arcos and heard somebody calling me, I got closer and saw it was him, his face was reddened and he was very restless ... He started to say he had a lot of problems 'I am very hooked on cocaine, I am wanted for a lot of things, I have to think about going somewhere ... I am finished! I have not eaten or slept in days because of cocaine ...' His evolution also struck me; the drastic physical, psychic and relational changes that he went through in a short amount of time contrasted with a monotonous, cyclical and rational scheme that consisted of: getting drugs-using-getting-using. I thought that this behavior was not only Kike's but that it could be attributed to any user" (Fieldwork diary, p.126). [41]

Surprise or the break (as explained by AGAR, 1996), is a starting point for reflexivity. At the moment of surprise I could begin to problematize my ethnocentrism and cultural essentialism. Cultural essentialism is a conception of culture as fixed, pure, and unaffected by history. With regard to subject and identity, it refers to a notion of culture as that which is central and constitutive of the subject. At the same time, the break allows a source of innovation and comparison or contrast between the sociocultural practices of others and me from which I could make intelligible the process of creating knowledge. [42]

In this example I intend to show my surprise about the therapeutic dynamics in the treatment center, especially the prevalence of a discourse of control and surveillance above a discourse of healing that I had expected to find.

"I was amazed at the pre-established norms at work in both the therapeutic contract and the treatment protocol, as they indicated a high level of control and surveillance over the user. For example, when a urine test was requested, the user had to do it in front of a nurse to avoid any exchange with a 'clean' sample" (Fieldwork diary, p.145). [43]

To be surprised and to analyze the context of our interactions and data requires a dialogue with and between these elements. In the multiple conversations established between informants and researchers, divergences and inconsistencies are negotiated through discovering values and subjects' constructions inserted in the different dialogues. It is in the resolution of the break that a reflexive examination of the action as an act is included, whether it is of an action observed from a distance or one that is shared as a lived experience with the informants (one can only know one's own actions as acts given that to contemplate them is to step outside of them). [44]

Surprise is closely related to the prejudices the researcher holds that are questioned through his or her fieldwork experiences.

"Perhaps I had a preconceived idea that users belonged to closed, structured, and differentiated subgroups, but with time I learned that they all knew each other well and that their alliances (two or more subjects) were restricted to specific contexts and for very limited periods, unless there were more permanent affective ties between two or three friends or a couple. In the market of the street almost all users ended up meeting or knowing each other and, precisely for that reason, it was always very clear to me that I should not make enemies with anyone even though there were individuals I did not like nor trust" (Fieldwork diary, p.111).

"Other prejudices that I had at the beginning of the research, which disappeared with time, were, for example, the idea they are not neat. I was surprised how, at times, they took care of themselves and cleaned up (except when they were high). Also [I was] predisposed to the idea that they were not structured, in fact, at times, I found them very lucid and attentive (Antonio, for instance, remembered exactly how many tapes I had taped of his life story). During the research I thought they were not dangerous or that you could trust them and later I found Fernando in jail because he had threatened his neighbor with a knife. I also believed that there could not be a love relationship between a user and a non user. It was unthinkable for me (who would put up with a user if one was not on that path?). I realized many couples start without being users, one person then starts consuming and he or she may or may not draw the other in. In addition, living in the same neighborhood and frequently sharing the same public spaces, allowed for strong ties between users and non users; or else when these non users would get high on occasions (drinking alcohol) which was more normal than in the world I came from" (Fieldwork diary, pp.287-288). [45]

3.2 Discursive formations

The actors and the context of action cannot be the only dimensions of analysis for reflexivity; there is more than the definition actors offer and what we encounter in the socio-historic conditions of knowledge production or in the socio-historic tradition of that context of action (GADAMER, 1991). Therefore, reflexivity is previous to the context of action and enables its comprehension. This prior condition brings us to the discourses or discursive formations that are involved in a dialogic process. [46]

BAKHTIN's dialogism (as cited in HERRERO, 1992) does not mean the text takes a dialogue form, but rather it assumes a fictional dialogue where there is space for others' discourse. Direct observation of the social action as it is happening does not free the observer in any way from dependency on a dominant discourse. The analyst can always, like the participant, extract a definite version of the events even from a diverse group of descriptions; for example, rephrasing what the interviewees wanted to say, eliminating certain exaggerated, ironic, or rhetorical statements, or interpreting data according to tacit agreements made in the course of the interaction with participants. [47]

Dialogism, in the case being analyzed here, is portrayed through fragments of text that reveal different discursive formations. These different formations are put in tension with one another in the final text and are recognized as they construct the subject and the context through differentiated logics in which the predominant concern is: 1) the pharmacologic value and the effects of the substance (pharmacologic); 2) the participant's desire and behavior with respect to using drugs (consumption); 3) the psycho-medical discourse (therapeutic); 4) the environment which prohibits the use of drugs (prohibition); 5) the relationships and values in the community itself and with the group of users (community-relational). In what follows I review some of these fragments to illustrate how they work. [48]

3.2.1 *Pharmacologic discursive formation*

"[H]eroin ... comes to own you, because what you do for heroin you do not do for anything else, it makes you do things you never imagined doing, it has a power above anything else, I could even think it is supernatural, do you know what I mean? A power capable to manipulate people who have brains" (Interview, Pili and José, p.1).

The drug and its powers are the vital center of this discourse. Its focus is on the simultaneously physical—that is, chemical—and overwhelmingly compelling power of the substance, in its magical capacity to transform or transport us to a fantastic world where everything is possible, and where the subject of discourse is more about the drug itself rather than the user. Indeed, the user (or the user's brain) dissolves or evaporates in its wake. The drug produces the temporary annulment of personal problems and recognition of drugs as harmful for users through their exclusive, intimate relationship with the substance. They engage in a constant, persistent search for increasing pleasure, a search that is revealed by

excessive injection of drugs when actually, their needs are satisfied. The subjects become accustomed to the immediate pleasure of an injection and the simultaneous experience of moving away from what is undesired, that is, a retreat. [49]

3.2.2 Discursive formation of consumption

"According to Vicky, her sister was going through a period of severe depression.

'Is it because her boyfriend is very sick'? I asked.

'Not at all! That's not important,' said Vicky.

I was quite surprised at the response since Pepi had told me her partner was very sick.

After a few days, I saw Pepi and asked her about her depression. She responded, 'It is because the methadone dose they give me is not enough ...' I realized a user's motivation may be very different from what a non-user might imagine" (Fieldwork diary, p.113).

In this formation the need to constantly consume is accentuated, disregarding otherwise seemingly important functions or priorities in life. In addition, the subject manifests obsessive-compulsive behavior towards the substance and its administration, so that even when a sufficient dose has already been given to avoid withdrawal symptoms, he or she seeks other new sensations or physical states. In some cases this can in turn lead the subject to use drugs without reflecting on potential consequences for his or her life and relationships. [50]

3.2.3 Therapeutic discursive formation

"The more years you are involved with drugs, the less willpower you have and the more personality and motivation you lose, until you get to a point when you realize you have to do something to get out, while the person who has only been using for two years still has will, hasn't lost his memory or his conscience or anything ... I think it's the sickness itself, it's a process. A person who has been using for two years still has to go through many relapses. What happens is that these relapses, help you become conscious of your own sickness and make you make all of the changes that a person has to make to stop using drugs, changes at the level of the family, the internal level, social changes" (Psychological Interview, p.3).

This formation operates in terms of healing from drugs, the destructive effects that the consumption of toxic substances produces in a person and of relapses during treatment. [51]

3.2.4 Discursive formation of prohibition

"With regard to the users, I started to consider what would happen if they saw me as a possible snitch, as they often complained about snitches. I didn't have any problems with this. I was careful about broaching certain issues, especially since I was getting warnings, like the one from Quim:

'Sometimes you ask questions that are no good, eh?'

'Really? Which are those questions?'

'Well ... asking me who are the dealers or who is this one or that one ...'

After this I thought about what to ask and what not to ask in certain circumstances. I had to be careful not to reveal what some of my informants said, even if they had made it public" (Fieldwork diary, p.15).

This formation reactivates processes related to the concealment of everything having to do with drugs, with regard to its illegal nature, as well as processes of criminalization, and the exclusion of users. [52]

3.2.5 Community-relational discursive formation

"With Fredy, I had a lot of conversations rather than just simply observing him in situations where he was using. He was a good conversationalist and he helped me reflect on issues than concerned me, and doubts that came up. In addition, he had a long history of drug use and he told me about his experiences from years earlier. When I met him, he was 29 years old.

His daily activities had changed since he started methadone. He continued taking *rulas* (pills called Rohipnol), and sometimes cocaine, but in a controlled way. He was physically deteriorated, extremely thin; he looked tired of the life he had been living. He often commented: 'I have been taking methadone for a month, and the same story every day is boring.'

'Do you think that the relations that a user has to get drugs have some kind of meaning?' I asked.

'Yes of course, there is some of that, at least you are busy all day looking, then you talk to other people about it: if you have scored, who has good stuff ... but now ... why talk?, I am kind of outside of the conversation, it's not the same, and my old friends have disappeared ... With the methadone people, since I don't drink and I'm not high on *rulas*, I'm not in the same state as them, and you can't talk too much when they're high like that, you know?'

Fredy always said that doing heroine was a way of life, now he felt alone: I don't know how I can learn another way to relate, to find other people I can talk to ...'

I asked him if had noticed any changes in his way of thinking or understanding since he was on methadone: 'the only difference is that now I don't have to go out looking' ". (Fieldwork diary, pp.127-128).

In this discursive formation the relational issue established through drug use becomes very important. [53]

The dilemmas and contradictions in the text reveal how different discursive formations are put into play, although on other occasions different discursive formations coexist to strengthen one goal or objective. In the following fragment a consumption discursive formation is put into play with a relational logic (community-relational discursive formation): Wanting to stop using to take care of her daughter:

"In Alicia I could always see a dualism: on one hand she talked about 'the damage drug use had done,' and 'the problems with quitting,' but at the same time, in all of our encounters I observed the protagonist was drugs. She only went to Los Arcos to buy, even sometimes, if she was taking her daughter out in the stroller and saw the possibility of getting heroin, she would call her nephew to take her daughter home so she could stay alone to shoot up.

Seeing Alicia, I could not help feeling a sense of oppression, of discomfort, when she would tell me about her internal conflicts about 'wanting to stop using,' and 'not having the willpower' in the face of feeling bad about how she behaved with her daughter, in the sense that she was not giving her the necessary care" (Fieldwork diary, p.152). [54]

The claim in the text that some discursive formations were ignored or dealt with less frequently or treated as inadequate is also the product of a reflexive practice. A reflexive practice attends to descriptions that articulate mechanisms, or methods, which make it possible to produce and understand interdiscursivity, to have access to participants' orientations with regard to the action and the rhetorical mechanisms that they use. In the case of heroin use I sought to visualize which discursive formations prevailed in the final text, the text written by me, concluding that the consumption and the community-relational were most hegemonic, while issues that were less frequently addressed belonged to the pharmacologic and therapeutic discursive formations. [55]

3.3 The emergence of subjectivities and transformations

The emergence of subjectivities (of the informants and the ethnographers) can be understood through inter-subjectivity. In the space that the latter creates there also emerge intentions, rules, emotions, expectations, and desires; it is this space in which people establish a common world of shared meanings for interaction and communication. Even knowing there are no two identical ways to apprehend reality, it is enough that they be similar to establish a common perspective or framework of action where reciprocal subjectivities are continually adjusted. All of these intersubjective elements constitute the motor of action. [56]

The implication of these elements can be detected in the fragment of interaction in which Quim (user) and I (the ethnographer) interact, especially in relation to emotions and the issue of gender, as well as an adjustment to roles, identities, expectations, and explicit and latent interests:

"I sometimes ran into Quim with his friend Antonio in the neighborhood. A somewhat uncomfortable situation with Quim developed for me. He had talked to me a number of times about his need to go out with a woman who did not use drugs, and later he would ask me if I was really married and if I was seeing anybody, etc. Knowing this, I always made it clear, that my intention 'was not to go out with a guy.' One day I ended up telling him: 'Quim, do not think that you are going to go out with me, and don't keep from doing other things like going out with Antonio ... I consider you a friend and if I can help you I will, but nothing else.'

He answered: 'Ok, you do not want me to fool myself, right?'

Despite this, that same day, when we were saying goodbye he said: 'Ah! If we decide to meet on another day, I do not want to go to La Plana with that whole crowd there' (referring to the rest of the users who gathered there). I told him I did not choose the people for the study that my mission as a researcher was to talk with everybody I could, even with people who I did not like so much.

Nevertheless, my relationship with him was good, sometimes we met for a coffee and he updated me on his life and answered my questions. He kept on shooting up cocaine every time that he got paid" (Fieldwork diary, p.267). [57]

To understand the position the researcher occupies in different situations and in the framework of discursive formations grants her or him agency, and at the same time, reveals the understanding of what she or he is or can be in relation to others, and what others also are or can become, in the relationship. In short, it allows the emergence of different selves or subjectivities, subverting fixed and limiting social categories. [58]

In the following fragment two users ask me for money to pay for a place to sleep. They know they have my friendship, that there is trust, and they test me. I think the money is possibly not for lodging but to buy drugs, but beyond that concern I am convinced that I have to help them. They make a commitment to pay back the money, and they do it (much to my surprise, and my stereotype that a user does not keep his word is destroyed). My reaction is to celebrate that they paid me back and that they kept their word, since I was not sure they would do it.

"In my last encounters with José and Pili a somewhat embarrassing situation arose. One afternoon I founded them in La Plana, Pili, was very sleepy (I thought she had taken something in addition to methadone), José started to say to me: 'Look Pilar, I wanted to ask you a very big favor, it turns out that tonight a bunch of relatives from Andalucía are coming overnight, and my mother wants to put them in our house, but she told us that we should go somewhere else to sleep. we checked out a pension where they charge two thousand pesetas for the two of us, although after I bargained with the lady she has left it at fifteen hundred ... and that is what I wanted to ask you, if you could lend us that money, and the tenth of this month when I get paid I pay you back, I promise.'

I was somehow confused in the sense that I did not know what I should do.

'Can't you stay in your house too?' I asked.

Pili: 'Yes, but we would have to sleep on the floor, me pregnant, and him, look at his arm ...'

(José's right arm was paralyzed, as if he had had a stroke.)

Jóse: 'My mother tells me we just have to deal with it ... [W]e have been asking the people we know in the neighborhood for money, but nobody has any or wants to give us any.'

The problem was not whether or not to give them the money, but rather the feeling that they were testing me. The three of us knew we had established a good relationship amongst ourselves. I decided to lend them the money even though I only

had 1000 pesetas with me. They accepted and immediately started to justify the need for that money even though I had not asked for any explanations. They were very thankful and we agreed to see each other again the on the tenth of the month when José got paid and would pay me back, and in addition they offered to do a second part of the interview.

On the tenth I met them at La Plana, José took me aside and returned the money to me, then they commented that it was the last day he would get paid (30,000 pesetas) after being released from jail. We went to buy some snacks and I invited them to drink sparkling wine. We sat down in the grass and on benches in a nearby park all afternoon and part of the evening. We talked about their relationship as a couple and other issues; they said they really wanted to make plans to go out with me again" (Fieldwork diary, pp.251-252). [59]

The following example has been selected to show how experience is embodied in the researcher. In other words, how the fact of having a given experience and going through a particular situation (going to buy drugs in an unfamiliar neighborhood) has effects on the construction of subjectivity. Both the informant and the ethnographer find themselves in a tense situation. They are in a threatening and unfamiliar environment where they can be caught by police. The subjectivity of the user, who has the need to use, emerges as that of an extremely vulnerable being, subject to unpredictable and uncontrollable conditions in the environment. I can make this interpretation because I share in this experience. At the same time, the emerging user's subjectivity will allow me to contrast it with the social stereotype of a drug abuser as a passive, manipulative person who takes advantage of others, and to define the user from alternative points of view.

"One morning I found Alicia frantically looking for heroin; she had 2,000 pesetas but could not get anybody in the neighborhood to sell to her; some didn't have any and she didn't want to buy from others. After asking various dealers she found a colleague, who surprisingly thought I was a user, as she suggested we 'score some for the three of us from a guy I met in another part of town.'

When we got to the neighborhood, it was hard to find the dealer, we asked various users who sent us to an apartment where nobody answered, and we walked anxiously through the streets. After asking a few other people, two users from that neighborhood took us to another apartment. Alicia grabbed me by the arm saying, 'this is more discreet don't you think?' and added I don't really like following these guys, they might entrap us, you know?'

I was worried—what if we get caught by the undercover cops? What would I tell them? On one occasion I told Alicia 'I feel very awkward doing this here.'

'Yes I can tell' she answered.

Actually, I was perfectly aware of how vulnerable we were in an unfamiliar environment where it was difficult to know what was going on in the spaces and with the people.

We went down narrow streets. The ones leading us stopped under a balcony and started to whistle but nobody came out until suddenly Alicia pulled my arm hard to

change direction; 'we had the secret police in front of us,' she said. She became impatient and said she was going to leave the neighborhood because it was late and she had to go back to relieve her mother at the hospital, as Alicia's daughter was at the hospital because she was suffering from fever.

Finally we found the dealer we were looking for but he wasn't carrying. Alicia gave up the search but the other guy continued looking 'so you can see how long it takes to find 2,000 pesetas of horse, and then have the police come and take it from you,' they both said.

Alicia and I decided to go back to our neighborhood, and on the way, she was very anxious to take drugs and I was anxious to be done with the whole situation.

We walked fast and when we arrived at Los Arcos she was able to buy and once she had it in her hands she seemed totally relaxed and in no hurry to snort it. She asked me to accompany her and went into a bar's restroom while I waited outside. I remember she took a long time to come out, so long that I became anxious that she might have overdosed" (Fieldwork diary, pp.259-260). [60]

3.4 Rhetoric of the text

It is mainly through fieldwork notes and their selective use that I portray reflexive practice. The fieldwork notes are highly evocative; they constitute the textual record of field work, constructed through our memory and that of our informants in a collective act; although making fieldwork notes public is a delicate matter, given that it subverts the idea of objectivity and scientific truth (it entails revealing the author's or informants' most private feelings and thoughts) and it raises issues of power between ethnographer and informants. [61]

The text should be understood as a version or a history, of the reality studied. It must persuade the reader that this fiction is something like the truth. The text's small details and nuances, as well as the existence of rhetorical figures (e.g., metaphor and synecdoche) help in this. [62]

In this fragment evocation is utilized, Mercé tells me of her memories. The text refers to feelings of pain, blame, and a discomfort with oneself:

"One day Mercé told me she did not fear death, she was only worried about suffering, then she told me a story that made her feel very bad and that really made an impression on me:

'This happened two years ago, when Pedrito died in my arms ... he was a friend, a gypsy stabbed him various times...He was a little gypsy that hung around the neighborhood but he was a little nuts (crazy), back then I was sleeping at the factory with other junkies and drunks..., One day the gypsy came and stole all of our clothes, I told him to return them but he refused and called me a lesbo. Then I'm the one who egged Pedrito on: 'go slash him with a switchblade,' I said to him, and when the gypsy saw Pedrito going for him he took out a knife like the one used to cut ham and started to stab him in the chest. I was there and held Pedrito, I tried to cover his wounds so the blood would not come out of his chest but he did not last very long...I'm the one who provoked Pedrito to take out his knife(!), and if not, nothing would have

happened. I have always felt guilty ... Then there was a trial and I testified that the gypsy was the murderer, and they put him in jail. How many years do you think they have given him? I am sure that one, he'll come after me as soon as he comes out, but by then I will already be dead ... In our code I am a snitch because I put a man in jail, you know?' " (Fieldwork diary, p.261). [63]

One option for including different versions is to return the analyzed information to the group under study, or even better, if possible, for the researcher to analyze the entire discourse with that group, and to study the effects of the ethnography on other interested groups (therapists, professionals who work in the neighborhood, and neighbors). In my case, two years after I finished the final report, I returned to the neighborhood to share the results with some of the users. In the following fragments I illustrate a relationship with users and professionals in the drug world:

"The users expected (at the beginning of the study) that as a 'researcher,' I would begin to do surveys or that I would only be there for a few days. When they realized how much time I was dedicating they were amazed. I remember when Javi said something like: 'this kind of study you are doing is very good, no-one has ever done a study of us like this.' For others the surprise was the kind of work I did as a researcher: 'so they pay you to be out on the street like this?' (As if it was an unfamiliar kind of task). One of the things they also did to tempt me was to say: 'to know what drugs are you have to try them,' but I answered: 'there are many other aspects of drugs that must be tried as well in order to know what they are.' They were also intrigued to know whom I worked for, and I told them it was a study for the University, and they saw me as a journalist-type researcher who could potentially publicize the stories they told me (rather than what I observed)" (Field work diary, p.286).

"While my perception of the therapists at the beginning of the study was positive, it became progressively more negative as I got to know the users better. I realized I could not take an intermediary position since the relationship between therapists and users was very polarized. Therapists used moral values to treat users (what they did was not acceptable; they had no feelings, etc.). They had a controlling function, a position of authority and a rather distant treatment, which made me feel bad. I came to identify with the users" (Fieldwork diary, p.150).

"With regard to my relation to the institutions, in the medical center where I did my research, I did not feel very recognized, despite the fact that I was also becoming socialized in its epidemiologic culture. At a certain point, I had a difference of opinion with one of the supervisors of my project, especially with regard to the use of methadone as a treatment for the users. In the center they were doing a study to evaluate the effects of methadone on the users' way of life (and the point of departure was to agree with its use), but I had the impression that the users were not asking for methadone and that it was not satisfactory to them. I felt too influenced by the user's perspectives, and possibly I was, and these situations of tension with other perspectives were good for me because they provided contrasts and questioning; nevertheless I also knew that the power exercised by other dominant discourses (therapeutic, legal, etc.) was very strong" (Fieldwork diary, p.271). [64]

4. Conclusion

Reflexive practice constitutes a model for critical thinking and the examination of multiple positions. As such, reflexive practice helps us to identify social and rhetorically constructed boundaries that delimit our perspective in the social field. At the same time, awareness of these boundaries allows us the possibility of transgressing those limits, thereby providing the possibility of generating more creative explanations of the realities we observe, as well as making different ethical choices. [65]

In this article different forms of a reflexive practice have been explored. They are all interrelated, constituting aspects that may be more or less marked in the final ethnographic text: [66]

1) Detailed descriptions and narratives of how different situations of interaction between actors and the relationships established in the context where they are produced are constructed. As ethnomethodologists assert, to make the rational and meaningful character of concrete practices observable to other actors or readers is to put reflexivity into practice. The elaboration of this knowledge is something constructive and not simply descriptive. In this way the account turns into a constitutive description where the actors and the acts are configured in every microcontext that appears. [67]

2) The analysis of the discursive formations involved in the accounts and the agents' positions to engage in reflexivity, or reflexive practice, is not so much a matter of revealing the researcher's origins and social location (class, ethnicity, sex, academic or intellectual affiliation), nor of carrying out an intellectual introspection about the researcher's self. Nor is it simply a matter of the researcher's process of cultural interpretation and reflection on fieldwork, or of writing in the first person to emphasize empathy, difference, or the elaboration of the individual researcher's text with regard to observation, but in the words of BOURDIEU and WACQUANT (1994) it is to "explore the unthought categories of thought that delimit and predetermine what can be thought and that orient the practical realization of the research project" (p.37). [68]

The work of reviewing goes further than analyzing the researcher's lived experience, and what should be examined and neutralized in the act of the construction of objects is the unconsciousness of the scientific collective that is implicit in the theories and categories that it elaborates. The subject of reflection should be, in the final instance, the field of social sciences itself, and the mode should be dialogical (public debate, mutual criticism, interaction of discursive genres) not only through the writer but also through those who occupy contrary and complementary positions in the scientific field. [69]

3) The visibility of the researcher's self. A self based on inter-subjective relations with others with possibilities for personal transformation. The self, or subjectivity, is the social and historical dimension of the subject, which simultaneously configures it and allows it to become self-conscious and so also to potentially

initiate a process of transformation motivated by desire and experience. Subjectivity—including emotions, expectations and intentions—is at once the effect of socioculturally created discourses and comes after them, and is the means through which the subject may be transformed. [70]

Consequently, experiences are constructed through a complex formation of meanings, effects, habits, dispositions, associations, and perceptions that result from the participant's interactions and how she or he interprets them through the different possible discourses. Therefore, we must also assume that the concept of subjectivity itself is trapped in discourses (PUJAL, 2003). [71]

Operating in terms of this understanding of the self, reflexive practice in the ethnographic text generates and offers multiple subjectivities that question and resist the identities and social categories established by the dominant discourses through which it is also formed. [72]

4) The rhetoric adopted in the text will be fundamental for communicating reflexive practice to the reader, given that reflexivity is an inseparable act from that of the text's formation and, therefore, from potential readers or spectators. [73]

From the point of view of reflexive practice, rhetoric is viewed as: a) an aspect of the antagonistic relation among accounts: how one description is contrasted with an alternative one, and how it is established or organized at the same time to resist opposition; and at the same time, b) the capacity to communicate to the reader the version in which we have positioned ourselves. [74]

A reflexive practice aims to invite and mobilize the reader to explore key issues, not simply to explore the feelings of others as they are represented through the author's experience, but to question accounts of the self (the author's and the reader's) with the aim of constituting a kind of social criticism and action. In a reflexive practice of writing, the author constructs his or her inner experience publicly with regard to the reader. This strategy makes familiar what is otherwise strange (or invisible) to the reader. The reader's emotional response is a signal that the text has worked to actively connect him or her to the text and to the author in a way that can produce a change in the reader. [75]

To construct a reflexive text is therefore to enact an epistemological intent, which also involves an ethical-political positioning on the part of the researcher. And yet it is still a discursive practice, which necessarily maintains relations of power with other discourses or accounts, as Tomás IBÁÑEZ (1994) notes. As such, it should also play a part in the activity of permanent deconstruction. [76]

Acknowledgments

This article was translated from Spanish by Claudia CASTAÑEDA, PhD.

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Citation

Albertín Carbó, Pilar (2009). Reflexive Practice in the Ethnographic Text: Relations and Meanings of the Use of Heroin and Other Drugs in an Urban Community [76 paragraphs]. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 10(2), Art. 23, <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs0902235>.