

The Sender

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Following the reflexive turn in anthropology, feminist's researchers have tried to shift focus away from the ethnographic field as a specific location in external space and time, far away from one's own home, to the researcher's inner construction and understanding of the context being studied. Where the visual and aural were previously given precedence in ethnographic research, today many researchers emphasize the method as a fundamentally interpretative process which cannot be separated from the researchers own lived experiences of the field.

When collecting and analysing the data, the ethnographer is her own instrument which means that the ethnography measures lived experience through the researcher's own experience. Essentially, the ethnography draws upon an epistemology of experience (Skeggs, 1997).

This is a poem that describes my own construction and understanding of the field that I have researched, namely treatment within the Swedish social services for men who have perpetrated violence against a female partner. It describes my very personal experience in this field. More than being merely a research process, this poem embodies a personal process, the search for a passionate social working mother and her life's work, as well as my own experience of struggling to become a mother to my son.

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The Sender

Women have a living space within.
A space of possibilities.
The warm soughing home of the unborn.
And in a space of possibilities, the researcher must also dwell—
Must ache and give birth to her knowledge.

Dear mamma,
The feminist researcher Beverly Skeggs stated that all her research was about her mother.
“It’s all about my mother.”
My research is about you; you are so intimately bound with my field.
And even if you are not a physical place,
Yet, a mother is someone who can fill everyone else’s place, but whose place can never be filled.
Through this exploration I have searched for you
I know you better now.

I know a mother always has a longing away.
During this exploration I have met you twice.
This text is only the surface of an undercurrent.
While I am writing my dissertation, a storm has blown from paradise and desolated everything in its way.
I myself have become a mother.

Beloved son,
every single word in this text
I have written from a body that was once yours.
I think of the mother as a sender.
I think that a researcher is also in a way a sender that can pass on the words.
Beloved son,
in your eyes I am sending you my own.

References

Skeggs, B. (1997). *Formations of Class and Gender: Becoming Respectable*.

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