

ETHNOGRAPHY, ETHNOGRAPHERS AND HOSPITALITY RESEARCH: COMMUNITIES, TENSIONS AND AFFILIATIONS

Peter Lugosi, PhD
School of Services Management
Bournemouth University
Fern Barrow
Poole
Dorset
BH12 5BB
Tel. 01202 965219
Fax. 01202 515707

Abstract

This paper examines the professional and moral positions of ethnographers located in institutions specializing in hospitality management. The paper considers the notion of ethnographic subjectivity and argues that ethnographers working in various paradigmatic contexts have differing relationships with the principles and practices of social science, organisation studies and commercial activity. It is suggested that they are simultaneously members of disparate communities with conflicting norms and values. The paper identifies the cultural and institutional forces that shape the absence, presence and the potential future of ethnography in hospitality management research.

Keywords: ethnography, ethnographer, hospitality, management, business schools, research, community

Introduction

There is a long and rich tradition of ethnographic research in commercial hospitality organisations (cf. Whyte, 1948; Spradley and Mann, 1975; Mars and Nicod, 1984; Marshall, 1986; Paules, 1991; Crang, 1994; Fine, 1996; Sosteric, 1996; Erickson, 2004; Sherman, 2005). These studies emerged from the disciplinary traditions of sociology, anthropology and geography, and the majority were conducted by academics from outside the management research community. Rather than address the immediate concerns of commercial operators, this body of work appears to have been written for a social scientific audience. The historical relationship between hospitality management scholarship and ethnography is fragmented and ethnography remains an underused methodology. However, the landscape of hospitality management research is changing and the methods and epistemologies of ethnography are increasingly being applied by management academics to this area of commercial activity. Recent studies have used ethnographic methods and principles to investigate customer participation (Lugosi, 2006, 2007), homestay hospitality (Lynch, 2005), emotional labour (Seymour and Sandiford, 2005), foodservice operations management (Gramling et al., 2005), service quality (Huetteman and Brownell, 1997) and empowerment (Hughes, 1997). The growing role of ethnography in this area of organisational research raises a number of important questions for ethnographers located in institutions specializing in hospitality. These questions concern the intellectual and moral positions that ethnographers occupy, the fundamental purpose of such applied research and the interests these studies serve.

This paper has two aims: first, to examine the shifting, often liminal statuses of ethnographers located in institutions specializing in hospitality, and in the related areas of tourism and leisure management; and second, to identify the institutional and cultural practices that shape both the application of ethnography in research on these commercial activities, and the professional and moral statuses of those academics who seek to apply its principles to the study of hospitality organisations. This paper is speculative rather than authoritative, and it therefore invites commentary and criticism from ethnographers. It is argued that ethnographers studying these areas of social and commercial activity act as members of multiple communities, and they therefore have obligations to a wide range of interest groups that include hospitality academics, industry practitioners and social scientists. These disparate interest groups often have conflicting norms and values, which potentially displaces ethnographers from each of them. By reflecting on these issues, this paper provides an insight into the state of ethnographic research on hospitality organisations, and it informs a critique of contemporary institutional practices that have the potential to marginalise applied ethnographers. Consequently, it is part of a broader process of change within hospitality studies.

Within the management research community a critical management studies (CMS) movement has emerged that has challenged existing orthodoxies of organisational research, education and practice (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992, 2003; Grey and Willmott, 2005a). In a similar way, hospitality management research has developed to a point where academics are questioning existing assumptions about the nature of hospitality and the fundamental principles underpinning hospitality research (cf. Lashley et al.,

2007b). More importantly, Grey and Willmott (2005b) argue that their work is an attempt to institutionalise CMS, i.e. to highlight common themes, identify different perspectives and locate CMS in a broader historical, political and institutional context. In a similar way, this paper is part of a process of institutionalisation: others have already begun to identify the shortcomings of existing hospitality management research, potential issues for this fragmented community and common themes for future research (cf. Lashley and Morrison, 2000; Lashley et al. 2007; Morrison and Lynch, 2007; Lugosi, 2008); this paper seeks to identify the roles and positions of ethnographers in this emerging movement. Above all, this paper is intended to be a point of reference for all ethnographers seeking to apply the methods and epistemologies of ethnography to these and other related areas of management studies. This is necessary and important for a number of reasons: firstly, it can help to identify a sense of shared interest among applied ethnographers working in these fields; secondly, it can help build cooperative networks between different academic communities and thus institutionalise a broader hospitality research agenda; and thirdly, it can inform important debates about the roles that ethnographers have in different communities and about their obligations to other members.

The paper begins by exploring the notion of ethnographic subjectivity before considering the potentially contradictory relationships that different types of ethnographers share with the principles and practices of social science, management studies and industrial activity. It subsequently discusses the cultural, commercial and ideological forces operating in academic communities that marginalise ethnographic practice, and potentially exclude those who seek to apply ethnographic methods and epistemologies to the study of hospitality organisations.

Ethnographic subjectivity

Numerous authors have put forward their definitions of ethnography and it is not the intention to offer a detailed review (cf. Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995; Fetterman, 1998; Willis and Trondman, 2000; O'Reilly, 2005). Nevertheless, it is important to highlight four distinguishing features of ethnographic practice: first, that it requires researchers to live and/or work among groups of people for extended periods; second, it involves the creation of emic understandings of human experience, which are communicated through rich accounts; third, although it may not be equally important for all its practitioners, ethnographers are sensitised to the problematic nature of power inherent in relationships between informants and them, and fourth, by extension, they have come to problematise ethnographic representation of individuals and groups.

These are important characteristics because the long-term engagement with individuals and groups that allows for the development of emic perspectives requires ethnographers to build relationships and trust through ongoing reciprocal exchange. Some academics argue that inclusion, trust, a critical awareness of power and the problematic nature of representation are features of all contemporary, enlightened qualitative inquiry (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005a, 2005b). However, while issues surrounding the development and maintenance of relationships, and the associated issues of obligations and reciprocities may be part of qualitative inquiry in general, they are fundamental to ethnographic

practice and to the development of ethnographic knowledge. Furthermore, although power and the politics of research may not be central concerns in all applied or marketplace ethnographies, a reflexive consideration of these subjects is again a fundamental aspect of contemporary ethnographic practice (Davies, 1999). Consequently, awareness of these issues is central to being an ethnographer, and the ethnographic sensibility or 'consciousness' (Linstead, 1997) may therefore provide a particular subjectivity or subjective experience of groups, communities, organisations and notions of identity.

As Coffey (1999) suggests the relationships between ethnographers and informants shape and are shaped by the identities of fieldworkers. This shaping of identities includes impression management and surface acting (Goffman, 1990) and deep acting (Hochschild, 1983), where individuals try to change the way they are supposed to feel and act, but it is fundamentally about a shifting sense of self, which is underpinned by how we sincerely feel about ourselves and how we maintain relationships with those around us. There are numerous accounts in which ethnographers reveal their sense of multiple selves – where they discuss a simultaneous sense of familiarity and belonging alongside distance, strangeness and outsidership before, during and after fieldwork (cf. Powdermaker, 1966; Coffey, 1999; Davies, 1999; see also Humphreys et al., 2003). The tensions caused by mixed intellectual affiliations in universities is also highlighted in several other accounts of academic lives (e.g. Lennon and Wood, 1992; Lau and Pasquini, 2004, 2008). It is important to stress this sense of belonging and alienation, familiarity and strangeness, inclusion and exclusion when discussing the positionality and subjectivity of ethnographers working in applied areas of hospitality management.

Ethnographic types, institutional practices and affiliations

Having identified particular aspects of the ethnographic self (or selves) and ethnographic practice, this section considers how its practitioners may develop different positionalities that stem from the obligations and commitments they have to the various groups or institutions with which they are associated. Within this part of the paper a distinction is made between different types of ethnographers based on the intellectual contexts in which individuals begin their careers, develop their craft and subsequently apply their knowledge. It is undoubtedly problematic to attempt to capture the experience of applied ethnographers through the typology proposed below, just as it is problematic to talk about ethnographers as a particular type of person i.e. reflexive, ethically engaged and conscious of his or her shifting and fluid sense of identity. The discussion of these issues does not necessarily assume a particular, fixed identity for ethnographers; instead it highlights those forces that shape the ongoing process of identity formation. It points to some of the objective aspects of being an academic in a particular intellectual context, while also considering what may shape the subjective experience of ethnographers within these contexts.

Institutional, disciplinary, paradigmatic and cultural forces have the potential to create *rooted*, *migrant* and *accreted* ethnographers. Rooted ethnographers are social scientists who gain their education in sociology, anthropology and geography departments, and

who continue to teach and research in these institutional contexts and intellectual traditions. The notion of rootedness is not used pejoratively to suggest insularity or intellectual stagnation; rather, it follows Kuhn's (1996) observations about academic paradigms and Knorr Cetina's (1999) work on epistemic cultures. Within academia, knowledge generating systems reflect as well as shape a particular field of inquiry. These systems have a cultural dimension, involving a convergence of beliefs and customs, as well as a behavioural dimension insofar as they shape the actions and interactions of practitioners. These systems also have material, spatial and technological aspects, which influence how researchers engage with each other and with the objects of their inquiry (see e.g. Knorr Cetina, 1999). Finally they also have a structural dimension that involves a range of political, societal, economic and institutional pressures, which interacts with and consequently shapes cultural and behavioural patterns. These systems focus intellectual inquiry; they create expectations, set particular challenges and also generate criteria that are used to evaluate notions of quality, progress or success. These systems are of course dynamic and intellectual divergences, emerging specialism, institutional rivalries and interpersonal tensions undoubtedly create different groups and factions within academia (Becher and Trowler, 2001). According to Becher and Trowler (2001) such groupings may take a number of different forms with varying sizes, configurations, complexity and coherence. Moreover, as Lau and Pasquini (2004, 2008) suggest, academics with interdisciplinary backgrounds and research interests may experience exclusion from those engaged in work that falls within more established disciplines, sub-disciplines and their specialist areas. Nevertheless, the centrifugal forces that accentuate differences operate in contrast to centripetal forces that create shared codes, standards, norms and expectations for academics (Becher and Trowler, 2001). Such forces encourage rooted ethnographers to draw on the methodological, epistemological, linguistic and cultural norms of specialist areas, and also to engage in debate, both in person and in writing, with colleagues in their fields. Such forces are likely to shape their research endeavours, while helping to determine which disciplinary, sub-disciplinary or related specialist subject events academics attend. They are likely also to drive academics to publish primarily, though not exclusively, in particular discipline or sub-discipline-specific journals, and in many cases write extensive ethnographic monographs.

Migrant ethnographers are academics who gain their initial training in traditional social science institutions, but who go on to work in business faculties and departments. Mars (2004) identifies a number of migrant ethnographers with anthropological backgrounds working in business schools and in tourism departments. Mars is a good example himself: he read economics and social anthropology at Cambridge, before completing his PhD in anthropology at the London School of Economics. He subsequently went on to work in a number of management schools and published on human resource issues in hotel and catering, hotel pilfering as well as co-writing *The World of Waiters*. [1] Lennon and Wood (1992) reflect upon the experiences of such academics who teach sociology in hotel and catering courses. They have to adapt and apply their existing knowledge base to suit the specialist area as well as incorporating existing paradigmatic and cultural practices that already circulate in those departments and schools. The intellectual activities of migrant ethnographers, coupled with the expectations of the

institutions in which they work, are likely to encourage them to engage with various academic networks – some of which have closer ties to social science while others to applied practice. The applied nature of their work also forces migrant ethnographers to have some awareness and potentially some contact with practitioners and their cultures. Furthermore, the inter or trans-disciplinary nature of their field and the intellectual communities with which they become affiliated may mean they are as or even more likely to publish work in interdisciplinary, subject-specific journals rather than those with an overt disciplinary focus.

Accreted ethnographers are individuals introduced to the concepts and methods of social science, often by migrant or other accreted ethnographers, in the context of management education. Within such courses, anthropological and sociological concepts are taught alongside business principles. Accreted ethnographers continue to work in business or management faculties and simultaneously apply social scientific and commercial principles in their teaching and research. Their intellectual interests may draw heavily on social science, which may subsequently be reflected in their publications and research activities as well as the diverse networks with which they become involved. Sometimes these interests and activities are congruent with the institutional discourses of management and business faculties, but these may also be sources of tension.

All three types of ethnographers have obligations to multiple communities, which may have very different, perhaps even conflicting interests. It is certainly the case that the commercial agencies with which migrant and accreted ethnographers become affiliated often have radically different interests, values and norms to many social scientists. A professional, commercially focused community desires greater levels of productivity, efficiency and income, and mainstream applied organisational or management research perpetuates and advances these interests. Feminist, critical and postmodern discourses of social science suggest that research should expose or problematise iniquitous social structures and asymmetric power relations (cf. Fine et al., 2000; Pilcher and Juneau, 2002; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005b). At the very least, ethnographers and other social scientists should avoid exploiting people and undermining their positions in society. Not every advocate of ethnography subscribes to these ideological, often politicised, ethical positions. Nor is everyone necessarily writing within the later 'moments' of qualitative research in which these values are deemed to be inescapable features of research and knowledge generation (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005b). Nevertheless, it is difficult to assume that anyone engaging in ethnographic research is unaware of the fundamental issues that have problematised the nature of qualitative inquiry and ethnographic research. The intellectual identities and academic practices of applied ethnographers are inevitably shaped by the competing professional and moral ideologies at the core of social science and management praxis. Consequently, the extent to which migrant and accreted ethnographers can and do participate in the activities of either commercial or social scientific communities may be restricted. They are potentially displaced professionally, intellectually and morally from both. Such displacement may be experienced as a sense of unease regarding their identities and inclusion in, or exclusion from, particular academic communities (see for example Lau and Pasquini, 2004, 2008). This may be amplified by a perceived or actual absence of support from appropriate advocacy

networks and professional bodies. Beyond a psychological experience, displacement may also emerge as a real inability to access social networks, institutions, funding, jobs and academic forums, including publication outlets. It may also be evident in the devaluing or marginalisation of work in institutional performance reviews (Lau and Pasquini, 2008). The remaining part of this paper considers the underlying factors that continue to present challenges for ethnographers working in hospitality management schools. Moreover, it discusses the tensions that emerge from the competing forces encountered by ethnographers.

Ethnography, ethnographers and hospitality management research

When conducting research in hospitality organisations, migrant and accreted ethnographers are confronted by a range of conflicting professional and institutional forces. Mainstream hospitality research clearly serves a practitioner community. Historically, teaching and research in these areas has been driven by the discourses of management (Airey and Tribe, 2000; Botterill, 2000). The spectre, or 'tyranny' (Lashley et al., 2007b), of industry relevance continues to cast its influence over hospitality scholarship. The location of hospitality management teaching within business schools, and the dominance of the term 'management' rather than 'studies' in course descriptors (see Jameson and Walmsley, 2006) reflect both the dominant business focus of hospitality education, and the ways in which institutions position their courses in the academic marketplace. Competing approaches to hospitality research have emerged in these institutions and among these scholarly communities. Academics have attempted to develop social science driven management research (Slattery, 1983), social science informed academic curricula (Morrison and O'Mahony, 2003; Morrison and O'Gorman, 2008) and a broader research agenda for the study of hospitality in society (Lashley and Morrison, 2000; Lashley et al., 2007). However, the management focus of hospitality research is evident in the subject-specific literature; the dominance of quantitative over qualitative methods in hospitality research continues to exist (see Hemming et al., 2005; Crawford-Welch and McCleary, 1992; Jones, 1998; Taylor and Edgar, 1996, 1999), and the methods and epistemologies of ethnography remain underutilised in hospitality research.

Pizam's (2008) recent keynote address at the Council for Hospitality Management Education (CHME) Conference in Glasgow illustrates the dominant discourses of hospitality management research. Pizam (2008) identified four generations of hospitality management researchers. He argued that the three earlier generations relied principally on descriptive case studies, univariate and bi-variate statistical analysis respectively and largely borrowed, reproduced and extended existing social science or business principles. In contrast, members of the fourth generation use multi-variate analysis to generate original theoretical and empirical contributions to knowledge. He then went on to discuss a study by Riviera and Upchurch (2008) that examines published articles in the *International Journal of Hospitality Management* (IJHM) and highlighted the range of statistical analysis employed by authors. Pizam (2008) concluded that the use of sophisticated statistical techniques was further evidence that hospitality management research had 'come of age.' The foregrounding of statistical analysis reflects the

reproduction of existing discourses of what is appropriate hospitality management research. Moreover, when asked his opinion on the role of qualitative research, Pizam said that there was a place for it in hospitality research and he did not rule out its publication in the *IJHM*, but said that it too often lacked methodological rigour and generalisability. The statement that conceptual and empirical rigour is necessary for qualitative research is legitimate and the sentiment is laudable, but the underlying assumptions, both about the criteria for rigour and the appropriateness of notions of generalisability conflict with many emerging discourses of qualitative inquiry. Qualitative researchers talk about subjectivity, positionality, authenticity, aesthetic merit, reflexivity, morality and an overt ethical consciousness, reciprocity, criticality, political engagement, emancipation, polyvocality and giving voice to silenced and unrepresented groups, (cf. Lincoln, 1995; Denzin, 2003; Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, 2005a; Richardson, 2000). It is difficult to see how these notions of quality, rigour and value square with the positivist discourses of mainstream hospitality management research.

Hospitality management academics who perpetuate dominant research paradigms, the institutions in which they are located, and the commercial agencies with which they are affiliated, form a community of interest. It may be problematic to think about hospitality management academics and practitioners as a distinct community; nevertheless, it is clear that operators have a business focus and a common desire for capital generation, and that hospitality academia has traditionally sought to emulate the values and norms of the practitioner community. It is perhaps more useful to think of this as an interdependent network of agencies that perpetuate particular ideological, organisational and intellectual discourses about the value and aim of knowledge and practice. As Becher and Trowler (2001) acknowledge, there may be idiosyncratic differences within disciplinary or sub-disciplinary academic groupings, but there are patterns to be found in their cultural and institutional practices. The existence of this network or community manifests itself in what Tribe has called a 'knowledge force-field' (2006: 362) – the cultural and institutional practices 'which mediate in the process where the phenomenal world of [hospitality] is translated into its known world' (ibid.). These practices shape and legitimize a particular body of knowledge generated about hospitality. Historically, the body of knowledge around hospitality has been dominated by technocratic, rationalistic discourses, and the majority of research seeks to advance the interests of commercial organisations rather than their staff, consumers or other stakeholders

Migrant and accreted ethnographers are potentially displaced from such a practitioner-focused academic community for a number of reasons. Firstly, hospitality academics have historically strived to legitimize their teaching and research practices (cf. Taylor and Edgar, 1999; Wood, 1999; Litteljohn, 2004). The idiosyncratic and highly subjective knowledge developed through participant observation, and the interpretative nature of ethnography, does not offer the same level of methodological and epistemological credibility as such well established methods as questionnaires, the statistical analysis of operational data sets or formal interviews, which have largely underpinned this field of inquiry. It is certainly difficult to justify the relevance for practitioners of the abstract epistemological and ethical debates surrounding knowledge generation and the politics of representation. Secondly, because ethnographic studies frequently expose unsavoury

business practices, such research threatens to undermine the dominant discourses of hospitality management education and business practice (see e.g., Mars and Nicod, 1984; Peacock and Kübler, 2001; Lugosi, 2007). Contemporary ethnographic critiques are echoed in the emerging debates of critical management studies, which challenge the established ontologies, epistemologies and general authority of management ideology and practice (Fournier and Grey, 2000). Lastly, because ethnographic research is concerned with social relationships, structures, institutions and practices that may overlap with, but are not limited to, commercial hospitality contexts, such research stretches beyond the interests of most hospitality academics and practitioners.

At a workshop in 2005 on the application of anthropology in multi-disciplinary departments, several established authors in the areas of leisure, tourism and hospitality claimed that they constantly struggled to have their ethnographic insights recognized by practitioners. Moreover, it was clear that many have come into conflict with academic managers reluctant to accept the foregrounding of ethnographic or anthropological practice within course content (see Scott and Lugosi, 2005). This reflects, albeit anecdotally, the professional discourses, the institutional practices and the market realities that shape teaching and research in these areas. Within business schools, migrant and accreted ethnographers often challenge existing cultural and institutional practices, and they represent a disruptive element. Schouten (2004: 485) goes further in noting that 'in business schools the practice of ethnography itself is generally considered deviant.' Consequently, ethnographers risk being marginalised in these organisational settings and displaced from a community of educators or scholars who seek to serve a practitioner community.

The limited presence of ethnographic research in hospitality management is clearly evident in the profile and publications history of the leading subject specific journals (e.g., Cornell Hospitality Quarterly, International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, International Journal of Hospitality Management and the Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research) (see also Taylor and Edgar, 1999). There may be a number of explanations for this. Maybe few ethnographic studies have had the appropriate focus or have been of sufficient quality. It may be because editorial board members or the current pool of reviewers of hospitality journals have a limited understanding of ethnographic praxis. However, it is important not to draw any rash conclusions about the editorial policies of these journals. Sandiford and Seymour's (2007) recent discussion paper in the IJHM on the analysis of ethnographic data demonstrates that ethnography can provide contributions to knowledge development in hospitality management research, but this is still only one of very few articles to overtly employ and examine ethnographic practice in a hospitality context. The relative invisibility of ethnographic research may reflect the unfamiliarity of hospitality management academics with these methods, or their lack of confidence in applying ethnography to advance management practice. The time-consuming nature of ethnography may make it prohibitive for full time hospitality academics to pursue it effectively. It may also stem from writers' conceptions about what the hospitality research community perceives to be good research. If this is the case, it is not just the traditional gatekeepers of academic publishing – the editors and reviewers – who continue to perpetuate existing definitions

of hospitality research, but ethnographers themselves. Finally, the very nature of ethnographic analysis and writing may inhibit researchers from submitting to hospitality management journals. As Bate (1997) notes, the length and messiness of ethnographies can make it difficult to publish them in management journals with tight restrictions on length and style. Humphreys et al. (2003) also note that the limited length of journal articles may hinder the development of rich, nuanced ethnographic texts. This is compounded by the growing influence of the metrics culture and the UK Research Assessment Exercise (and its international equivalents), which place emphasis on the continuous production of published outputs. Most hospitality management journals publish relatively short articles and have a backlog of papers, and therefore do not appear to be viable outlets for complex, lengthy ethnographies. At best, as Sandiford and Seymour's (2007) work suggests, ethnography has to be tempered to make it palatable for a hospitality management audience.

It is interesting to note that several of the workshop participants also emphasized that they did not attempt to publish their work in mainstream anthropology or sociology journals because they felt the editors would be hostile to such applied research – a point rejected by several anthropologists representing 'traditional' anthropology departments. It seemed that some of these applied ethnographers also felt displaced from well-established communities of anthropologists or sociologists. [2] Mars (2004) points to similar tensions in his discussion of the unacknowledged role of applied anthropologists working outside traditional anthropology departments in business schools and outside academia. Misconceptions about editorial policies may account for the absence of ethnography in hospitality management journals, and for the under-representation of applied ethnographic research on hospitality in mainstream sociology and anthropology journals. The invisibility of this kind of applied ethnographic research may also stem from the simple fact that few authors have historically published their work in these journals, rather than any systematic policies of exclusion.

Conclusion

Pizam (2008) has argued that the increased sophistication of quantitative techniques in hospitality management research demonstrates the maturing of the subject. While it is fair to suggest that this is evidence of development, this paper points to other, equally important indicators of progress. Hospitality academics have begun to question the fundamental orthodoxies that underpin, contextualise, and to some extent, force particular trajectories for their research. Academics working in the disciplines of sociology and anthropology have been questioning for some time whose interests they serve and how their research is used (cf. Becker, 1967; Fine et al., 2000; Price, 2005). Management academics working in the CMS tradition have also reflected critically, both on management and academia's relationship with it (Fournier and Grey, 2000). Arguably, the fact that hospitality academics have also reached this level of critical self-awareness, and have begun to engage in these debates, is an equally important sign of the maturing of the subject area.

CMS writers have critiqued emergent CMS work on theoretical and ethical grounds

(Wray-Bliss, 2002), but also because of the way CMS academics engage with, or rather, fail to engage with, management (Clegg et al., 2006). Clegg et al.'s (2006) point is particularly important. The challenge is not simply to engage in radical critiques of management, which cast scorn on management practice, but do little to change it. Nor should we attempt to create factions of hospitality researchers; rather, we should be developing critical approaches that can inform management practice, but above all, enrich students and practitioners' understanding of hospitality in its social and commercial forms. Recognising and developing ethnography is part of the theoretical and methodological pluralism necessary for the future evolution of hospitality education and research. Ethnography can provide a nuanced, contextually sensitive understanding of the many different manifestations of hospitality in contemporary society. Moreover, the principles of reflexivity, criticality and ethical consciousness at the heart of ethnographic practice also provide the basis from which to develop the reflective learners and socially responsible practitioners championed by Lashley (1999), Tribe (2002) and Morrison and O'Mahony (2003).

Currently, the conflicting interests of different communities of academics and practitioners perpetuate the separation of ethnographic research from hospitality management practice. It is possible to argue that the differences in the ethics and values of these communities are irreconcilable. Most practitioners are not ethnographers and probably have little appetite for the esoteric academic critiques developed through ethnographic research. The majority of hospitality management academics, driven by the need to demonstrate their professionalism and industry relevance will undoubtedly struggle to engage with or integrate ethnographic methods and epistemologies into their working practices. Lastly, many social scientists appear to be locked in disciplinary traditions in which they either engage in a perpetual cycle of abstract, philosophical debate, or add to a body of work that questions dominant management practices, but isolates these critiques in academic communities. Added to this is the influence of forces such as the Research Assessment Exercise, which relies on a narrow set of performance indicators and a narrow definition of utility and value, which further risks displacing ethnography and ethnographers.

There are undoubtedly a series of structural factors and resource constraints that hinder the development of ethnography in hospitality research. Academics with full teaching loads and managerial responsibilities are constrained by the demands placed on them by the academic institutions in which they are located, and are thus unable to engage in lengthy participant observation and cultural immersion. Whereas it may be an accepted part of anthropology departmental cultures for staff to take extended periods of leave to conduct fieldwork, this is not part of the institutional norms of hospitality management departments. Lengthy ethnographic fieldwork may be a luxury of doctoral candidates with fewer life commitments rather than working academics, particularly women and those with family commitments. Even among doctoral candidates, the lack of experienced researchers who can encourage and develop the capabilities of future generations of hospitality researchers may limit the number employing ethnographic approaches. Nevertheless, the appeal of a broader, critically informed hospitality studies is increasing and there are a growing number of social scientists and accreted ethnographers working

in this field. This is reflected in conferences such as CHME, which in 2008 attracted a greater number of hospitality studies papers than management ones. Consequently, people entering hospitality academia are still socialised into the community and its heritage, but are they entering a community with a wider set of interests and intellectual capacities.

Alternative conceptions of hospitality are emerging (cf. Lashley and Morrison, 2000; Morrison, 2002; Lashley et al., 2007; Lugosi, 2008), and it is evident that ethnographers have a central role in transforming the institutional practices that perpetuate existing discourses of scholarship. However, before the dominant academic and practitioner cultures can be challenged further, there is a need to develop a body of applied organisational research that drives this process of change. To develop this body of knowledge, it will be necessary to build networks between hospitality academics, social scientists working outside the constraints of management education, the growing number of applied ethnographers working in business and management schools and open minded practitioners. The extent to which fragmented networks of individuals can develop into consistent communities of interest will ultimately depend on the intellectual interests of its members, their sense of collective identity, and their ability to force academic host institutions to accommodate emerging approaches to the study of hospitality. A crucial set of questions for such a community concern the criteria by which its members evaluate ethnographic research. Is it according to the ethical standards that research sets and maintains? Is it the ability of such work to engender change in organizational practices that benefits workers, customers and a global community? Or is it the extent to which research drives operational efficiency or improves profits? Asking and answering these questions will undoubtedly shape the foundations of this community and help to define the identities of its members.

Notes

1. It is interesting to highlight Slattery's (1985, 133) review of *The World of Waiters* in which he criticises Mars and Nicod for being 'non-hotel researchers' who are 'outsiders to the hotel world, making sorties into hotels then withdrawing to their more general disciplines.' His comments reflect the tensions between applied ethnographers or anthropologists and committed hospitality academics.

2. At the 2005 workshop David Mills presented the results of a Higher Education Academy Sociology, Anthropology and Politics Subject Network (C-SAP) funded research project that examined what anthropologists did after leaving university. One of the questions from the audience was why the study only looked at traditional anthropology department, while not considering the many anthropologists who gain their

academic qualifications in non-anthropology departments. David's response suggested that anthropologists outside anthropology departments were not considered. Although the difficulties of finding self-defined anthropologists in non-anthropology departments is obvious, it must also be recognised that his response, and the study, did little to challenge the notion that applied anthropologists working in non-specialist institutions are not considered to be part of the disciplinary community.

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