

The Supervisor Effect: A Note on Teaching Field Methods

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Abstract

In this article we reflect on our experiences as supervisors in a field methods course in order to explore how ethnographic research practices can be used as tools in the supervision of students that conduct field research for the first time and as such to provide insights about what constitutes “good supervision.” Our reflections follow the three main stages of fieldwork: preparing and designing research, doing fieldwork, and reporting on research, as the role of the supervisor and their relationship with students transforms accordingly. We describe how we use the parallels between “doing research” and “teaching how to do research” as tools for teaching field methods through learning by doing. We pay specific attention to three central elements of ethnographic practice: building rapport, social interaction (the “supervisor effect”), and reflexivity that we use in our supervision.

Keywords

field research, ethnography, student supervision, learning by doing, fieldwork

Supervision can be of great importance in guiding students through the process of going from coursework to doing independent research (Lovitts 2005). This goes especially for students who embark on doing ethnographic fieldwork for the first time. First fieldwork practices are often described as unsettling experiences, as encounters with feeling “betwixt and between” (Rabinow 2007). Supervising such processes entails balancing between taking students by the hand and letting them take responsibility of their own learning process.

Although there is a vast body of literature on student research supervision, showing that confidence and ownership are part of what is experienced as “good supervision” (Roberts and Seaman 2018, among others), there is little specific literature on the supervision of undergraduate students who do ethnographic fieldwork for the first time (Rasch et al. 2020). In this teaching note, we intend to provide some insights in how central elements of ethnographic research can be effective tools in

supervising undergraduate students’ first fieldwork experiences. A greater self-awareness of, first, how doing ethnographic research resembles supervising fieldwork and, second, how ethnographic practices can be used as teaching tools can make supervision of fieldwork more effective and empathetic. Although the northern European teaching context differs in terms of how programs are organized from universities in, for example, the United States, we believe that insights about what could constitute good supervision can be used in many teaching contexts that prepare students for future fieldwork at a master’s or PhD level as well as in their professional career.

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The insights that we share on these pages are based on an autoethnographic reflection on how we, together with other supervisors, supervise undergraduate students in a four-week course, called the Field Research Practical, during which students conduct two weeks of fieldwork in Ireland and England as part of their methods training for the bachelor program in international development studies.

The article now proceeds as follows. After the Literature Review and Methods sections, we briefly introduce the background and assignment of the Field Research Practical before we go on to discuss student supervision in the Findings section. In the Findings section, we explore how we use the parallels between doing research and supervising fieldwork as teaching tools. In so doing, we follow a slightly adapted version of Bernard's (2018) sequence of doing fieldwork: preparing for field research, initial contact and culture shock, "getting the good stuff," focus and disengagement, and finally, exit.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Most articles that review the value of ethnography for teaching are about the transformative character of learning about ethnographic methods for students and not about using ethnographic principles as didactic tools. There are a few exceptions. Ward (1999), for example, argues that "culture shock" can be used as a teaching tool. She does not elaborate, however, on how supervisors can facilitate this process. Cohen (2000) demonstrates that sharing both the triumphs and tragedies of fieldwork with students is an adequate teaching tool. This, as we will show, also becomes relevant when embedded in a broader strategy of supervising fieldwork through ethnographic practice.

Whereas supervision used to be seen as a more vertical relationship between supervisor and student (O'Byrne and Rosenberg 1998), today "good supervision" is characterized by trusting relationships wherein students and supervisors share research interests and supervisors provide advice without undermining students' ownership of projects (Roberts and Seaman 2018). In their study about "what a good supervisor is," Roberts and Seaman (2018) found that supervisors consider clear advice, instilling confidence, sharing an interest in the topic and ownership of students over their research project, and an evolving relationship as important elements of a good supervisor experience.

In this article, we consider the supervision of students as the supervisors' own "microethnographic project" (Spradley 1980), in which the students'

fieldwork comprises the social setting that supervisors engage in. Supervisors ask ethnographic questions about the social activities of the students doing fieldwork, such as the following: How do you approach people? In which activities do you engage? How do you keep your field notes? How do you experience doing fieldwork? In addition, supervisors take ethnographic records of their field visits, which they discuss with colleagues.

METHODS

The findings presented in this article are based on 10 years of experience in teaching the course. The first author of this article and coordinator of the Field Research Practical started teaching the course in 2011. She has supervised around 70 students since then. The other authors have participated as supervisors in the course from one to four times. As part of a larger project in which we explored different dimensions of the Field Research Practical, we analyzed course materials, students' evaluation forms (2011–2019), and students' reflection chapters from their research reports. We also interviewed 18 students, which resulted in an article about how students experience learning how to do fieldwork (see Rasch et al. 2020).

In the discussions that we had during the writing process of the aforementioned article (Roberts and Seaman 2018, among others), we repeatedly came across the central theme of this article: the parallels between doing and supervising ethnographic research. This article is exclusively based on these discussions and self-reflections and could be considered a "supervisor autoethnography" as we retroactively write about past supervision experiences. As such, we did not "live through these experiences solely to make them part of a published document" (Ellis, Adams, and Bochner 2011:275), but we rather reassembled, examined, and reflected on our experiences with students in retrospect. Although we did take notes and reflected on the supervision process as supervisors, this was not done with the intention to write this specific article. The illustrations that we present in this article to show how we put ethnographic principles in practice as part of student supervision all, except for one, come from the first author and coordinator of the course. This is because she kept the most extensive recordings and had supervised the most students during the past years. The examples and the central themes for this article were established and discussed during numerous meetings among the authors between 2015 and 2018. This was an

iterative process, during which we engaged in an ongoing analysis to refine the themes and the story the analysis tells (Braun and Clarke 2006).

We did not obtain an institutional review board approval for this research as this is not part of the process of getting permission to do (field) research at our university. However, we did discuss ethics among each other and with the students continuously, thereby taking into account the general Netherlands Code of Conduct for Research Integrity (Nederlands Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek 2018) as well as the Ethical Guidelines of the Dutch Association of Anthropologists (Antropologen Beroepenvereniging 2018). Ethical concerns, including the anonymity of students and research participants, as well as informed consent of research participants, were constantly deliberated upon rather than “checkboxed” at one moment in time. In addition, doing ethical research was a recurring theme in the Methods course prior to the students’ fieldwork (see Background and Assignment) and part of the discussions between supervisors and students. Students were also asked to reflect on ethical issues, such as how to maintain ethical relationships with research participants, how to secure continuous informed consent, and how to anonymize research participants in an effective way. We have also incorporated those ideas in the writing of this teaching note.

BACKGROUND AND ASSIGNMENT

The Field Research Practical takes place at the end of the second year and is an obligatory part of the BSc program International Development Studies of Wageningen University in the Netherlands. This is an interdisciplinary program with a sociology track. Before the students take the fieldwork course, they have been trained in methods in three other courses: Analysis of a Problem Situation, Research Methods in the Social Sciences, and Methods, Techniques, and Data Analysis for Field Research. The latter one takes place in the four weeks just before the Field Research Practical starts. The students that take the course are predominantly between the ages of 19 and 21 and of northern European descent, and while the gender composition of the group changes year to year, typically most students identify as female. English is a second language for all students.

The main objective of the Field Research Practical is to let students experience the complete research process from research design to doing fieldwork to reporting on research findings. Earlier

studies have proved that research methods are best taught by hands-on practice (Keen 1996; Raddon, Nault, and Scott 2008). Or as Spradley (1980:38) put it, “[T]he best way to learn to do ethnography is by doing it.” Although time constraints—in this case, students have only four weeks—bring forth limitations to the thoroughness of the fieldwork and research findings, independently going through the different stages of research is an extremely fruitful experience for students. During the course, students complete four assignments: a research proposal, a midterm report, a compilation of field materials, and a research report.

The students write their research proposal during the first week of the course. They are relatively free to choose their research topic. Because the course is primarily aimed at training methods, the main prerequisites are that the research topic should be viable and of no harm to research participants. The themes students choose to explore in their fieldwork are determined in consultation with the supervisors and largely build on theories and approaches they have studied in previous courses. The course *Rural Households and Livelihood Strategies*, for example, is especially influential. In addition, many students tend to implement theories of community organization, identity, and development. Furthermore, the partners (community organizations) that we work with in England and Ireland provide a list with topics that they find interesting and important for students to research. In some cases, students contact our partners directly or their host family to find out if the topic they have in mind is relevant.

During the four-week preparatory methods course prior to the fieldwork, students learn about several methods, of which the most important are participant observation, ethnographic and qualitative interviews, and questionnaires. These are methods they also must put into practice during their fieldwork. Shaped by the focus on participant observation and qualitative interviews, students often ask explorative research questions about how people experience and give form to social, economic, political, and environmental changes in their daily lives.

After having completed the research proposal, students and supervisors travel to the field together (either Roscommon, Ireland, or Devon, England), where students live with a host family and the supervisors settle in a cottage so to be able to provide supervision in person. In the two weeks that follow, students conduct exploratory qualitative research and work on their fieldwork assignment:

conducting interviews, doing participant observation, and making field notes. After the first week, students turn in a midterm report, on which they receive feedback from their supervisor within 24 hours. Topics that are covered in these reports are progress, research participants, and a first methodological reflection. They are expected to keep a field log including all their activities, conduct around eight interviews, and write about 5,000 words of field notes based on participant observation. A limited number of students use a questionnaire as a research instrument. After the fieldwork, students are requested to turn in their field log, field notes, and part of their transcribed interviews.

After two weeks, the group returns to the university to write up the findings of their research in a 20,000-word research report. The report consists of an introduction including a problem statement and a brief theoretical framework, a chapter on methodology (including reflections on positionality and ethics), three chapters that narrate about their research findings, and a discussion and conclusion.

FINDINGS

In this section we explore the parallels between doing and supervising field research during the different phases of fieldwork. The subsections are, inspired by Bernard's (2018) sequence of doing fieldwork, organized as follows: preparing for fieldwork, initial contact and culture shock, "getting the good stuff" (field visits), focus and disengagement, and finally, exit.

Preparing for Fieldwork

Whereas the course officially runs from the beginning of June to the beginning of July, the preparations for the students' fieldwork already start in November, when the coordinator of the course organizes an information meeting about the Field Research Practical. This is the coordinator's first encounter with the students. From that moment on, the logistical part of the fieldwork preparations starts: arranging transport to the fieldwork sites, communicating with the partners that make host family arrangements, and responding to students' queries. From March onward, several lunch meetings are organized during which information about the different field sites is provided and fieldwork experiences from previous students are shared. Supervisors, except for the coordinator of the course, do normally not participate in these sessions.

Parallel to these information sessions, the course coordinator organizes meetings with the supervisors in which they discuss the course guide and course assignments. In the preparatory phase, several weeks before the actual start of the course, supervisors are assigned to a group of students. To be fully prepared, supervisors then read up on and discuss the students' research settings and go through former students' reports. Mimicking preparations for ethnographic field research, they focus on getting to know the context (that is, the course and fieldwork locations of the students) and presenting themselves to the students they will work with in their microethnographic project.

Initial Contact and Culture Shock

Supervisors first meet the students in person when they start working on their research proposal during the first week of the course. Throughout this first week, special attention is paid to the importance of a solid and feasible research design, the operationalization of research questions, and how to introduce oneself in the field. Students are also coached toward being able to handle "the unexpected"—this involves being flexible and relying on the fact that fieldwork often depends on serendipity. In addition, supervisors play an important role in managing anxiety, uncertainty, and stress among students. Some students stress out because they lose the overview over the project and are very nervous about going abroad, having to conduct interviews and living with a host family. Some students need extra time and care in order to mitigate such feelings rather than yet more feedback on their research design. During this week, the relation between supervisor and student starts to become more personal and slowly evolves into a horizontal relationship.

After a week, students and supervisors travel to the fieldwork sites together and, upon arrival, briefly get together with the host families and local partners, after which students travel to the homes of their respective host families. Students are now on their own and grow accustomed to living with the family, while supervisors settle in their accommodation and start preparing for their own fieldwork: the field visits. New supervisors are introduced to the region and prepare their field visits together with more experienced supervisors but might still experience some form of culture shock and anxiety about what is about to come (Bernard 2018). The first days in the field are characterized by exploring and determining how to organize

fieldwork. Basic preparations include renewing contacts with local partners, getting organized in terms of logistics, and if necessary, solving first problems for students. Supervisors draft a schedule for their individual field visits, based on questions like the following: Who needs more guidance to start with, mentally or intellectually? Who might be too nervous or shy to get out of the house? And who would benefit from being left “on their own” for a while?

“Getting the Good Stuff” (Field Visits)

The individual field visits that all supervisors pay to their students, starting a couple of days after arriving at the field site, constitute the heart of fieldwork supervision. The aim of individual field visits is to check on progress but also to coach the more personal processes that students go through. A field visit usually contains a part in which supervisors go through all the elements of the research: doing interviews, conducting participant observation, and laying down all this in field notes, as well as a part during which supervisors reflect with the students on the research process and personal issues that might come up as a part of their first fieldwork experience. The length of the field visit (scheduled for three hours) permits the construction of rapport—the “gradual building up of trust” (O’Reilly 2009:175)—through informal small talk, going out for a walk, or having lunch together.

This phase of fieldwork supervision is best compared to “getting the good stuff” during fieldwork, the period in which field researchers start to collect data on a systematic basis (Bernard 2018). Supervisors prepare their field visits well, like they would prepare a research activity during their own fieldwork: They determine which topics to explore with the student, read the research proposal, and delve into former student experiences in the community. Supervisors employ three ethnographic techniques in field supervision: building rapport, interacting with research participants (the supervisor effect), and reflexivity. These practices help to build mutual trust between student and supervisor, opening doors to discuss more personal issues that might arise during fieldwork and to help students to deal with the methodological and personal challenges of doing fieldwork.

Rapport. Supervisors engage in building rapport by, one, creating situations in which more informal chitchatting can take place; two, sharing own fieldwork experiences; and three, being reachable for

students nearly 24/7 via WhatsApp and email. Next we elaborate on these two ways of gradually building trust with students.

Supervisors create spaces for informal conversations during field visits by, for instance, taking students out for a walk and visiting the places that could be important for their research. This can include going to a marketplace, a shop, a vegan restaurant, or a pub. Inspired by Spradley’s (2003) tour questions (questions that invite research participants to describe the place they are in), supervisors might also ask students to provide for a “tour” of their fieldwork location. Walking through urban or rural areas together, with the student as the designated “expert” on this area, creates opportunities for informal conversation and asking questions about the progress of their fieldwork and allows for a way of getting to know each other. During these walks, students might share personal struggles related, but also unrelated, to fieldwork. Sometimes this happens in unexpected situations:

We had agreed to meet in the town center. As we have a coffee on a terrace, we discuss the progress of her research on political attitudes in this small coastal town. Because I always like to see where the students live and to meet with the hosts, as soon as we have finished our coffee, we take the bus to her house. As we wait in line for the bus, not being able to have direct eye contact, the student starts to share how she finds it difficult to start to speak to random people in the streets. She continues to share her insecurities when we are on the city bus, looking out of the window. (supervisor field notes, *Field Research Practical*, June 2014)

Such “confessions” about difficulties or anxieties that students experience—or about what makes them feel delighted—make it possible for supervisors to be empathetic and think along with the student, to be an effective supervisor. After a field visit where supervisors have explored options to overcome setbacks in fieldwork with students, it often happens that students start sharing their small fieldwork accomplishments via WhatsApp messages. We have all received messages with enthusiastic updates about a great interview or with pictures from a location where they do participant observation, like farmers’ markets in rural Ireland, seafronts in Teignmouth, cleaning activities of Tidy Town communities in Ireland, and Dartmoor walks with research participants, among others.

Another way for the supervisor to create such a space is by sharing one's own personal experiences as a way of opening informal communication, for example, about (field)work, family, or even daily chores. It is a proven tool for supervisors to tell stories about their own fieldwork experience (see also Cohen 2000). The first author of this article, for example, often shares how she would be very nervous before an interview but would feel great satisfaction after an interview worked out well. Examples of experienced insecurity or mistakes made (by the supervisor) help students to be more at ease with their own struggles and to share their insecurities.

The "supervisor effect." Taking students out for a walk to get to know the field site not only creates a safe space for informal conversations. In these occasions it often occurs that the supervisor starts to engage with research participants and talk informally with them about topics that are related to the student's research project. Such forms of social interaction are at the heart of ethnographic practice; they constitute the basis of its key methods, such as participant observation and interviewing (Madden 2017; O'Reilly 2009). In our discussions about supervision, we often found that these were enlightening moments for the students. Although the preparatory course discusses the importance of such informal encounters to establish rapport in the field and gain access to interviewees, students often admitted that they had never thought it would be that "easy" to talk with research participants or that it would actually "count" as doing research. It is worth recounting the story of the student that made us explicitly aware of how this worked, noted by his supervisor (the second author of this article):

This student did research on Brazilian identity and found it difficult to make contact with his Brazilian host family and to meet other Brazilian people. The farm where he lived was located on the outskirts of town, with only few direct neighbors. When I came over for the first field visit, he showed me the farmland, the cattle, the landscape surrounding the farm, and the house itself. Inside, the aroma of rice and beans filled the room as the host family was preparing lunch. I learned that the student had not yet really engaged in informal conversations with his host family and had done very little participant observation in and around the

house because he did not think of that as relevant to his field of research. However, during the tour around the farm, we stumbled upon a shed bursting with Brazilian ranching attributes such as brown leather saddles and old plows. And when I looked around the house, I noticed that the family had displayed a great deal of items that related to their home country. In addition, he told me that they prepared "typical" Brazilian meals almost every day and we found that their car was decorated with a Brazilian flag. Later over lunch we (supervisor, student, and host family) talked extensively about the family's Brazilian roots, their self-identification as *gaúchos*, and their migration to Ireland. (supervisor field notes, Field Research Practical, June 2014)

Afterward, this student introduced the expression the "Gijs effect" when he recalled how his host family had opened up to him after the field visit—and vice versa—and how this had helped him getting his fieldwork started. After that, we joyously started to address such instances as the "supervisor effect" to refer to situations in which supervisor and student jointly explore the everyday realities of doing fieldwork to help students gain proficiency in the intricacies of being a fieldworker. The following two examples reflect similar experiences with the "supervisor effect" during field visits:

As my student's host mom pours me a mug of coffee, I ask whether her husband also is around. She sighs, tells us that her husband works in England, which implies that the responsibilities of the household—bringing the kids to school, getting groceries and doing the cleaning—are all on her plate. As I nod understandingly, encouraging Pamela to share her frustrations about the home situation, my student quickly slips into her room to grab her notebook. When we stroll through the Irish rural village afterwards and reflect on the chit chat over coffee, my student admits that she would never have thought of bringing up the topic of her research—changing gender relations in rural Ireland—with her host family. And that she had never realized that posing "normal" questions about very daily activities could reveal so much about gender relations. (supervisor field notes, Field Research Practical, June 2013)

Another example comes from the 2017 supervisor WhatsApp group:

I was visiting a student who studies politics and political disenchantment. Discussing his whereabouts, he told me that he had talked politics with host mom and thought she could be conservative but that she was not politically active. When I suggested he could interview her and ask her for others, he was hesitant. When I was about to leave, host mom said “he’s in the wrong family, as we don’t care about politics at all,” and when I asked “why not?” a whole exposé followed about politicians and why she doesn’t trust them nor care about it. Then she offered to ask some friends... student picked up on it very well and engaged in discussion. (supervisor WhatsApp group, Field Research Practical, June 2017)

Indeed, the preceding situations are two of many that show how actually *doing* ethnography in the company of students helps them to conduct fieldwork themselves. Therefore, it is important for supervisors to take the students out of the house to see how they interact with their ethnographic fields. This also enables supervisors either to provide feedback on what they see students do or to give practical examples, which helps students to develop their own “ethnographic gaze” (Madden 2017:97). Through social interaction during the field visits, students learn to reflect upon their position in the field and the observations they make.

Reflexivity

The third central element of the supervision in the field is reflexivity. Reflexivity is discussed at three levels with the students during field visits: the null form of reflexivity, methodological reflexivity, and anthropological and feminist reflexivity (taken after Madden 2017).

The null form of reflexivity, the most basic form of reflexivity that essentially means “What did my fieldwork do to me?,” is the easiest way for students to reflect on their fieldwork. We agree with Marcus (1994) that the most likely outcome of reflexivity at this level is an introspective voice. Although Madden (2017:21) points out that this does not really tell us anything about research participants and how the researcher relates to the ethnographic field, it is a point for the students to start talking about their first fieldwork experience. This

is important because doing fieldwork for the first time is a personal experience, which has a significant impact on many students.

At another level, which might easily flow from asking more informal questions about how students feel about doing research, supervisors coach their students by way of what Madden (2017) calls “sociological reflexivity” after Bourdieu. This form of reflexivity helps students to reflect on how methods work out for them. Whereas Marcus (1994:394) approaches reflexivity at this level as a research tool that is “tied to the commitment to sustain objectivity,” as a supervision tool, it helps supervisors to teach students how to reflect on the use of their methods and the knowledge they produce. Sometimes this may lead to a change in methodology. One of the 2017 supervisors, for example, supervised a student who did research on transforming meanings of the harbor in a small coastal town in Devon. The student had planned to mainly conduct semistructured open interviews. As her fieldwork proceeded, however, she experienced that she could get so much more out of her research by doing participant observation most of the time as it worked very well for her to apply the method of “deep hanging out.” She found out that people got to know her quicker and that it was easier for them to chat with her almost every day rather than to make time for one hour for an official interview. As she discussed this with her supervisor, both concluded it would be better to switch to participant observation as her main research method.

In such supervision moments, supervisors often take the research questions as a guideline. In other cases, they might also consider what fits better to the student’s personality or the existing fieldwork dynamics. This was the case with a student who found it difficult to engage in informal conversations. This completely blocked her to the point that she could not get herself to undertake anything. After consultation with her supervisor, she focused more on observation than on *participant* observation, which permitted her to make extensive observations of the surroundings and talk about these in formal, semistructured interviews afterward.

While talking about these issues, it often comes to the fore that students’ biggest concern is whether their methods and their findings are “objective enough.” This automatically leads to questions that relate to anthropological or feminist reflexivity. In the Field Research Practical, this is approached as a way of reflecting on the students’ partial identities and how these shape the ways in which they (can) do and interpret their fieldwork. Supervisors

use it as a tool to help the students reflect on how their social upbringing, academic trajectory, religion, national identity, gender, or age might shape how they do research and the claims that they can eventually make. This helps, for example, our Protestant students who do research about the meaning of spirituality and the Church for Catholics to reflect on how they approach their research participants and findings. Some male students also reported that they sensed that their male gender identity made it easier for them to socialize with men in the pub and engage in informal research-related conversations. Often, however, students find it difficult to recognize how their own identity shapes their research findings. This was also the case for a student who did research on gender relations and, only during the interview that we took with her a couple of years later, realized that her being a girl had influenced the way her research on motherhood developed (interview, Emily, October 28, 2015; see also Rasch et al. 2020).

Reflexivity is an important element of doing ethnographic research and has proved to be an effective and sensible element in student supervision. Consciously using reflexivity as a teaching tool can help structure the different levels on which we converse with our students as supervisors. It invites students to share their struggles, including more personal issues related to fieldwork, and as such facilitates a transformative learning experience. It also invites students to reflect on how their positionality shapes their research experience and research findings. At the same time, reflexivity provides a space where students and supervisors can build rapport.

Focus and Disengagement

After the first intensive week of their microethnographic project, the supervisors take a break, again following the rhythm of fieldwork. A fieldwork break permits the fieldworker to get some distance, both physically and emotionally, and to take some time to reflect (Bernard 2018; Madden 2017). Supervisors then receive the midterm reports in which the students reflect on their process and give an overview of their progress so far. These reports permit the supervisor to reflect on the students' process and focus on the students who need more attention and supervision. Contact with the other students is maintained by way of WhatsApp messages, phone calls, and emails. Other tasks of the supervision team in this period are maintaining contacts with the partners and exploring new research topics in the region. After a second round

of field visits to students who need it, supervisors slowly start wrapping up things. Contact with the students starts to become less frequent.

The second week also means the first steps toward disengagement. Supervision in this week guides the students toward the end of the data collection and leaving the field. Although students work within the scheme of the course, which sets the boundaries for data collection (Snow 1980), some students might have the idea that they have finished their assignment before the end of the fieldwork period, reaching the "taking-for-granted stage," whereas others have the feeling of being left with "unfinished business" (Snow 1980) when they leave the field. Some students look forward to going home; others find it difficult to disengage because of the close personal ties and friendships that they developed during fieldwork.

Exit

Leaving the field for students means saying goodbye to their host families. For the supervisors it means distancing themselves from the students—physically but also within the supervisor–student relation.

Students mostly take the weekend after the fieldwork to finish up their field notes and the transcriptions of their interviews. In the workshops that follow, students briefly reflect on their fieldwork and discuss how they will structure their report. The supervisors are back in their more distant role again, mainly giving feedback on structure and content. Communication mainly takes place via email instead of WhatsApp messages. This new period of distance between supervisors and students parallels the separation that students need to have to be able to write their final research report. This "stepping out" (Madden 2017:78–79) enables them to analyze their field notes as well as to reflect on their findings and their own development as researchers. The subsequent writing phase and the act of writing itself, then, facilitate detachment and become the primary mode of exit (Mosse 2006).

Equally, supervisors need the distance to be able to review and mark the students' final reports; they need to "step out" of the ethnographic context, separate from the previous two weeks, and refamiliarize with their more formal role as teachers.

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

In this teaching note we examined how ethnographic research practices can be transformed into

teaching tools in the supervision of students who do fieldwork for the first time and how the process of supervising field research parallels doing field research. Our contribution to the literature about research supervision is best understood through some reflections on three main stages of fieldwork: preparing and designing research (covered in the subsection Preparing for Field Research), doing fieldwork (covered in the subsections Initial Contact and Culture Shock, “Getting the Good Stuff,” and Focus and Disengagement), and reporting on research (covered in the subsection Exit) as the role of the supervisors and their relationship with students transforms accordingly.

Parallel to the students who start engaging with their ethnographic field through contacting their host families and exploring field sites on the internet, supervisors inform themselves about the students, the outline of the course, and potential research topics. In this week, the foundation is laid for building rapport during actual fieldwork as the first social interaction between the students and the supervisors takes place. From an initial more distant relation as teachers, supervisors now transform into supervisors and start to engage in horizontal relationships with their students.

During the two weeks of fieldwork, building rapport, social interaction, and reflexivity are important teaching tools for supervisors. It is crucial for supervisors to build rapport with students because it allows them to do their own “fieldwork,” that is, coaching students through methodological as well as personal fieldwork-related dilemmas and experiences. Supervisor–student rapport is mostly constituted during field visits, in which methodological as well more personal issues and dilemmas are discussed. An important element of such field visits is the “supervisor effect,” that is, the supervisor engaging with the student’s ethnographic field as a way of demonstrating to the student how they can approach and informally interact with research participants.

During the fieldwork, students and supervisors further communicate through email, phone, and WhatsApp. Communication is not limited to office hours. Such ways of (informal) interaction and reflection guide the students through their struggles related to overlapping personal and researcher identities as well as interaction angst and leaving comfort zones. When the fieldwork has ended, supervisors need to reestablish distance to be able to take on their role of critical reader of draft writings and examiner of the final product.

The stages of supervision follow the stages of doing field research. During these stages, ethnographic principles have proved to be important teaching tools; building rapport, social interaction, and reflexivity are not only important tools for students to be able to comply with the learning goals of the course and turn them into fieldworkers but also important tools for supervisors to guide them through exactly that process. Doing so is an ongoing learning experience for supervisors, in which they learn from students and from each other. Students bring supervisors back to that first experience of doing fieldwork, year after year, with their own topics, approaches, and personalities. Entering and engaging in the field of supervision is therefore always messy, unpredictable, and above all, exciting. Reflecting on what we learned from this course as supervisors, we all shared memories of our daily conversations over dinner in our cottage about students’ methods, research questions, and well-being but also about our own insecurities regarding supervision issues. Being together in the informal setting in a mix of junior and senior supervisors facilitated these open exchanges. In sum, if we expect students to learn how to engage in immersive ethnography, supervision is best organized in a way that permits supervisors to spend time together and to be present at (or close to) the field site where students do their fieldwork.

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