

It is such an honor and such a pleasure to be introducing a book that has given me goosebumps on many an occasion. Kristen Schilt first gave me the book in 2019 and I remember devouring it in a couple of sittings. The book warrants no other form of engagement, really. For a book that grapples with very complex and difficult questions, it is startlingly lucid. Every page resonated with me. I have said this to Rebecca and Patricia before, but *Harassed* is a book that I have - for the lack of a better word - forced people into buying and reading. The reason for this is quite simple - personal and political, at once: this book talks about an issue - gender and fieldwork - that was not brought up when I studied sociological methods. Sure, I was told that gender (along with other factors like race, class, caste, religion, sexuality) matters during fieldwork - okay - but what does one do with that? It is one thing to acknowledge one's social position in an abstract albeit relational social space but how much should I, as an ethnographer, say about this? Should I think of my social position like a sieve through which my data is being filtered or should I think of my body and my biography as if they were the shaky hands of a novice potter, crafting my fieldwork and data intimately, inimitably? And, most troublingly, would talking about my gender reinforce some sort of stereotype around women researchers? More fundamentally, why does such a stereotype even exist and why don't men talk about their gender during fieldwork? Many of us are often clueless as to how, and how much, gender matters to - the way we do fieldwork, how we write research, the kinds of arguments we construct or, quite simply, what we consider "good data" and, by extension, "good sociology".

I started fieldwork in 2017, I realized very quickly that I would have to confront these questions although for the longest time I was confused about what to do with since my project isn't "really" about gender...if one can even make such claims, but stay with me for a moment. For those who do not know, I did ethnographic research amongst cabdrivers, tuk tuk drivers,

and traffic policemen in the Indian city of Hyderabad and spent a lot of time, as I often joke, gallivanting on the streets. I was trying to understand state-citizen relations through the prism of traffic regulation. My project was about social disciplining and state authority and I was not thinking about it in terms of gender; neither was I thinking about it in terms of violence or danger. I was not researching gang violence, homicides, or sexual crimes; I was not unearthing state secrets of troubling proportions. However, considering India's atrocious tryst with women's safety, my project was immediately and instinctively considered a "risky" project by my friends and family - and, even, my interlocutors. After all, I was a woman researcher in very masculine spaces - and, as you can imagine, I had several encounters that reinforced the risks I was undertaking as a woman ethnographer. I often caught myself thinking about my gender as a disadvantage and wondered if I was not better off doing something else. One professor even told me that a male student would have been able to do a "better" job with my kind of a dissertation - because they would be able to hang out with their interlocutors without worrying about the sexual dangers involved. But I did what I could. The first time a tuktuk driver asked me to have sex with him during an interview, I did what we do best: I wrote a reflective essay about it. As such, my field notes were brimming with thoughts about being confronted with sexualized encounters that no methodology training had prepared me for, and about relying on my gut to get out of those situations unscathed or even using gendered presumptions around my innocence and naivety to my advantage. Those moments are seared into my memory; they have shaped the way I think today. These moments also, I have to admit, made me proud. I felt like I was doing good ethnography by putting myself out there - after all, isn't danger crucial to good ethnography? Was I not proving my mettle by shouldering these risks? All that "juicy" data atop slippery, slippery slopes...

And, yet, the dissertation I am defending in a couple of days (!! ) does not talk about any of these moments - neither my real anxiety at being harassed, nor my self-declared heroism. Some of it is relegated to the Methodological Appendix but much of my dissertation reads as if my hand was never kissed by a police constable who was merely trying to - in his cheeky words - imitate American culture, or as if I did not put myself in very shaky situations just to sit in on high-profile meetings. These moments became what Hanson and Richards, drawing on others, refer to as “surplus data” - the kind of data one often does not know what to do with. I have been carefully socialized into writing *despite* my gender; procuring data *despite* the disadvantages of my body.

Harassed gets at precisely these audible silences that emerge as difficult dilemmas around gender, fieldwork, and sociological inquiry. Drawing on interviews with qualitative researchers, Harassed discusses the experiences of women (and men) in their ethnographic journeys and how their gender identity shaped what they were able to do. It centers how gender shapes fieldwork and sociological thought instead of making it a “variable” one needs to cursorily account for. The book sheds light on the kinds of physical, psychological, and emotional costs that our fellow ethnographers have paid while doing projects that are just vexing to do - because of their gender identities and also because there was no space in which to discuss these issues. The androcentric, racialized, and colonialist history of qualitative methods developed within the academy has made discussions of the body taboo in ethnographic narratives - which contribute to the silence surrounding sexual harassment and other forms of violence. This book speaks for those who have remained silent. As I read this book, I saw myself in the narratives of those who abandoned their projects or just simply changed them because the harassment on the field was becoming untenable; those who blamed themselves for their ethnography being “difficult”; those who felt like the data they were collecting was not

valuable enough or, worse, legitimate enough. To go to back to my own tryst with writing a dissertation, it was when I read the book that I realized that not only was my own understanding of what ethnographic brilliance is shaped by fixations - solitude, danger, and intimacy - that are deeply gendered and point to a prevalent masculinist ethic.

In short, *Harassed* is a critical analysis of why we consider certain kinds of data, certain forms of ethnographic writing more valuable, and what the gendered histories of such valuations are. The book shows how intertwined fieldwork is with socialization processes within academia and the pressures and expectations that we face as we try to publish, get jobs, and establish ourselves as experts. The book is also prescriptive: it argues for an embodied approach to ethnography that reflexively engages with the ways in which researchers' bodies shape the knowledge they produce. Each chapter comes with several little exercises that facilitate a re-writing of data. The book does not just advocate for "writing with the body" but shows us how it can be done through examples and practical exercises. Show, don't tell - am I right? *Harassed* provides us not just with critiques but also alternatives - a rare feat for an academic book! For that reason, it is also an incredibly useful tool to teach with - one that I am so excited to use in the coming year.

I must admit that even though I had read the book, I could not retrace my steps into writing the kind of embodied ethnography that the book discusses. To me, it simply points to how deeply entrenched ideas around "writing without a body" are - at least in sociology. We are not trained to think with our bodies, to write with our bodies from the very beginning. But the fact that I also have several "alternate versions" of chapters overlaid with points on how to write with the body is testimony to what the book allows one to do: imagine differently. And, to me, this has been the most useful contribution of the book; it is not simply a provocation, it is also a prescription; it is not simply an indictment, it is also an imaginary.

In all, thank you, Rebecca and Patricia for this wonderful book. I cannot emphasize how critical a contribution this is to the world of ethnographic writing.