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Coping with cannabis in a Caribbean country : from problem formulation to going public

Analyzes the dialectic between problem discovery and formulation, ethical considerations, and the public dissemination of research results. Author describes his personal experience of fieldwork, the moral-ethical dilemmas it involved, and the circulation of research findings on cannabis production and consumption in St. Vincent. He became frustrated that his academic publications were only accessible to a tiny portion of St. Vincent's population and therefore decided to publish about cannabis in the local media.

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COPING WITH CANNABIS IN A CARIBBEAN COUNTRY: FROM PROBLEM FORMULATION TO GOING PUBLIC

INTRODUCTION: STUDYING DRUGS CARIBBEAN STYLE

In his otherwise comprehensive and penetrating assessment of the Caribbean as an open frontier of anthropological inquiry, Michel-Rolph Trouillott (1992) omits two exemplars of the region's unboundedness: wage-labor migration and illegal drugs.¹ My concern here is with the latter, specifically marijuana, an illicit substance that has been present in the Antilles far longer than elsewhere in the hemisphere.² Though it was the subject of a comprehensive anthropological field study in Jamaica in the early 1970s that yielded two monographs (Rubin & Comitas 1975; Dreher 1982) and several articles,³ ganja, as *Cannabis sativa* is commonly known in the region, has received only brief and sporadic treatment in recent years (Hayes 1991; Rubenstein 1988, 1995). Since marijuana was not well established in places other than Jamaica and Trinidad before the early to mid-1970s, this means that knowledge about its differential regional introduction, acceptance, spread, production, exchange, and consumption are largely confined to newspaper reports and information from police interdiction and eradication efforts. Conversely, recent Caribbean drug studies by political scientists lack the fine-grained, humanistic, and grounded quality of ethnographic reportage and have been preoccupied with macro-level features of drug production and trafficking, drug related crime, local and regional organized drug control efforts (the so-called "war on drugs"), the laundering of drug money, arms smuggling, and the corruption of elected and other officials (Griffith 1993, 1997; Maingot 1993; Sanders 1993).

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Moreover, this new research thrust has focused at least as much on cocaine as on marijuana even though the former is neither produced in the region nor as widely consumed there as the latter. Studies of the drug trade and allied issues also tend to uncritically assume that illicit mind-altering substances are unequivocally harmful,⁴ a supposition that cultural anthropologists customarily question on empirical and other grounds (Room 1984). Such studies also generally ignore or superficially dismiss the possibility that first, many if not most of the real or alleged problems associated with illicit drugs are rooted not in their intrinsic psycho-active properties but in the very fact that involvement with them has been criminalized and, second, the war on drugs has created far more moral, legal, social, political, and economic problems than it has solved.⁵

These newer studies, based as they are on the analysis of already published material (media stories, government reports, the first-hand accounts of anthropologists and other fieldworkers, etc.), are also immune to the methodological and allied problems inherent in first-hand ethnographic or comparable research. These problems are common to all anthropological and equivalent *in situ* studies of deviant or criminal behavior and include researcher stress, the conflict between the needs of science and the responsibilities of citizenship, possible complicity in illicit activity, the ethical and legal implications of surreptitious research, difficulties obtaining informed consent, the need to protect informants and data from official scrutiny, and the potential adverse effects of publication (Akeroyd 1984: 143-46). Only one of these issues was fleetingly discussed in a single short paragraph in the often cited Rubin and Comitas study (1975:x): as in the bulk of the larger anthropological literature devoted to illegal activity no attention was paid to the dialectic between these personal and ethical considerations and the problem of problem discovery and formulation, on the one hand, and the mode of circulation of research findings, on the other. How and why do researchers decide to study illegal substances when doing so may prove risky to both self and Other? How do they obtain (or bypass obtaining) permission to do so from their sponsors, hosts, and informants? How can the field study of such activities, most of which are both clandestine and dangerous to their participants, be reconciled with the professional obligation to publicly disseminate one's research findings?

The danger to self and Other associated with the ethnographic study of illegal or deviant behavior also means that research tends to take place in a single (though sometimes lengthy) period of fieldwork. Accordingly, continuous or repeat studies of prohibited activities have been as much eschewed in the Caribbean as they have elsewhere despite the fact that a

diachronic research strategy is best suited to their understanding. This is because such behaviors are habitually marked by much volatility and conflict, the features of which can be studied as they occur or shortly thereafter. Moreover, discovering the principles behind the flux and friction is best done employing a long-term research strategy (Foster 1978). So is an understanding of the dialectic between problem discovery and formulation, ethical considerations, and the public dissemination of research results.

My aim is to describe and analyze the long-term, reflexive interplay between problem formulation, the personal experience of fieldwork, moral-ethical dilemmas, and the circulation of research findings in my experience of learning and writing about ganja in a small, rural community in St. Vincent and the Grenadines (hereafter identified by its local acronym, SVG). Though I do not deny that the extant anthropological studies have enhanced our understanding of cannabis among its Caribbean producers, sellers, and consumers, they follow the “normal science” (Kuhn 1962) approach to methodology, description, and analysis. Scientism rules, the voice of the ethnographer is absent or muted (except as embedded “objective” prescriptive authority or in a short “Introduction” where field techniques are briefly enumerated), and the voices of users, growers, and pushers are taken at face value. Though these features are understandable in the context of 1970s method and theory, they now seem static, unidirectional, mechanistic, even unauthentic. In particular, there is hardly a domain of social behavior (save perhaps human sexuality) that is more subject to subjectivity, caprice, and reflexivity – to deception, fiction, exaggeration, myth making, stereotyping, unpredictability, and moralizing – than illegal substances.

My experience with cannabis in Leeward Village (a pseudonym) highlights just how subjective, reflexive, and problematic the field experience can be. To be sure, whether ethnographers acknowledge this or not in their writings, all fieldwork involving participant-observation has these qualities. What may be different (though not necessarily unique) about my research in SVG is the direct and public manner in which I reacted to the subjective, the reflexive, and the problematic in my study of ganja. In their influential *Anthropology as Cultural Critique*, Marcus and Fischer (1986:138) argue that “The challenge of serious cultural criticism is to bring the insights gained on the periphery back to the center to raise havoc with our settled ways of thinking and conceptualization,” thereby reminding us that cultural anthropology has always been an academic exchange mainly with and for the West about the Rest. My experience studying and writing about ganja in SVG suggests that the genuine

globalization of anthropology should also mean that insights from either domain should be employed to raise havoc in the periphery too when the settled ways of thinking and conceptualization there are as intolerant or uncritical as their counterparts at the center.

CANNABIS AND CLASS

St. Vincent and the Grenadines is a small (388 km²; 110,000 people) nation-state located in the southeastern part of the Caribbean Sea.⁶ A former British sugar colony, the country is still economically dependent on the former motherland for the sale of all its bananas, the country's main (legal) cash crop and main (legal) export. Though it has experienced some superficial economic growth in recent years, SVG has long been one of the poorest countries with one of the highest un(der)employment rates in the region (Rubenstein 1987; Potter 1992:xxi-xxiii). Together with its rugged terrain, limited road network, vast expanse of unsupervised Crown lands, inadequately patrolled coastal waters, and proximity to marijuana-hungry neighbors like Barbados, St. Lucia, and Martinique this has helped make SVG the second highest marijuana producer in the entire Caribbean after Jamaica (*The News* 1992:1), a country where ganja has been produced and consumed for nearly 150 years (Rubin & Comitas 1975).

Though cannabis is now king of crops in SVG, it is a cultigen associated with the most ignoble of Vincentians: young, poor, rural, black men. It is this feature, along with the alleged dangers of smoking ganja, that account for much of the societal opposition to it. This is because despite a great deal of overall upward mobility over the past fifty years, much of it resulting from migration overseas for work or study, the Vincentian populace remains hierarchically stratified by race and color, income and property, occupation and education, prestige and respectability, and privilege and power (Fraser 1975; Rubenstein 1987). To be sure, SVG is now a sovereign state with a fully-enfranchised black electorate. Still, the many examples of black people rising from near the bottom to near the top of the class hierarchy have blurred rather than erased the main social and economic boundaries. Many features of the traditional racial hierarchy are still evident, and a disproportionate number of the largest businesses (such as supermarkets and the biggest department stores) are in the hands of whites, mulattoes, and foreigners. Most black Vincentians (three-quarters of the population according to preliminary reports from the 1990 census) are poor and most poor Vincentians (between two-thirds and three-quarters of the population) are black. The lowest-ranked and most destitute

poor black people are young rural males between their late teens and mid-thirties, a category that is habitually pejoratively labeled by all other status groups as rowdy, uncouth, blasphemous, lazy, thievish, ignorant, illiterate, violent, and unkempt. Sometimes feared because of their alleged predilection for lawless or anti-social behavior, often reviled for appearing to flout societal norms of respectability, it is these youths and young men who are the most conspicuous and unapologetic of marijuana growers, sellers, and smokers.

Cannabis sativa is a prohibited cultigen in SVG that carries severe juridical sanctions. Concomitantly, its production, sale, and consumption have been associated with much internecine conflict and praedial larceny, thousands of police raids and ganja seizures, and hundreds of imprisonments and/or costly fines. Between 20 to 25 percent of the prison population is incarcerated for “dangerous drug” offenses (St. Vincent and the Grenadines 1991, 1994), many involving tiny quantities of marijuana meant only for personal use.

INITIATION, 1969-72

Marijuana was the furthest thing from my mind when I went to SVG in 1969 to conduct field research on poverty and social networks for my doctoral dissertation (Rubenstein 1976). The plant is not indigenous to the country and only years later did I realize that I had inadvertently “studied” its early introduction into the country.

Nearly all my long-term research in SVG has taken place in Leeward Village, a rural community of 2,300 people on the western side of St. Vincent Island (see Rubenstein 1987). Soon after I moved into the community, I became acquainted with a loosely-knit friendship clique of about a dozen young men aged between sixteen and twenty. One day as we stood chatting under a shade tree, they asked me what I knew about marijuana. Though I had spent the previous year in a large student housing co-operative in Toronto where all sorts of drugs were easily obtained, I had no familiarity with marijuana. But I knew enough to draw a crude outline of its well-known leaf shape on the ground in front of us, casually remarking that because cannabis grows well in tropical countries, there might be some wild plants in the vicinity of the village. To my surprise, I later learnt that several clique members had spent much of the next day scouring the overgrown areas of the agricultural estate bordering the village in a failed attempt to locate some marijuana plants.

These youths were better educated and more worldly than most of their

village peers. They were also quite gregarious. Two of them had grown up in Kingstown, SVG's small capital of 16,000 people, and had many friends and acquaintances there. Most of the others either had jobs or were attending high school in the city. All of them also occasionally went there to *lime* (hang out) in order to escape the boredom of village life. If marijuana had had more than the most limited distribution at that time, I am sure that they would have known about it.

One of these same young men, Willie (a pseudonym), aged twenty-one, visited my home early one Friday night about eighteen months later. After some preliminary banter, he produced a brown paper bag from under his shirt. The bag held what seemed to be about two ounces of marijuana. According to Willie, the marijuana was part of a small stash that had been smuggled into the country by a friend of one of the Peace Corps volunteers who had been living and teaching in the village during most of my fieldwork there. Willie also confessed that though he and two of these volunteers had smoked together on several occasions, they had asked him not to tell me about their activities, fearing, I suppose, that I would either report them to the police or insist on sharing in their windfall. The bag of marijuana was left for Willie as a farewell gift.

Willie had been one of the heaviest drinkers in his liming group and the rum shop across from my rented house received a good portion of its revenue from his sometimes nightly drinking sessions with fellow limers and other villagers. But his introduction to marijuana resulted in a quick conversion for he nearly abandoned rum drinking for weed smoking. Many years later, when I began to systematically explore local ganja ethnohistory, I learned that Willie had smoked (and later peddled) domestic and imported marijuana non-stop until his migration to Trinidad in 1977.

A second community member began to smoke marijuana in the village a few months later. After returning from Britain with his new English wife, Joel obtained some marijuana via the woman's overseas contacts. Though they limited their smoking to the privacy of their rented apartment, their use of ganja must have attracted the attention of other villagers because they were soon arrested and convicted for possession of the substance. Again, only years later when I began to peruse back issues of *The Vincentian*, the country's oldest newspaper, for data on activities and opinions relating to marijuana did I find out that the couple were among the first island residents ever charged with ganja possession.

INSTITUTIONALIZATION, 1980

I considered these two experiences as social aberrations in village life because I did not even record them in the diary I sporadically kept during this first and longest (two and a half years) of my dozen field trips to SVG. They were not even part of my consciousness during my next visit to Leeward Village, a two-month sojourn in June 1980. The production and sale of marijuana was by now well established in the community, though I did not realize this until I started paying ethnographic attention to it several years later (Rubenstein 1988). I did interact with some people involved with ganja, including a twenty-five-year-old craftsman who was also a local grower and pusher. Still, I made no attempt to study the substance except by making some sketchy entries in my field diary:

Thursday, July 31, 1980: He [Ishmael] has lots of produce planted in the backyard – tomatoes, cucumbers, bananas, etc. – which he sells at his shop. Also has marijuana plants growing in *the Mountain* [the entire area of hilly agricultural valley land that stretches nearly three miles behind Leeward Village].

Sunday, August 3, 1980: Ishmael keeps a large number of joints [actually *spliffs* or marijuana cigarillos] in an old cookie tin.

Tuesday, August 5, 1980: Ishmael had just returned from the Mountain where he had gone to inspect his marijuana plants to assess the extent of damage [from Hurricane Allen which had devastated the island the day before]. About one dozen plants damaged. He picked many [plants] and will dry them and try to sell them to a dealer in Kingstown. Has been growing marijuana for a couple of years. Apparently several farmers are growing it on a commercial or semi-commercial basis. Ishmael used to consign joints to several young men on a 50-50 basis. But it didn't work out since the boys claimed that they had to dispose of their produce because of the police. Ishmael smokes a great deal of *grass* – several joints [spliffs] within a 2-3 hour period – as do many other young men in the village. His wife also smokes but not too heavily.

FIRST RESEARCH, 1986

The project that brought me back to the community for another two-month field trip at the end of June 1986, a study of marital union formation, could hardly have been further removed from the study of marijuana.⁷ But even as my luggage was being inspected at SVG's tiny airport, the thought of ganja fleetingly crossed my mind when a customs officer asked me whether I was coming from Jamaica, the Caribbean's premier ganja

producer. A negative reply brought an abrupt end to his search of my belongings. As I reached my destination in a part of Leeward Village that I later discovered housed the greatest concentration of the community's marijuana smokers and growers, I again was reminded of ganja from the distinctive odor of its smoke coming from a knot of young men lounging along the roadside about twenty yards away.

Given its illegal status and a lack of permission to study it from the relevant parties (the government, my university, and the granting agency), I only slowly – and hesitantly – turned my attention to marijuana as I began to discover how important it had become in village social and economic life. Part of my first diary entry on ganja reads:

Monday, July 14, 1986: Kenny, a rastaman⁸ who grows the weed, came over with a spliff ... and stayed for about 1.5 hrs. I asked him about the marijuana trade and growing techniques and he said that *sens* [sinsemilla, the potent virgin female variety of the plant] is mainly grown ... A pound of marijuana is valued at 300-400 [Eastern Caribbean] dollars⁹ ... Marijuana is grown on Crown Lands in large clusters of plants ... Police raids occur only when there are fights among growers. One such fight occurred between Ishmael and another man in which ... Ishmael ambushed the other man with a group of friends after threatening to kill him following a fist fight over the theft of marijuana crops. The man was beaten in the Mountain where he slept while overseeing his growing produce ... Left for dead, he crawled down to the road and managed to call for help. The case is still pending.

A tragic early morning event nine days later further piqued my interest in ganja.

Wednesday, July 23, 1986: A young man named Woods ... was killed this morning in a motorcycle collision with another cycle [owned by his ganja-planting companion] as he was coming back from *changing* [re-pasturing] his animals ... He was a Rasta and had bought the cycle and built a house occupied by himself and his common-law wife and three children with earnings from growing marijuana.

Woods's colleague was questioned by the police and is alleged to have revealed the locale where he and others were growing marijuana. The Special Services Unit (SSU), the police squad responsible for illegal substance interdiction, was quickly alerted by the village police resulting in an immediate raid of the areas that had been identified. Other ganja growers were rounded up for questioning over the next few days and two additional SSU Mountain operations took place over the next few weeks. Thousands of plants representing hundreds of hours of work were soon destroyed. Two young men apprehended on one of these raids pleaded

guilty to growing marijuana and each received a nine-month prison sentence.¹⁰

A week later,

Wednesday, July 30, 1986: I ... broached the possibility with Ishmael of doing a study of marijuana cultivation [with his help as a research assistant]. He picked up on it but seemed more concerned with finding a commercial outlet [with my assistance]. He talked about large plantings in the hills, the absence of negative effects of smoking, arguing that this view [i.e. that it was harmful to smoke marijuana] was being expressed by those who do not smoke.

I can mark my formal, though unsanctioned, study of marijuana the next afternoon when I employed Ishmael as a principal informant and go-between. Such formalization resulted in an intensification of my observations of and participation in his marijuana activities:

Saturday, August 2, 1986: He [Ishmael] had gone to *Zion* [the name he had given to remote inland Crown land area where he and others had been growing marijuana for several years] the day before around noon and seems to have reaped about 1 lb. He sent 8 oz. to town with Walter, a teenager who is working for him ... He wanted \$EC250.00 for the 8 oz. but said he would take \$EC200.00 minimum ... The boy returned in about two hours with \$EC225.00. The amount paid depends on color, texture, freshness, smell, and potency.

Monday, August 4, 1986: We went up to the house and packed some supplies and water and set off about 8:30 a.m. for *Zion*. The climb through Old Bush [the furthest region of agricultural lands in the valley] was long and hard. It took us 2.5 hours to reach the summit along a slippery, narrow, and very steep trail. Large fallen trees, low hanging ferns and vines had to be maneuvered over or under. I fell a couple of times and got my arms very scrapped up ... We had to climb up and over a couple of trees ... We rested once we got to the top. Ishmael has 3 gardens, which he calls no. 1, no. 2, and no. 3, in various stages of cultivation ...

Ishmael has a hut there which he built for storage and sleeping. The roof of the enclosure is made out of old plastic sheets for protection from the rain and to catch water in. He lost two crops in a row a couple of years ago and had a team of several boys sleeping over for weeks on end when he was involved in larger-scale growing. Many of the boys he has brought up there to work felt it was too far and hard to get to and didn't come back again.

The areas of cultivation are very steep and small banks [tiny terraces] are dug prior to cultivation. In order to guard against rats eating the seeds, Ishmael planted some of the *herb* [ganja] in raised beds. Built on a wooden frame, the seeds are sown in small plastic envelopes and later transplanted. The only variety planted is sinsemilla. Male plants are

deliberately exorcized as soon as they are recognized ...

We began our descent about 4:00 p.m. and got down to the junction about 5:30. Going down was harder than going up and I slipped and fell several times. I had to slide down on my backside or crawl sideways several times. I was quite muddled by the time I got back to the house. My arms were covered with dozens of small scrapes and scratches and everyone laughed at my condition. [But] I felt quite proud about having made the trek, a trip that many villagers would not make. It brought home how difficult marijuana cultivation really is.

The next day Ishmael and I met to have lunch in Kingstown:

Tuesday, August 5, 1986: We ate in a little open air snackette in Paul's Lot [a part of the capital well known for drug sales and other illegal activity]. Rasta food – no meat or salt ... We then went to an *herb gate* [a place where marijuana is sold and/or smoked] – a house on Paul's Avenue colorfully painted [in Rastafarian hues] with a bar at one end and a hall for smoking marijuana at the other. There were 15 adolescents and young adults, most [judging from their dress and demeanor] from the countryside, according to Ishmael, who had come there to buy marijuana and have a smoke during their lunch hour from working in Kingstown. The premises are owned by a large dealer and there was a fairly new and expensive Toyota Corolla parked in the driveway. Only a few of the men were obviously Rasta in hair style and dress. There were only men present although some girls are supposed to be there at night. We stayed about 15 minutes until the rain let up. No one paid any real attention to me and apparently there is no trouble from the police. There are [according to Ishmael] about 6-8 such *herb gates* in Kingstown.

Until my departure three weeks later, I continued my investigation of marijuana. I made many observations of public and private ganja consumption and I conducted interviews (most of them tape recorded) with twelve other smokers, growers, and pushers, including two whose marijuana gardens I also visited:

Friday, August 15, 1986: Elton passed by just before 8:00 a.m. and we walked along the path to his land ... He asked me why I wanted to go up to the land telling me that his girlfriend [common-law wife] was suspicious of my motives. I explained again my interest in coming right on the spot to talk about his cultivation. I [again] assured him of confidentiality; I also said that his girlfriend was quite right in trying to protect his interests. It was a pleasant walk to Elton's father's land ... It is about 1/2 mile from the main road and much of it is along the steep slopes up the head of the valley. The land reaches right to the crown and the cultivated areas are mainly along the hillsides. Three brothers work the land separately and his father has not been to the lands for several years. Kenny is located in the flat towards the bottom of the holding. Elton's other brother, who lives at home with his father, has his *itals* [vegetables] up the hill and his herb further to the north around the side

of the same hill. Elton has his provisions [vegetables] about 30 yards away and his *herb* in two plots, one separated by a narrow strip from his itals and the other about 50 yards away on the other side of the hill. We visited each of the [ganja] plots in turn and I interviewed him [by tape recorder] after we got back. He was quite forthright and open about his own activities and the manner in which he had been ripped off over the years. He has a small hut with two bunks and since his plants are beginning to bud says he will start sleeping in the garden to protect the ganja from theft sometime in the next few weeks. He will only come to the village at midnight and leave at midnight and his girlfriend will tell people that he has gone to the Grenadines to work (as she did last year). He says that he has made up his mind to go to prison if he is caught.

SYSTEMATIC RESEARCH, 1987-88

Once again I returned to Leeward Village in July 1987 for an eleven-month field study of Vincentian land use patterns funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRCC). My grant application had proposed a comparison of agrarian practice in Leeward Valley and the Marriacqua Valley, a region on the southeast coast of the island. Though I planned to pursue my growing interest in ganja by studying its place in the larger farming complex, I mentioned this only obliquely in the research application:

Leeward Valley contains some 600 hectares of privately owned land divided into nearly 300 separate plots. Although peasant and small-scale commercial farming was the major valley occupation during the late 1960s and early 1970s, less than 20 percent of valley acreage was cultivated. This situation has changed during the past few years. My own observations in 1980 and 1986 and discussions with villagers indicate a significant increase in valley cultivation. The causes and extent of this transformation need to be studied in detail although decreased migration opportunities and the introduction of a new cash crop – marijuana – seem to be important surface manifestations of more fundamental causes lying outside of the island itself (Rubenstein 1986).

Since I was still reluctant to fully embrace the study of marijuana because of the personal and other dangers this might involve, I feared that too much attention to the substance in the application might open up an ethical and political can of worms: SSHRCC might expect written permission from the Vincentian government to study the crop, something I assumed (partly based on my conversations with an overseas consultant and the head of a local NGO the year before) would be difficult if not impossible to obtain.

It was not until February 1988, after I had been in the field for over

seven months, that I finally consulted the Attorney General and the Minister of Education about my marijuana research. To my surprise and delight, rather than discouraging my efforts to study cannabis, both men readily agreed to support my inquiries. The Attorney General instructed the Commissioner of Police to assist me in obtaining whatever data I needed. Among other things, this gave me access to restricted police drug interdiction material. The Minister of Education permitted me to conduct an island-wide survey of drug use among secondary school students. This provided me with a wealth of attitudinal and other data. Little did I know at the time that the promise that I was given by the Attorney General and others that I would not be harassed in my marijuana research would not be fulfilled.

DANGEROUS DRUGS ARE DANGEROUS TO STUDY, 1989

As in nearly all other countries, marijuana is legally defined as a "dangerous drug" in SVG. If my reading of the scientific literature told me that the myriad of dangers attributed to it by the Vincentian general public and medical community were either grossly exaggerated, had been proven groundless years before, or still remained conjectural, there was incontrovertible evidence of the dangers associated with the fact that marijuana is an illegal substance: the country's dungeon-like prison held hundreds of inmates who had been convicted of various marijuana-related crimes. But I was ill prepared for the police operation against me when I returned to SVG in 1989 for two months of follow-up research.

My first difficulty with the police had actually occurred the year before when the film in my camera was seized after I was spotted photographing a SSU ganja raid in the village. The film was returned to me several days later after I had been given the following counsel by the head of the west coast police division: "We wish you wouldn't take photos. It creates anxiety."¹¹

My own anxiety was raised to a record level in July 1989 when I was roused from a sound sleep by a loud knocking at the door of my rented apartment. The dreaded "Mongoose Gang," as the SSU is called by ganja devotees, armed with handguns and M-16 assault rifles (provided by the United States Drug Enforcement Agency) had come to subject me to one of their frightening pre-dawn raids. A warrant signed by the Commissioner of Police was flashed in front of my face. This was followed by a systematic thirty to forty minute exploration of the apartment and its contents.

Studying illegal or deviant behavior is always a potentially dangerous activity – for both self and Other. The first priority has to be to one's informants, protecting them from harassment or worse. This was partly why I had sought permission from the Attorney General, Commissioner of Police, and other authorities to conduct my marijuana research asking only that my interest in it exempt my ganja informants and me from deliberate police surveillance or persecution. This assurance was given to me by all parties.

It was on the basis of this promise that I customarily allowed marijuana informants to smoke in my rented quarters. Not only did this serve to reinforce my credibility with the *ganja man*, as anyone devoted to smoking, growing, or pushing marijuana is called, it also placed informants in a congenial frame of mind for discussing their experiences with the substance. As he lit up a spliff while I was setting up my equipment for a tape recorded interview, one young man stated, "I had to "burn" [smoke] something before I could talk about *that*."

The search left me stunned and confused. I felt fear, rage, helplessness, even victimization and marginalization (see Pelto & Pelto 1978:185-89), emotions that repeatedly had been expressed to me by my informants when they talked about marijuana *tribulation* (the conflicts that involvement with it causes) (cf. Bourgois 1995). An overnight guest was subjected to a humiliating internal examination by the lone female officer who is always charged with this duty. Shock quickly turned to anger. I knew that the commanding NCO was familiar with my research because of my many visits to the Criminal Investigation Division, SSU's parent body, where his unit was headquartered. When he kept responding to my indignation about the raid with the reply that his job was not confined to searching for drugs, it finally occurred to me to examine the search warrant only to find that my name had been badly misspelled and that it referred to "the illegal possession of a firearm," an accusation that seemed to bear little relation to the exploration of my guest's vagina.

I complained about the raid, which I considered both an unacceptable invasion of my privacy and a breach of the understanding that had been reached with the police, to the Attorney General. The latter seemed genuinely angered, claiming that he had repeatedly chided the police for conducting frivolous raids, and immediately called the Commissioner of Police to launch an inquiry. A chance meeting with the Commissioner the next week allowed me to protest to him in person. He said that he regretted the embarrassment it had caused me, that he had had no prior knowledge of the raid because it was impossible for him to peruse the many warrants he had to sign every day, and that "national security"

required that the police act on all reports that are made to them about illegal activity.¹²

FROM SPY TO SPOKESMAN, 1991-92

Since 1969 there have been vague rumors circulating mainly among some of the youth of the community that I am a CIA agent (despite my Canadian birth, citizenship, and life-long residence) sent by Uncle Sam to spy on the people of Leeward Village. Of course, ethnographers are often accused of snooping for their actual or alleged sponsors (Brettell 1993; Bourgois 1995) and most villagers did not seem to either believe or be affected by such rumors. Some people have simply retorted “Spy on *what?*” when we occasionally discussed this allegation, expressing their incredulity that there might be anything going on in the community that could remotely interest the U.S. government.

In 1991 the old allegations of spying took a particularly nasty twist when the following faxed information from a member of the advance organizing team in SVG was passed on to me regarding an upcoming international conference on Vincentian environmental institutions that I had been invited to address:

[D]oes Hymie Rubenstein realize that there are some vicious rumours going around about him and his research that he did on ganja production and distribution in Leeward Village? You know what it is like here – virtually impossible to substantiate any rumour – but I have been told that there are some people who believe that he released names or specifics in his study, and as a result some people in that area of St. Vincent were arrested. I have been told that there were death threats from people in the village made against him. It is hard to say how serious such threats are or even if they were ever made, if all this has blown over (either the perception or the reality). I have no idea what the truth of the matter is. I can not get a copy of the study here, and can not say how many people hold this perception of his research. It seems as though only a very small group of people in Kingstown know anything about it. But I think that he should be told – be made aware that there is this perception floating around – particularly because ganja production is going to be one of the topics he discusses in his presentation on land use.

The study referred to was a brief, preliminary description of what I had learned about marijuana in Leeward Village on my 1986 field trip (Rubenstein 1988). On my initiative, its publication had been reported as a government news release by the Vincentian press. Copies of the publication, which were available in the Kingstown Public Library and elsewhere,

carefully obscured the identity of individuals and employed the “Leeward Village” pseudonym. But my heart still sank when I received this information. Though providing information to the police about illegal substances is a routine activity in SVG, it would be unconscionable for an anthropologist to do so.

When I arrived in Leeward Village in April 1991 for a few days visit before attending the conference in Kingstown, I carefully inquired about the accusations in the fax. None of the several close marijuana informants I consulted had heard about them, though I did learn that one young Leeward Villager (who had assisted me with my ganja research in 1986 and 1987) had been arrested for possession of marijuana in 1990 in a random search of a passenger van outside the community.

Nearly all members of the tiny Vincentian social and intellectual elite were invited to attend the proceedings of the three-day conference.¹³ My participation consisted of describing the history of Vincentian exports crops from the country’s first European settlement in 1719 to the present. Though less than one-third of my talk dealt with the latest of these cash crops, marijuana, my discussion of it was not well received. I seemed to have touched a raw nerve by mentioning such an unseemly issue (the adaptive role of marijuana production by the most feared and despised segment of Vincentian society – poor, young, uneducated black men) in such polite company (a wealthy and well-educated, mainly middle-aged and disproportionately female audience of about two hundred people). Indeed, my paper probably did look like an open sore against the backdrop of the many genteel presentations dealing with botanic gardens and pristine forests. I was criticized for wandering from the conference theme and for both “romanticizing” and “exaggerating” the role of marijuana in the country’s economy. I did not consider any of these assertions as being valid. The theme of the interdisciplinary conference – “Environmental Institutions” – was so broad that it would have been nearly impossible to stray from it (though several papers tried as hard as they could to do so by not even mentioning SVG in their presentations). “Romanticizing” marijuana consisted of traditional ethnographic description in which marijuana was treated as a farm crop, albeit a peculiar one. “Exaggeration” involved surmising that marijuana might be the second most important national export crop following bananas, a suggestion partly based on quantitative material from and briefings by the SSU. Though a couple of Vincentians came to my defense, the differential levels of audience applause by supporters and detractors showed that I had far more of the latter than the former (Rubenstein 1995).

My position was soon vindicated. “[T]he three-part US[Drug Enforce-

ment Agency]-assisted eradication effort in October 1991 and January and February 1992 which destroyed over 2 million plants" (Bureau of International Narcotics Matters 1994:213) in the remote northwestern forested interior of the mainland not only confirmed that my speculations about marijuana production were far too conservative – ganja, not bananas, was the king of crops in the country – but represented a Rubicon in Vincentian eradication efforts.

Part of my marijuana research had involved documenting the mainstream Vincentian position on ganja, and my conference experience merely reinforced what I had already learned from other sources, including the written views of members of the general public and the local medical and para-medical community. The best-known opponent of ganja use was the most respected member of the national medical establishment, Dr. A. Cecil Cyrus, a general surgeon and ophthalmologist, who reported his views in four newspaper articles and in a specially-commissioned Lions Club booklet (Cyrus 1986) that is still being widely distributed. Though the referencing in the booklet was sketchy, I was able to track down most of the studies referred to by Cyrus. All were based on outdated research and, with the possible exception of lung damage, had had their findings debunked or questioned on methodological or other grounds many years before (Rubenstein 1995).

My study of the scientific literature and how it had been misinterpreted in SVG, my experience at the 1991 conference, the recurrent accusations of spying, the memory of the feelings generated by the 1989 ganja raid on my apartment, and my aversion to the prejudicial treatment of the *ganja man* in this class- and racially-stratified society slowly forced me to reexamine the ethical implications of my fieldwork. By mid-1992 I concluded that it was time to simultaneously address these issues by offering a public cultural critique of the distorted mainstream Vincentian view on ganja. Hence, the following letter to the publisher of *The Vincentian*:

I am writing to express an interest in producing [without remuneration] a regular column on the use of drugs in SVG for your newspaper ... Your newspaper has been a good source of public opinion and ... I suspect that a regular column would attract a strong readership and provoke a good deal of lively exchange ... I have found that there is a great deal of misinformation about drugs – especially ganja – that is part of the public collective conscience in SVG. When I look at some of the statements that have appeared in *The Vincentian* it is like stepping back 50 years regarding what is actually known about marijuana. But I have no particular axe to grind, either personal or professional ... My aim would be to present the evidence that I and others have collected, especially in regard to illegal drugs, in as objective a fashion as possible.

I did indeed have several personal and professional axes to grind: frustration that my academic publications were only accessible to a tiny portion of SVG's 110,000 people; guilt over my First World career-driven parasitic-like relation to the country; and the charges of spying. But the main stimulus for the column was a combined moral-intellectual aversion to the way marijuana was treated in the local print media and by the local (para-)medical community and how this rationalized the stigmatization and punishment of the *ganja man*.

FROM LEARNED JOURNAL TO TABLOID JOURNALISM, 1992-94¹⁴

I approached writing the column with some trepidation, not because I had any fear of compromising my informants or my future research in SVG, but because all of my writing had been confined to scholarly outlets. I felt much more secure about the ethical stance informing the column: that it was wrong to misuse science to harass and incarcerate people for involvement with a victimless and relatively innocuous activity. In particular, my decision to write the column was based on a conflation of three domains of understanding: my reading of the scientific literature, my personal sense of right and wrong, and the moral position of my ganja-involved informants. It was because the establishment position was *both* bad science and bad morals (from *both* my perspective and those of my ganja-involved informants) that I decided to act. Had the mainstream Vincentian model paralleled the scientific one but was morally wrong (either in terms of my ethics or those of the *ganja man* or both) or vice versa, I would not have asked to write the column. In particular, had most cannabis devotees believed that the police were right to crack down on marijuana (in fact, a few did), and even had I concluded that this was based on false consciousness, I would have had difficulty "going public." Conversely, since the position of my informants (whose authority was experience) closely matched my position (whose authority was my fieldwork results and the evidence of First World scientific marijuana research), I found it easy to justify addressing the Vincentian public. Though this may smack of situational ethics, it also suggests that the practice of making moral decisions of this kind are usually (rightly or wrongly) grounded not in logic, method, or theory but in the exigencies of particular cases.

Readers of *The Vincentian*, a tabloid-style newspaper, had long been treated to a steady stream of information about ganja: stories of major eradication efforts; reports of police bribery; news of big seizures at the

airport; excerpts from anti-drug addresses by politicians and members of the judiciary; summaries of First World marijuana medical research findings; reports about the large number of "marijuana addicts" admitted to the mental hospital; synopses of drug seminars held in the region; and highlights from local drug abuse rallies. This varied and extensive negative coverage – more than one item per month (in a weekly paper) for the entire twenty-six-year period, 1969 and 1992, and nearly one per week between 1987 and 1992 alone – served to both reflect and create public opinion against marijuana (Rubenstein 1995; cf. Carter 1980:37).

Letters to the editor have referred to "hopeless failures," "hideous drug addictions," "frustration, depression and a sense of hopelessness among users," and people being "mentally destroyed" or "enslaved by their addiction to marijuana." It has been claimed that marijuana use "inevitably destroys, maims, and permanently distorts the intellect, the bodies and the morality of its participants," that "The amount of vagrants on our streets today [because of marijuana addiction] are numberless," that "A large number of gruesome crimes committed are drug-linked in some way," that "The crime rate is on the increase, 93% of which is drug related," and that "the illicit use of drugs is causing our homes, society, states, nations and the world on the whole to crumble." One editorial called "addiction" to marijuana "the new slavery" and others tried to link ganja to violent criminal behavior and pornography.

The aim of my column, which consisted of forty-six articles (nearly 53,000 words) that appeared between December 1992 and June 1994 under the title "The Drug Dilemma," was to counter these hysterical and spurious claims about marijuana, assertions that legitimized what I believed was the arbitrary harassment, improper detention, and unjust imprisonment of thousands of poor Vincentian youth and young men.

Four articles overviewed marijuana production, sale, and consumption in SVG; six described its origin and spread; five surveyed twenty-six years of its treatment in newspaper reports, editorials, and letters to the editor; four summarized the results of a national questionnaire on drugs I administered in 1988; five assessed the most recent scientific evidence about ganja's alleged or potential adverse effects; and twenty-three detailed marijuana production, sale, and consumption in Leeward Village.

The views and experiences of the *ganja men* were presented in their own words. A small sample from a couple of domains (using a modified orthography from the one employed in the column to make the men's Creole English voices more understandable to standard English users) show how antithetical these were to mainstream assertions.

On addiction: IO: "I have been smoking for a while [sixteen years] and I have never got hook on the habit. I could do without it."

On physical damage: XQ: "A man could smoke but you have to know how you smoking. The smoke not go up there for touch your lung. It not touch there. Doctor does tell too much a whole heap of lie. Doctor does print a whole heap of thing and show you ass."

On criminality: IO: "It's not a habit where you have to kill a man or you have to break [into] somebody's house to get money to buy it. *Herb* is not leading you into other habits so as to break people house to get money to buy it, or to break a bank or something."

On the work ethic: CP: "Them say when you smoke weed that you lazy. But other people [non-smokers] who lazy [too]. Because when I wake up this morning I smoke a weed up a bush and do real work. Weed does make you work plenty. You not want stop. You get different feelings in a you."

On medicinal uses: XB: "My man [friend] used to say since he start to drink that ganja tea he start to shit pretty, pretty, pretty like gold. He used to shit black shit, ugly shit. It clean him out. From the time he start to just drink ganja tea, that man just get clean out. Ganja is a good medicine. Is the healing of the nation. That is a herb that we should take care of."

On mental illness: XB: "If you check the majority of people in the mental hospital, this madness have to come from them roots. It were there from creation."

One column specifically challenged the widespread middle-class and elite idea that marijuana farmers are lazy people looking for a quick and easy dollar and five treated the *tribulation* context, the fact that involvement with ganja produces *cut down* (the destruction of ganja crops by the police or personal adversaries), *rip-off* (the theft of growing, harvested, or processed ganja), *unfairness* and *robbery* (being taken advantage of, exploited, or tricked in some ganja transaction or arrangement, sometimes accompanied by a fear or threat of physical violence), and *fight down* (actual physical violence sometimes accompanied by the use of weapons). These five columns served to balance the other material – to show that there were many negative features (albeit products of interdiction rather than consumption) that accompanied involvement with marijuana – and to suggest that though I was critical of the dominant societal beliefs about and reactions to cannabis and those involved with it, I was not promoting the growing or smoking of marijuana.

The last piece in the series, titled "The Case for and against Marijuana" directly confronted what I considered the most pernicious feature of the societal treatment of marijuana, the Vincentian self-righteous opposition to it:

If marijuana is less harmful than tobacco or alcohol, if its proven deleterious effects are few and far between, and if it has several possible therapeutic functions,¹⁵ then why is there so much opposition to it in this

country? ... [G]anja use in SVG, associated as it is with Rastafarianism, is a symbol of rebelliousness and alienation. As such it represents a threat to the existing socio-economic status quo and a repudiation of our mainstream British-derived values and mores. How have "respectable" Vincentians reacted to this threat? I will never forget the late Hudson K. Tannis' [the Deputy Prime Minister] bald assertion to me in July 1980 – he was the second most powerful politician in the land at the time – that: "I hate to see Rastas!"

But ganja is not only the Rasta symbol par excellence. It is also associated with the most disadvantaged and despised sector of Vincentian society: the Black, rural, undereducated youth. American drug researcher Dr. Norman Zinberg's [1976] statement that 'our [U.S.] drug policy is based on morals, not on health considerations' applies equally to SVG. Current Vincentian drug attitudes and policies are a product of elite and middle class morality reinforced by United States diplomatic pressure. Marijuana smoking in SVG is very much a matter of class and respectability. Though there are many secret elite and middle class smokers, they form a much smaller class-segment than their "bad boy" lower-class counterparts, most of whom smoke their ganja openly and unselfconsciously. Not unexpectedly, some of the severest critics of marijuana smoking are those not far removed from their own rural lower-class background ...

In his Lions Club booklet Dr. Cyrus claims that "There are those in our society who think and state that marijuana causes no harm; one man in a very important position was heard to declare publicly that it only makes people happy, and does no harm. This is irresponsible and dangerous dogma." Equally irresponsible and dangerous is the dogmatic declaration that marijuana is a "heinous indulgence" engaged in by "weird, unkempt creatures."¹⁶ ... No responsible researcher would argue that marijuana has been proven to be a completely harmless substance. But this is surely not the same as saying that marijuana causes relatively little harm, especially if smoked in moderation, a position that scores of drug researchers endorse. For two decades now the Vincentian public has been treated to lies, half truths, and hyperbole about marijuana. This bombardment is irresponsible and dangerous because when actual or potential ganja smokers discover that the medical community has been fooling them about marijuana, they laugh off their pronouncements on other drugs, including alcohol, cocaine and heroin.¹⁷

CONCLUSION: ANTHROPOLOGY FOR THE OTHER

Thirty years ago Jongmans and Gutkind (1967:v-vi) complained that:

Existing literature offers little data on how anthropologists carried out their research. The last forty years hundreds of monographs have been published, yet a careful study of them reveals that at least sixty percent of the authors make no mention whatever of the methodology employed; perhaps another twenty percent devote a few lines, or two or three paragraphs, to this important topic; while only the remaining twenty percent

give us some clear idea about how they carried out their research; this is hardly a satisfactory situation.

Though a perusal of the scores of ethnographies in my personal library suggests that this situation has not improved dramatically since 1967, the same does not hold for the literature devoted to the art and science of ethnographic fieldwork which has grown tremendously in the last three decades.¹⁸ Few of these works, however, have much to say about research and publication reflexivity: how topics are selected for study; the contest between research plans and the serendipitous nature of the fieldwork experience; and how this dialectic influences the reporting of research results.

There are several reasons why Caribbean ethnographers (or other social science fieldworkers) have never paid much attention to detailing how they develop their research problems. First, the positivist orientation that still dominates the social sciences (despite complaints from some self-proclaimed “empiricists” who believe that the post-modern “interpretivists” are taking over their disciplines) means that field research is supposed to take place to fill in obvious descriptive gaps in the literature. Accordingly, it is expected (or assumed) that researchers should (or do) go to the field with clearly developed and circumscribed research projects that have been carefully scrutinized by granting agencies or other bodies (such as ethical review committees). Second, the accumulation of a rich body of empirical material since the late nineteenth century for so many socio-cultural systems in nearly every “culture area” of the world, including the Caribbean, means that contemporary ethnographic and allied research are increasingly concerned with testing theoretical formulations, not with collecting large bodies of new or unique data. Third, the eschewal of autobiography – at least in regard to problem selection and development – in most descriptive field studies leaves the impression that the generation of research programs and procedures is a more or less mechanical process. So does the paucity of discussions of projects that failed either because of poor problem selection, faulty methodology, or researcher incompetence. As my experience in SVG suggests, none of these considerations apply very well to the unanticipated study of aberrant or illicit behavior, on activities that may bring risk to the researcher and/or researched.¹⁹

Nor is there much if anything in the methodological literature about the relation between collecting primary data and communicating its results to native readers in ways that are accessible to them. In *When They Read What We Write* (Brettell 1993:3), “what we write” is nearly always a specialized monograph that few Third World readers could (or would want

to) understand and “when” is almost always after an accidental discovery that yet another foreign academic has produced yet another esoteric misrepresentation of local lifeways (Rubenstein 1995). Nearly all of the papers in the collection treat the narrow issue of “when the natives talk back” (Brettell 1993:9) – react negatively to what has been written about them – leaving untouched the possibility of a direct and proactive interchange with the Other (or with *their* Other in societies stratified by class, ethnicity, and/or race).

My cultural critique – my “experiment” with ethnography as journalism – tried to answer these criticisms. To be sure, my field situation in SVG may not be shared with most other researchers, many of whom may rightly claim that it would be difficult, if not impossible, for them to replicate my efforts. (But how many have tried?) Yes, my marriage to a Vincentian has given me citizenship in the country and a nearly unconstrained right to do fieldwork, I have been doing long-term research there for twenty-five years, SVG has a free press and parliamentary democracy, there is a well-established tradition of social criticism, the present government is much more open to foreign academic research than the previous one, and illegal substances – those exemplars of transnationalism – have been hotly contested in public for over twenty years. But these features only made it is easier to go public.

The decision to do so was rooted in the traditions of anthropology: an aversion to bad science (whether social or physical) and a compassion for unjustly persecuted peoples (Valentine 1968:188-89). Long ago Hymes (1974:5, my italics) argued that “People everywhere today, especially (and rightly) third world peoples, increasingly resist being subjects of inquiry, *especially for purposes not their own*; and anthropologists increasingly find the business of inquiring and knowing about others a source of dilemmas.” My response (part catharsis, part confessional, and part intellectual engagement) to these dilemmas was to write to and for a Third World people for purposes that were very much their own. If other Caribbeanists, especially those residing outside the region, wish to answer the often whispered charges that they are preoccupied with Western academic careerism (the only First World “credit” for producing the column is its discussion in academic publications like this one), are indifferent to the actual (as opposed to “textual”) fate of the oppressed Antillean peoples they study, or even lack the moral courage to speak out on contentious issues, they will have to find new and more imaginative ways to bring their research findings back to their source.

NOTES

1. Trouillot (1992:20) defends the omission of wage-labor migration because it is a topic that has “generated many solid studies and deserve[s] separate treatment” but makes no mention of illegal drugs.
2. “Strong circumstantial evidence suggests that the multipurpose use of cannabis was introduced to the British West Indies by indentured laborers from India, the first of whom arrived in Trinidad and Guyana in 1844 and in Jamaica in 1845” (Rubin & Comitas 1975:15-16).
3. Comitas 1975; Rubin 1975; Schaeffer 1975; Dreher & Rogers 1976; Dreher 1983, 1984a, 1984b, 1989.
4. For example, they tend to uncritically equate illegal drug use with drug abuse or addiction.
5. See Zinberg 1976; Grinspoon 1977; Auld 1981; Himmelstein 1983; Kleiman 1989; Nadelmann 1989; Alexander 1990; Beauchesne 1991; Brownstein 1992; Grinspoon & Bakalar 1993; Elwood 1994. The momentum against the international war against drugs is growing. Days before the United Nations announced its most ambitious – and costly – anti-drug program ever, hundreds of influential persons, including former UN Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar and former U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz, presented a grounded-breaking petition to the UN General Assembly in which they stated that: “We believe that the global war on drugs is causing more harm than drug abuse itself ... Human rights are violated, environmental assaults perpetuated and prisons inundated with hundreds of thousands of drug law violators. Scarce resources better expended on health, education and economic development are squandered on ever more expensive interdiction efforts” (*Winnipeg Free Press* 1998:A1-A2).
6. The nation is composed of the mainland (St. Vincent Island; 344 km²), which contains over 90 percent of the population, and the 44 km² Grenadines, a chain of tiny islands which stretch from the main island to neighboring Grenada to the South.
7. This is literally true because many chronic ganja users quit smoking as soon as they get married as a sign of respect for their wives and new status.
8. In Leeward Village, as elsewhere in SVG, adherence to the tenets of Rastafarianism is mainly confined to a dreadlocks hairstyle, involvement with ganja, the use of Rastafarian jargon, and a preoccupation with reggae music.
9. EC\$1.00 is equivalent to US\$0.42.
10. Indeed, the summer of 1986 represented the apex of valley cultivation in the number of people growing marijuana, the number of teams of growers, and the extent of cultivation. The death, raids, and imprisonments prompted many ganja farmers, especially those only marginally involved, to either pull up their immature plants or abandon their gardens. Again, the implications of this were not clear to me until the next year.
11. My reply to the police superintendent was that I had not entered the property where the raid had taken place, that I thought I had the public right to record a public event, that it was not my purpose to embarrass or interfere with the police, and that the

photos would complement and highlight the other research material I had collected (including many photographs of ganja gardens).

12. The police have few resources to do much intelligence work of their own. This is of no great moment since they are kept busy enough following up on reports made by ordinary citizens against acquaintances, neighbors, and enemies involved in marijuana growing and selling. The raid on my apartment, then, was not a random event but resulted from a report by a village informer to the authorities in Kingstown. Such are the perils of long-term research in the same community, on the one hand, and studying illegal drugs, on the other (see Bourgois 1995:19-27).

13. Active participants included the Governor-General, who gave the opening address, and the Prime Minister, who delivered the keynote presentation.

14. A fuller discussion of the issues in this section is found in Rubenstein 1995.

15. These were mentioned in several of the columns and was the topic of two or three of them.

16. "Weird, unkempt creatures," the term used by Cyrus in his Lion's Club booklet, was a thinly veiled allusion to the long and thickly platted hair of Rastafarians.

17. *The Vincentian*, June 24, 1994.

18. Indeed, there is a fundamental contradiction between a preoccupation with methodology in the abstract and its integration with the actual conduct of ethnographic projects. According to Holy (1984:13): "In contrast [to research in the natural sciences], social sciences abound in methodological treatises, courses in methodology form a considerable part of the curriculum, a social scientist could hardly qualify without passing examinations in methodology, his or her own research will hardly be of interest to fellow practitioners if it is not methodologically significant, and the practitioner's status within the professional community is directly proportional to contributions to the development of the subject's methodology: a single methodological treatise is bound to bring more fame and prestige than several published results of empirically oriented research."

Though these observations may hold in such social sciences as sociology, psychology, and geography they hardly correspond to the situation in cultural anthropology. Despite the abundance of methodological works, most ethnographers have had little more than a single textbook course in field methods; second, contemporary ethnographies continue to be marked by a paucity of data on research procedures. Finally, the highest standing in the field has always been held by those who have made the most significant empirical contributions.

19. See, for example, Humphreys 1970; Weppner 1977; Carter 1980; Lieber 1981; Fields 1984; Adler 1985; Williams 1989, 1993; Bourgois 1995.

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