Ghostwriting Research: Positioning the Researcher in the Interview Text

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This article reviews the practice of interview-based research through the metaphor of researcher as ghostwriter. What is suggested is that research can be examined as a form of textual practice in which researchers create images of others and also enter those images. In such a practice, research can be understood as a dialogic process where researchers are never neutral in their attempts to write about the lives of other people. This then leads to a need for researchers to account for their textual choices and their role in producing accounts of the experience of others. The article concludes that the ghostwriter metaphor is a way of understanding research that enables researchers to acknowledge their role in the production of textual representations of their research participants.

> I was working myself to death, while getting no real support whatsoever. The main business was in New Zealand, so Joe only came over every couple of months, just to see how things were going. When he did come over though, he never really wanted to talk business, it was like it was a holiday away from New Zealand for him.
>
> Bob Carey (in Rhodes, 2000b)

The opening paragraph comes from a story told by a person who chose to adopt the pseudonym of Bob Carey. It is excerpted from a longer piece of writing that tells a story of Bob's experience working in Australia for a small publishing company and of his relationship with his manager, Joe (see Rhodes, 2000b). At first glance, it might appear that this is a story told by Bob and is about Bob's experience. In practice, however, this is not the case; despite this piece being written about his experience, I too am deeply implicated in it. My implication is not as a character in the story nor as someone who lived through it, but rather, the production of the text resulted from an interview interaction arranged by me. It was generated as a result of my research interests in people's experiences with organizational change, it was produced (as a written text) by me, and it is included here for you to read because I included it. I am, therefore, in the text, but rather than being explicit, I am hidden; I am like a ghost. My purpose in this article is to discuss the writing practice that

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went into the production of Bob Carey's text—a practice that I call 'ghostwriting.' To pursue this purpose, I will start with an introduction to and an excerpt from the ghostwritten text that I produced in collaboration with Bob Carey.[1] From there, I will describe the methodology and process that went into its writing. Finally, I will review the implications of ghostwriting for interview-based research.

ABOUT BOB

Bob was a professional acquaintance of mine, and I knew him prior to asking him to be involved in my research. As I was planning my research, I thought of Bob and believed that he might have experiences that were relevant to my research interests and that he might want to contribute by being interviewed. I approached him about this and talked to him about my interest in understanding and writing about people's experience with organizational change. He did not have any real experience with the kind of academic work that I was doing, but he seemed genuinely interested and agreed to participate. I asked him to think about his own professional experience and to recall an experience of change or learning at work. I suggested that this should be an experience that was personally meaningful to him. A few days later, I spoke to Bob again and asked him if he had thought about a particular experience that he might like to base the interviews on. His response was that he was not sure about exactly what I wanted from him. I was cautious about being too leading in my interview practice, so I reiterated that the important thing to me was that the story was one that he wanted to tell. The only input I wanted to have in his selecting of a story to tell was that it related to change and work. He told me that he had a few ideas and briefly explained some of them to me. I said to him that any of the stories he was thinking of would be suitable and that he should choose the one that he thought was the most compelling.

In the end, he chose to tell a story about his first job after graduating from university. In summary, this story was about his experience working for a small publishing company. Bob was originally from New Zealand and had moved to Australia to study. As he approached the completion of his degree, the owner of the publishing company, whom Bob had worked for while in high school, asked him to set up an office for the company in Australia. He agreed to do so, and despite his lack of commercial experience, he made the business a success. After the company grew in its first year, Bob's boss, Joe, decided to hire a new person to work with Bob; her name was Susan. The story takes up, below, after Bob had discovered that Joe and Susan were having an affair.

> By then, I knew I had to confront Joe. To start with, I told him about my stress problems, then I asked him if he was having an affair with Susan. He did not

really reply. I told him I was leaving the company but would give him 2 months' notice. He told me to leave in 1 month.

After this was all over and Joe's wife had found out about the affair, she called me and asked me why I had not told her. After that, I lost my friendship with her too. He left his wife for Susan, and she left her husband too. That was about 7 years ago though, and now I'm told that he is back with his original wife, and they've had another baby.

It was late November when I left the company; the job market was quiet, so I went to register on the dole.[2] The lady at the dole office asked me if I had resigned or I had been sacked. You see, if I was sacked, then I could get my dole money quicker. Because he had not accepted my 2-month resignation notice and told me to go after 1 month, I figured this meant that I had been sacked. The dole office person had to confirm this, so as I waited at the counter, she rang up Joe in New Zealand. When she came back to see me, she said 'he certainly does not like you.' She said that he had said that I was pathetic and useless and that he should have sacked me at least a year ago. That was like the last straw, that bastard was still nailing me. But then again, after I left, the business in Sydney folded and his relationship fell apart. It would be interesting to hear his side of this story; maybe he just thinks that I'm a useless bastard who was sacked too late.

The problem through this whole thing was that I was too afraid to question things for fear of looking stupid. Joe seemed to assume that I could get sales naturally and that the business would look after itself. But I was not mature enough. We did well in the 1st year, but in the 2nd year, I could not handle the pressure of the work situation. I really handled it badly. I stopped wanting to work, and I stopped working to capacity. If only I had spoken up earlier, even if it had got me sacked, it would have been better. I had all the responsibility but none of the authority. Peter, who was my counterpart in Melbourne, seemed to handle it though. He was older than me, and although he suffered through a similar situation, he somehow managed. At the end of all this, he even apologized for not giving me more support.

I will never work for a small business or for friends again. In big companies, you can always find space to hide somewhere between the photocopier and the coffee machine. I should have left that place earlier. It really hurt. I was shattered. I felt that I had sold myself to him for 2 years only to get kicked in the mouth in return. I learned that I needed to look after myself.

REFLEXIVITY AND GHOSTWRITING

As Richardson (1992) puts it, "no matter how we stage the text, we—the authors—are doing the staging. As we speak about the people we study, we also speak for them. As we inscribe their lives, we bestow meaning and promulgate values" (p. 131). This view questions the assertion that researchers can create images of others represented in writing and asks us to consider the nature of the position of the writer in constructing research. In this article, I will write from the position that research is a form of textual practice and that researchers are themselves textual practitioners. I will explore how this textual practice is performed through the writing of interview-based research, particularly through a reflection on my own practice as a researcher and a textual practitioner in how Bob Carey's text was produced.

Accepting the constructive role of the researcher in writing about others is an issue of reflexivity. In this sense, reflexivity can be taken as the quality of an account of social activity where the account is both a description and a component part of the practices it refers to. The implication is that the character of the phenomena being investigated is dependent on the "constructive activity of human beings . . . [such that] as we act, and give accounts of our action, we are creating society and ourselves' (Albrow, 1997, p. 47). The notion of reflexivity, then, suggests that texts construct rather than discover the world and that this construction is born out of the textual practice of researchers.

My contention here is that conceptualizing the textual practice of research as a form of ghostwriting can provide useful avenues for understanding the relationship between the researcher and the researched and for accounting for reflexivity. Looking at Bob Carey's story, the text is not the transcript of an interview nor is it something that a research participant wrote independently and allowed me to reproduce. Rather, it is a research text in which I, as the researcher, employed a research practice of ghostwriting. In this sense, *ghostwriting* is used to refer to a practice where a researcher engages with a research participant and, as a result, creates a new text that both tells a story of that participant and implies the involvement of the researcher.

This notion of ghostwriting comes from the literary practice in which a writer authors a text but another person takes credit for its authorship. In such a text, the ghostwriter absents him- or herself as an explicit character in the text. From this perspective, the transcription and interpretation of interviews in research can also be seen as a form of ghostwriting in that it is the researcher who produces the text, yet the text is supposedly a representation of the experiences and ideas of the person interviewed. It is a way of writing for and on behalf of someone else. The issue that this highlights, however, is in terms of what happens to the ghost. As the producer of the written text, the researcher's ghost remains embedded but not manifestly apparent in what is produced, just as I am integral to the textual representation of Bob Carey's story. How, then, might we account for its ghostly practice?[3]

PRESENTATION AND REPRESENTATION

In discussing the ghost of the researcher, it is important to examine the nature of research as a textual representation of other people's lives. In what Lather (1991) calls "post-representational theory" (p. 25), language does not transparently reflect reality, but rather, it is productive and constitutive of reality. In using the notion of representation in research, it is therefore important to problematize the relationship between representation and reality and to examine how texts can be seen both to represent something other than themselves (i.e., the experiences of research participants) as well as presenting themselves as texts.

Representations are about the ways that language is used to convey particular meanings, and to claim to represent suggests that language is standing for something else. Representation in this sense implies a mimesis where one thing (e.g., writing) is a way of presenting another thing (e.g., social life) and where the job of the writer is to imitate reality for the consumption of others. In opposition to this view, representations can also be seen as social constructions that are created by a writer and within which are embedded the theories and models that the writer uses. As such, what claims to be a representation is, in a way, a presentation or a performance of a particular point of view. Such presentations exist not to mirror something else, but, rather, they stage the performance of a text. What this highlights is an indeterminacy between whether, when trying to write about a particular phenomenon, a writer is representing that phenomenon or is presenting and socially constructing something new through their own writing practice.

To highlight these problems of representation, we can refer to Baudrillard's (1983) notion of simulation. What Baudrillard suggests is that in postmodern culture, the relationship between signs and reality has been radically altered. In terms of writing, this implies a questioning of the relationship between representations and what they might represent. Baudrillard achieves this by introducing the concept of simulation. Where representation assumes an equivalence between the sign and the real, simulation is not referential; it creates a model of the real for which there is no origin or reality. This is what Baudrillard calls a *simulacrum*—an image broken with representation and that refers to nothing outside of itself. Baudrillard's simulacra mark the edge of the concept of presentation, an edge where language and culture are an appearance that masks an absence of reality.

Despite its insistence on the erasure of truth and reality, the notion of simulation still needs reality, as a concept, to define itself. In the supposed wake of modernity, Baudrillard's postmodernism can only define itself in terms of the real, even if it achieves this by arguing the negation of that reality. Simulation is achieved conceptually by implicating reality and by theorizing its absence. If we look at the implications of this for research writing, we can see that research, in its own terms, does lay a representational claim: Researchers write about something or someone. The approach that I take in this article sees representation and simulation as being mutually constitutive; representation (as mimesis) is contestable, but it can only be contested on its own terms (i.e., the terms of referentiality). What is left is what will be referred to henceforth as *(re)presentation*. A (re)presentation is both a presentation (i.e., a simulacrum) and a representation (it refers to something outside of itself and is born out of a historical critique of referentiality); the connection between the signifier and the signified may be severed, but its shadow remains. (Re)presentation then enacts an approach to writing that professes a profound agnosticism toward the relationships between writing and reality.

GHOSTWRITING BOB CAREY

Turning back to Bob Carey, we can see that this text itself is a form of (re)presentation that both told Bob's story and had embedded in it a particular way of telling that story and having a particular set of interests thrust upon it by my research practice. The text itself was produced in response to an open-ended interview process that was employed to allow me to make full use of Bob's interpretation of his own experience rather than constraining him with the loaded questions operating in more structured interview processes. This approach to qualitative interviewing aimed at encouraging Bob to recall aspects of his life story relevant to the research project at hand in a way that made sense to him (Tagg, 1985). The interview event followed the generally accepted characteristics of qualitative interviewing in that it used the informal style of conversation and discussion rather than a question-and-answer format: No structured list of questions was used, the interview was based on the discussion of Bob's autobiographical narrative, and all of the information about his experiences was gathered through my interaction with him (Mason, 1996). As we talked, I took written notes, through which I tried to capture the key ideas of the story that was being told. I also transcribed specific words, sentences, and turns of phrase that Bob used. In planning my research, this interview practice was seen as one in which I elicited and co-constructed a story based on Bob's own narrative reconstruction of the events of his past; this is a dialogic process that produces an output informed by the mixed voices of the interviewer and the participant. This assumes that interview participants do not have a fully formed version of their own histories to draw on freely and to call up and recount in a way independent of their subsequent experience, the context of the research, or their relationship with the researcher. There is not a coherent whole of experience from which a slice can be cut and delivered up to the researcher; rather, in the process of an interview, the past is being recreated in the present.

The excerpts that were included in the opening of the article are not parts of a transcript from the interview, but, rather, they were written as part of the ghostwriting practice; they were created when, following the interview, I wrote Bob's story in an 'autobiographical' format. This was achieved by my reviewing my interview notes and writing them as though Bob were writing it as a part of his autobiography. The writing was done in the first person, and the events described in the interview were reorganized to present them as a coherent written narrative. This actual process of writing started immediately after the interview. By that time, I had already decided that I wanted to write the interview in a format similar to that of a conventional short story written from an autobiographical perspective. My choice of this format was not because it was "natural," and indeed, many other ways of writing were open to me. Instead, the reason I chose this format was that it was consistent with the autobiographical way that Bob told his story, yet it was different from the way that interviews are traditionally written in social research. By writing this way, I wanted to draw attention to the "writtenness" of the text by incorporating an infrequently used genre. In selecting such a genre, however, I also wanted to ensure that potential readers could relate to what I was writing. Although I wanted to draw attention to the fact that the interview was written, I did not want the writing practice itself to foreground its textuality to such an extent that an effect would be created where the signifier overshadowed the signified. In this sense, although people do not usually use the conventions of autobiographical story writing to write research interviews, these conventions are used frequently elsewhere and are easily understood by readers.

Knowing the format in which I wanted to write, my next step was to recall the interview and, without referring to my notes, to think through both the structure and content of what Bob had said to me. In doing this, I wanted to try to recreate our conversation in my mind and to focus on those aspects of our conversation that seemed to be more memorable and relevant to the whole story. This was obviously an intervention on my part because it involved me, up front, reducing the complexity of the conversation to a mental framework of how to make sense of and communicate Bob's story. Despite this, I was careful to try to consider the important parts of the story to be those that Bob communicated (and I interpreted) as being important to him rather than just to extract the parts of his story that were convenient to any preset research conclusions that I might want to reach. At this stage, I decided on a general narrative structure through which I would write the story. My conversation with Bob involved his telling the story in a way that skipped back and forth through time as he recounted his experience, frequently remembering other events and referring back to statements he had made earlier. In addition, he often made further comments about specific characters in the story. Although these made sense in developing each character, their temporal spacing was not consistent with the story genre in which I chose to write the interview. As a result of these differences, a key part of my ghostwriting practice was to "re-genre" the story from that of an interview conversation to that of a conventional written narrative that proceeded through time in a linear way.

Next, I read back through my notes to ensure that the overall structure that I had developed from memory was consistent with what I had written down in the interview. From there, I started the actual writing. Based on narrative ordering that I had developed earlier, I went through my notes and started typing out the story. I would skip back and forth through my notes, reordering the flow of the conversation to follow the plot line of the written story. In doing so, I incorporated as many direct quotations and turns of phrase that Bob had used as possible, and I worked to tell the story in a similar tenor to that he had used in the conversation. After going through and rewriting my entire interview notes in this way, I read through the text a number of times, checking and making changes to ensure that the story developed in line with my chosen narrative structure, that the character development occurred in line with the plot of the story, and that the story line effectively built through to a tension between the main characters. Again, despite my intervention, my intent was to retain the characters, themes, plot, and setting from the interview conversation but to reorder them into the format of a written narrative similar to that of an autobiography. This written story, however, was not intended to be a replica of the interview but was designed to create a written narrative congruent in feel and content to the discussion that transpired in the interview.

This text was then returned to Bob for review and feedback; all of his recommended modifications were subsequently incorporated into the text. This process of review and rewriting was iterated three times until Bob accepted the text as an appropriate representation of his story. In general, he was happy with the text and reported that he believed it reflected the story he wanted to tell, although he did make some amendments and clarifications to what I had written. Using this approach aimed to

> produce an agreed upon account of the views of the participants rather than an agreed upon account of the discussion . . . [where] an accurate record of the actual words being originally spoken is of less importance that an effective transformation by the researcher of what was actually said into what the participants want written about what they said. (Tripp, 1983, p. 37)

This cooperative research process was one in which the researcher and the participant jointly constructed a meaningful whole that made sense to both of us and where we both left our mark on both the product and the process of the interview (Gudmundsdottir, 1996). This also addresses Mishler's (1986) critique of standard interviewing procedures where the researcher defines the meaning of the responses and where participants do not have the opportunity to comment or contribute to these interpretations. The purpose of this was not just to get Bob to validate that what I was writing was an accurate portrayal of what he had said in the interviews; it was also a way of allowing us to collaborate in the writing of his story. His approval of the final text, then, does not remove my subjectivity from what was produced but rather enables both of us to be accounted for in the writing. As Denzin (1994) notes, "Representation, of course, is always self-presentation. That is, the Other's presence is directly connected to the writers' self-presence in the text. The Other who is presented in the text is always a version of the researcher's self" (p. 503). Furthermore, what I was attempting to do in writing Bob Carey's story and involving him in that writing was to produce a (re)presentation that incorporated the direct reference to his subjectivity and methodologically accounted for the ghost of my own subjectivity in that (re)presentation.

AGAINST TRANSCRIPTION

In the interview process described above, I purposefully took on the role of a ghostwriter by attempting to develop an account of another person's experience that is sanctioned by that person yet that still acknowledged and incorporated my own writing practice into my methodological position even though I am explicitly absent. This differs from more traditional approaches that offer either transcripts of the actual interview or quotations from such transcriptions peppered through an interpretive reading of them. The danger of using such transcripts is that they obscure the constructions of the researcher by (re)presenting the interview in a way that appears to show a reflection of actual events; they foreground the text as a representation and background it as a presentation and a simulation. The power of the researcher to shape and construct meaning out of interviews is hidden through the sanitized output of the interview transcript. Using routine, precise, and technical approaches to transcription effectively hides the researcher's presence in the text and implies that the research method creates a mirror for reality while being veiled behind the researcher's representational ideology (Scheurich, 1995).

In any interview, the person telling the story is speaking to an audience in a particular social situation where text is inseparable from context and story is inseparable from storytelling (Langellier, 1989). Personal narratives must be seen as situated and context-dependent performance practices that textualize experience (Peterson & Langellier, 1997). Personal narratives are therefore not unproblematic and clear representations of the unique experience of an individual. As described by Langellier (1989), stories are co-narrated through conversation between a storyteller and listener. This is a conversation where although one person takes longer turns, it is still interactive and guided by recipient-researcher responses and the storyteller's contextually guided perception of what the researcher will find interesting and "story worthy." The question that ghostwriting attempts to address, however, is one of how should the interviewer be involved in the performance of the written version of the interview text. In addressing a similar issue, Pelias (1999) has suggested the use of poetic and aesthetic forms to write about everyday performance routines and about stories that help make people's lives meaningful. My approach here is consistent with this in the sense that I am suggesting that written narratives should be used to "perform" a (re)presentation of the interview rather than to pretend to represent it directly, as is the case with interview transcripts. Such a written text is a performance text in that it is a way for research writing to create a narrative model of the truth that both recovers and interrogates (rather than represents) the possible meaning of people's experience (Denzin, 1997).

Transcription is further criticized by Mishler (1986), who sees it as decontextualizing the interview and not accounting for the people, place, and time such that the transcript detaches itself from the uncertain relationship between meaning and language. Furthermore, for Peterson and Langellier (1997), the goal of a full or complete transcription is rooted in an outmoded conception of communication that is based on the agency of the storyteller and his or her ability to reflect an uncontentious description of his or her experience. In ghostwriting, however, the interview is seen as being jointly constructed by the interviewer and the participant, and the questions and responses are framed by the discourse created by the two (Mishler, 1986) and made available through their dialogic interaction and the availability of language(s) with which they communicate. The ghostwriting approach described in this article both recognizes the researcher's role in the co-construction by his or her adoption of the identity of a ghostwriter and deprivileges the researcher's position by excluding him or her from the outward (re)presentation of the narrative. The researcher is both in and out of the text. The process is then one of the "production of a co-authored statement . . . [through] a process of negotiating what the interviewee is satisfied to have written about what was said" (Tripp, 1983, p. 37). In this process, the researcher, although not neutral, does not create a monopoly on the (re)presentation of meaning in the research process by placing him- or herself as interpreter of a neutral interview text. The intended effect is a text that recognizes the dialogic process of its production. The production of ghost-written autobiographies (re)presents the interview in a way that takes advantage of the researcher-participant relationship by constructing a (re)presentation of the participant's experience that is negotiated and coproduced from the interview conversations: a text that is dialogic and contextually embedded. This is a form of research writing that represents a dialogue not just as a record of a conversation between an interviewer and a research participant but also as a dialogue created through the different discursive apparatus to which they each have access (Rhodes, 2000a).

STORYTELLING AND INTERVIEWING

Silverman (1985) states that "only by following misleading correspondence theories of truth could it have ever occurred to researchers to treat interview statements as accurate or distorted reports of reality" (p. 176). If this misleading correspondence theory were to be followed, then we would take the positivist assumption that realities are imperfectly (re)presented by their accounts; therefore, we need to incorporate some type of process to get a truer picture. In opposition to this monologizing effect, the methodological perspective taken through ghostwriting is that interviews are not treated as potentially accurate or distorted reports of reality, but rather, interview accounts are treated as compelling narratives (Silverman, 1993) that reflect a story and a way of telling a story based on the unique network of experiences and contexts of both the researcher and the researched. The interview is not taken to correspond to some external truth but, rather, is a way of creating one of many possible accounts. As Gubrium and Holstein (1998) comment, this approach recognizes that "the collection and analysis of personal stories . . . has become more methodologically self-conscious" (p. 163) and that rather than reporting experience, storytelling is an ongoing composition of experience where personal narration is "reflexively linked to the interplay of discursive actions and the circumstances of storytelling, which in contemporary life are more multisited that ever" (p. 164). In terms of academic research this is exacerbated in that

> the play of narrative composition is further controlled by institutionalized storytelling circumstances or the formal relations between interested parties. A research interview . . . usually forms an environment expressly designed to elicit the respondent's, not the interviewer's, narrative. Interview circumstances, format, and protocol dictate that the interviewer does the asking, while the respondent provides the story. Narrative topics are predesignated, and storylines are at least partially predetermined. (Gubrium & Holstein, 1998, p. 175)

This process of linguistically constructing the events of the past through interviews sees research participants as telling "stories about a certain action or situation, about critical events . . . or about unique or even routine experience" (Hutchinson & Wilson, 1995, p. 307). However, these stories reflect more than just the events in the past of the person being interviewed. The textual products of interviews cannot be divorced from the manner in which they were produced (Hester & Francis, 1994). The interview is the result of an interaction between the researcher and the participant. It is not characterized by the passive interviewer recording the interview participant describing chunks of his or her world; it is an interactive process in which information and interpretation flow between both parties. In this dialogic flow, researchers supply meaning to what they hear, and what they hear is guided by the interview participant's decisions about what he or she thinks the interviewer is interested in hearing (Gudmundsdottir, 1996). The dialogue that emerges is one that sees the researcher as having an unavoidable position in the stories produced from the research interaction. This is not represented as a dialogue between two independent selves in which the words of each are recorded separately; rather, it is a dialogue where a new "I" is created to speak the research text—an "I" that has resulted from a process of conversation and writing.

WHAT TO WRITE?

The discussion in this article has focused on how a ghostwriting metaphor has been used to inform how and what researchers might write about others in the face of reflexivity. As Gubrium and Holstein (1997) suggest, such a "reflexive sensitivity and an awareness of the roles occupied by authority and authorship in the production of knowledge invites us to examine our own claims as well as the claims of those we study" (p. 93). In the spirit of such a reflexive sensitivity, I have tried to problematize my construction of Bob Carey as a research subject and to write a reflexive statement acknowledging and accounting for my position in that writing. I have chosen not, however, to be reflexive about this reflexive statement itself or to delve deeply into how this article is also a way of (re)constructing my own identity as a researcher and a way of (re)defining Bob. The issue with reflexivity that this highlights is the possibility of its endless recursiveness. Should I now write a second reflexive text about my reflexive text? Should I, in turn, write a further reflexive text about that one? And so on. This reminds me of a joke told by Marshall Salhins as recounted by Marcus (1994): "As the Fijian said to the New Ethnographer, 'that's enough talking about you; let's talk about me'" (p. 569). This points to the possibility for reflexivity to be textually manifested in extended statements by researchers about their own positions at the expense of writing about others. If research is, however, to concentrate on writing about others, how then might reflexivity be incorporated?

My contention is that we need to be careful about forms of textual reflexivity that result in egocentric musings, self-promoting confessionals, and "more reflexive than thou" testimonials. My proposal here is that acknowledging ghostwriting and incorporating a methodological explication of the researcher's ghost as a part of reflexivity is a way that this can be explored. Leading from this is the need for researchers to find ways to acknowledge their position in their texts while still not succumbing to endlessly writing about themselves as researchers. Ghostwriting is one possible way to achieve this. It is a possibility for a way of writing about others that acknowledges reflexivity and accounts for authorial privilege without creating a solid differentiation between the textual productions of the researcher and the researched. This can then enable writing to embody the dialogic subjectivity of the "I" who is ostensibly written about and attests to the (re)presentational character of research texts. This suggests that as researchers we need to take care of how we use reflexivity as a pretext for surreptitiously reinforcing a privileged subject position for ourselves and that "we may as well abandon this self centered rhetoric and concentrate on a more practical issue: it seems that we would like to talk to one another, and from time to time have an illusion of understanding what the Other is saying" (Czarniawska, 1998, p. 274). This is not intended to mean, however, that researchers can remove themselves from their research texts but, rather, that we can take responsibility for our reflexive position and still dare to write about others. Research cannot then claim to represent others in an essential way or to understand them independently; instead, as Czarniawska suggests (using Mikhail Bakhtin's term) "empathy is a conceit, and . . . *extopy* [italics added] (the curiosity for Others because they are different) is more than enough" (p. 275).

In the case referred to here, the production of the ghostwritten autobiography of Bob Carey involved Bob's collaborating with and approving of the written accounts of his experience that I had produced as a result of interviewing him. What I have suggested in this article is that it would be naive to assume that his involvement in this writing makes it a unique representation of his experience. More appropriately, the dialogic nature of the production of an account of an interview leaves its trace in the text. As an analogy, it is similar to two police officers "fitting up" a suspect by getting their story "straight" before a trial:[4] Bob and I were not defining a preexisting truth, but rather we were agreeing on an account of it for a specific purpose. The truth of the text is therefore based on consensus rather than universality. I, as the author, do not disappear even through I am not a character explicit in Bob Carey's autobiographical text. My ghost is in this text as a co-conspirator, a writer, and the person to whom it was originally addressed. The author is not apparent in the text, but the ghostwriting leaves an image of the ghost.

The implications of this for research rest in researchers' taking an active responsibility for the reflexivity of their textual practice. By openly adopting the subject position of the ghostwriter, researchers can explore ways to account for the ghosts in their research texts such that the writing of research can move from attempts to represent or persuade to a reflection on the relationship between texts—a position where theory and knowledge are seen to fabricate the social which they once claimed to describe or explain (Fox, 1995). The constructed nature of the text, however, does not suggest that research writers should join in on a free play of textual production in and between different subjectivities. Instead, what is proposed is that research writers need to take responsibility for their textual practice and account for and accept their role in the (re)presentation of others. Research writing, then, has ethical consequences as we see the practice of writing as one where the writer is in a position of social power through being able to produce written (re)presentations. This acknowledges that any text written about others is not a straightforward telling of their story, that the text contains contradictions and elements that are textually suppressed (Cherryholmes, 1993), and that an exposition of the subtext of how the narrative was constructed undermines the agenda of the explicit text (Kilduff, 1993), which asserts that a written story can be a representation of an episode of a person's life.

NOTES

1. This article is intended not so much to be a vehicle for telling Bob's story, but rather it is my attempt to tell my story of how Bob's story was produced. For this reason, only an excerpt from the full text of Bob's story has been included. My intention, then, is to use Bob's story for illustrative purposes so as to enable a methodological discussion

of ghostwriting as a practice of representing interview-based research. To see how I have used this to discuss the research itself, please see Rhodes (2000b).

2. "The dole" is a slang term used in Australia and the United Kingdom to refer to government-paid unemployment benefits.

3. See Rhodes (1996, 1997a, 1997b, 2000b) for examples of experiments in the use of ghostwriting in organizational research.

4. Thanks to Michael Newman for this analogy.

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