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Following Fenno: Learning from Senate Candidates in the Age of Social Media and Party Polarization

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Abstract: Students of American politics are indebted to Richard Fenno's pathbreaking work, *Home Style*, published four decades ago. But, given the book's widespread acclaim, few have taken Fenno's prescription to go back home with members of Congress to heart. In this essay, I echo Fenno's call for scholars to become participant-observers of the political process while offering the modern "soaker and poker" a guide to the pitfalls and opportunities of pursuing such a research project. I respond to Fenno's methodological treatise, written as the appendix to Home Style, focusing in particular on gaining access and how to remain publicly engaged while observing a competitive Senate campaign. I discuss how changes in American political culture create additional wrinkles for participant observation that must be considered, especially if scholars chose to remain engaged in public outreach. I conclude by addressing the need to consider carefully the ethics of engaging the political world we study, particularly in the light of the Stanford-Dartmouth experiment scandal rocking Montana in the weeks preceding the state's 2014 judicial elections. We may not all do participant observation, but we should follow Fenno when considering the implications of interfering in the political world as we study it.

Introduction

Nearly 40 years ago, Richard Fenno published *Home Style*, a seminal volume explaining how members of Congress think about and engage in the process of representation. To accomplish his task, he observed members of Congress as they crafted and communicated their representational styles to the folks back home in their districts. The book, and Fenno's ensuing research agenda, served as a clarion call to move beyond sophisticated quantitative analyses of roll call voting and elite interviews in Washington, D.C. to comprehend congressional

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representation. Instead, Fenno argued, political scientists are better served by going home with members of Congress where "their perceptions of their constituencies are shaped, sharpened, or altered" (Fenno 1978, p. xiii). These perceptions of constituencies fundamentally shape what members of Congress do at home and in Washington. If members of Congress are single-minded seekers of reelection, as we often assume, then political scientists must begin with the constituent relationship essential to winning reelection. Go home, Fenno says, to understand Congress.

There are many ways constituency relationships can be understood and uncovered; the preferred method for Fenno is participant observation, which he variously terms as "soaking and poking" or "just hanging around." Although it sounds easy enough to sit and watch, good participant observation requires many considerations (as Fenno details in a thorough appendix to *Home Style*). In this appendix, and in another series of essays, Fenno grapples forthrightly with the tough choices researchers must consider when watching and learning from politicians.

In this essay, I respond to Fenno's thought-provoking methodological treatise in Home Style and the ensuing collection of musings he published as Watching Politicians: Essays on Participant Observation. I do so for three reasons: First, I wish to reinforce Fenno's call to action. As the study of political science has matured, it has moved away from engaging with politicians in the field across the various sub-fields, favoring statistical analyses. "Everyone cites Fenno, but no one does Fenno," I recently opined, echoing another scholar commenting on Fenno's work (Fenno 2013, p. 2; Parker 2015, p. 246). Unfortunately, that sentiment is supported by data (Grimmer 2013, pp. 13–19; Curry 2017). Although quantitative and formal analyses have led to important insights into the study of political behavior and institutions, politics is as important to our discipline as science. And in politics, the motives and concerns of people are important to witness, not just because they add complexity and richness to our stories, but because they aid in theory generation. Fenno's study was exploratory, but is full of key theoretical insights relevant to explaining how members of Congress understand their constituencies and the ensuing political choices they make.

Second, to "do" participant observation requires understanding the choices the methodology imposes. This necessitates that those who practice this method of discovery document and share their experiences (Lin 2000). The more the prospective participant observer can understand the size of the choice set she

¹ Kathy Cramer's work is emblematic of this. See Cramer (2016) and a recent article calling for a reconsideration and reconceptualization of political knowledge (Cramer and Toff 2017).

faces and the potential consequences at each decision point in advance, the better her odds of avoiding unanticipated consequences with both immediate and long-term research ramifications. I hope that adding my cumulative experiences to this ongoing methodological conversation will assist in minimizing both unexpected and undesirable consequences for those who follow into the field. Fenno is open about his own choices, and the difficult decisions he faced as a participant observer. Encouraging scholars to engage in participant observation is only half the battle. The other half is to encourage interested scholars to think about those same choices and methodological considerations, while acknowledging that context precludes a one-size fits all approach. Fenno's choices may not be your choices – and that might be just fine depending upon your circumstances. Fenno would wholeheartedly agree.

Finally, Congress and American politics have changed considerably from when Fenno embarked on his research in *Home Style*. At the end of his introduction, Fenno writes that "this book is about the early to mid-1970s only. These years were characterized by the steady decline of strong national party attachments and strong local party organizations. ... Had these conditions been different, House members might have behaved differently in their constituencies" (xv). Developments since Fenno put down his pen include political parties polarizing to an almost unprecedented degree, partisan attachments strengthening among voters, and technology emerging to change fundamentally how politicians engage with constituents. In light of this evolution of political culture in Washington and at home, it is worth considering the consequences for the participant-observation research approach. Many have asked me if it is still possible to do such work in the current political environment, and if so, what are the challenges facing political scientists going into the field? This essay provides some answers.

I proceed as follows: First, I briefly discuss my own foray into the world of participant observation, which occurred during the 2012 Senate race in Montana. Second, I consider two important methodological considerations raised by Fenno: access and participation as an observer. Third, I relate these two issues to a final consideration: the development of social media and the consequences of this for the participant observation enterprise. Finally, I show the perils of social science divorced from context, as demonstrated by the recent Stanford-Dartmouth mailer scandal. I conclude with not just a plea for us to pick up where Fenno has left off, but by suggesting that more thinking like a participant observer would benefit the discipline as whole by reminding us of our ethical obligations as researchers to each other, and to the political community that we study.

Battle for the Big Sky: A Convenience Sample of One

Frisch and Kelly (2012) note the importance of serendipity in their experience doing archival research. Serendipity played a considerable role in my participation in and observation of the 2012 Montana Senate race. Although I always imagined writing a book by watching over the shoulders of candidates during a campaign, I did not anticipate that the opportunity would come so early in my professional career.

In the fall of 2007, I accepted a job as an assistant professor at Montana State University in Bozeman. I had begun work on an archival research project looking primarily at how representational relationships – or the lack of such relationships – explained why US senators lose reelection. In a manner, I was soaking and poking about the importance of home styles, but in the past. During my first 2 years in Montana, I quickly met many of the key political players in the state – not hard, given that Montana at the time had fewer than one million residents.

I had also established a blog that received some attention. Like my predecessor in the political science department at Montana State, I quickly became a source of political commentary and analysis on Montana politics for the local press. As my professional reputation spread, national reporters also began to call when Montana politicians or issues reached an audience beyond the Treasure State's borders. Unlike Fenno, I was steeped in the world of practical politics as a real-time commentator. In this role, of course, there was always the possibility – no matter how remote – that my commenting on political events within the state might affect those events (or at the least, the impression folks formed of those events).

In early 2011, rumors began spreading that Congressman Rehberg was going to challenge Montana's freshman Democratic Senator, Jon Tester. Tester presented an inviting target for Republicans in their bid to take the Senate. He had barely beaten incumbent Republican Conrad Burns in 2006, and Montana was a fairly conservative state trending Republican. Rehberg was a quality challenger, having won reelection five times. He also represented the entire state of Montana, which is an at-large district, meaning he served the same geographic constituency in the House as Tester did in the Senate. Rehberg was a well-known commodity among Montanans with a proven track record as a fundraiser. National pundits and political observers immediately classified the seat as a tossup, and early polls indicated that the race was a statistical dead heat.³

² That blog is Big Sky Political Analysis and can be accessed at http://bigskypolitics.blogspot.com.

³ See my discussion in Parker (2015, pp. 5–6).

Beyond the immediate opportunity to write about one of the most competitive Senate races in the cycle was the chance to analyze the representational trajectories and choices of two incumbents serving the same geographic constituency. Both had successfully established distinct representational reputations in the same place. Given the choice between these two styles, which would Montanans chose and why? That question, at its heart, is why I decided to write a book about the Tester-Rehberg race, which is as much about two members of Congress crafting their home styles as it is about the inter-workings and dynamics of a competitive Senate race in the 21st century. In terms of research design, the one major difference from Fenno's studies was the fact I would be witnessing the campaign as it unfolded over the shoulder of both the incumbent (Jon Tester) and the challenger (Denny Rehberg). This would present a distinctive set of challenges.⁴

Social science methodologists emphasize the importance of careful case selection in qualitative and quantitative research.⁵ Fenno watched 18 Congressman over a period of 7 years, and carefully demonstrates how the members of Congress he chose varied on several different dimensions (1978, pp. 253–257). In my instance, case selection strategies were not considered in advance; I had a convenience sample of one. Fortunately, the 2012 Montana Senate race itself is reasonably representative of competitive Senate campaigns and the unique nature of the case - an incumbent House member representing a geographic place on the same representational stage with two senators – presented its own intellectual opportunities (Parker 2015, pp. 8-9). "Refusing to recognize that the research process is also one of discovery and understanding creates studies that are more about the researcher's preoccupations and limitations than about what the world has to teach us," writes Lin (2000) in a methodological appendix to her study of social policy in America's prisons, defending some of the choices she made that deviated from her initial research design. A scholar seeking to make generalizable conclusions about representational styles should carefully consider, all else being equal, case selection and aim for a representative sample. But sometimes you grab the opportunities presented to you, and let the world teach what it may. That is exactly what I did.

⁴ The challenges of viewing a race simultaneously from both sides are considered by Glaser (1996).

⁵ For those who care to rehash the debate about case selection, start with King, Keohane, and Verba (1994) and then review the series of response essays published in the June 1995 issue of *The American Political Science Review*, paying particular attention to Rogowski and Tarrow.

Access: Engagement as an Opportunity?

To learn from politicians, you need access and cooperation. It is not possible to go undercover, as Pachirat (2011) did when he got hired at a meat packing plant in Nebraska to study the politics of violence. The necessity of observing politicians requires a vantage point that is up close and personal. This often means you need to divine who the gatekeepers are and convince them that granting access is in their best interests – or at the very least, will do no harm to them or their principals. Communication with members of Congress since the 1970s has at once become easier and more challenging. Easier in the sense that the Internet makes finding contact information for members of Congress and their gatekeepers a snap anytime, anywhere. More difficult in that the ubiquity of e-mail has inundated congressional offices with letters and requests from interest groups, lobbyists, and constituents – and folks from far beyond a member's district or state. Some members of Congress, in fact, will not read e-mail solicitations received from outside their districts or states. Cold calling, the way that Fenno reached out to his cases, is certainly harder in this age of information overload.

Obtaining access to politicians is not just procedural, but as many qualitative researchers emphasize, requires reflexivity on the part of the researcher because what the researcher observes is a function of the shared context established by interaction and the terms of access granted in the first place (Alversson and Sköldberg 2000, pp. 39–40; Pachirat 2009). This means that the participant observer must think about how her perspective affects not just what **is** seen, but what **can** be seen by virtue of the access granted and how that access is obtained. There is no doubt that sharing a racial, gender, and ethnic background with the candidates aided in getting the access I sought. While qualitative scholars often emphasize one's ascriptive characteristics when considering the notion of reflexivity, it was my position as an academic and my professional background in politics that at once hindered and aided my ability to obtain access to my subjects. It also potentially affected whether I could see; that is, whether I could get access and the terms of that access. This, more than anything else, required careful circumspection.

Let's begin by acknowledging that access to politicians is likely more difficult today than in Fenno's time, considering the ideological polarization emerging between the parties over the past 40 years and the seeds of distrust this has sown (Theriault 2008, 2013). In addition, there's an important partisan and ideological dimension at play here as academics are seen as suspect by Republicans. It is fair to say that many academics in the social sciences and humanities lean

left politically.⁶ At the same time, Republicans are ever less trusting of professors and higher education generally. A study by the Pew Research Center shows a rapidly-sharpening partisan divide concerning the value of higher education to the nation, with 58 percent of Republicans saying that colleges and universities have a negative effect on the direction of the nation as of July 2017 (Fingerhut 2017). As recently as 2010, Democrats and Republicans largely agreed that colleges and universities were positive contributors (at 65 and 58 percent, respectively) (Ibid).

The skepticism of higher education is certainly real in a red state like Montana. Tester's Republican challenger in 2018, State Auditor Matt Rosendale, took to Twitter in October 2017 to denounce the decision of the Dean of Journalism at the University of Montana to rescind the invitation made to a controversial conservative blogger to speak on campus. He accused the Dean of "embrac[ing] the worst trend in academia, which is the shutting down all opposing viewpoints to ivory tower social justice progressivism." Even in a more genteel political era, Fenno was extremely careful not to give any hints of his own partisan leanings throughout his career, refusing to register with a party for fear of compromising his access to members of Congress (Fenno 1978, p. 262). For my research project to succeed, I needed access to both Congressman Rehberg and Senator Tester; I had to figure out how to gain their trust and cooperation. I also had to do so in an environment that has become far more suspect of the academy generally and professors specifically. How did I do it? I built trust through repeated interactions with the candidates and their staffs; in one instance, well before the project was a consideration.

One of the first Montana politicians I met upon moving to the state was (at the time) four-term Congressman Denny Rehberg, who spoke to my Introduction to American Politics class in the fall of 2008. My students loved hearing from Rehberg, and afterwards, we had a candid discussion about government transparency and how House members set up their offices.⁸ He offered his help in understanding representational allowances, and I invited him to come back to my classes as often as he liked. He took me up on my offer, and addressed my

⁶ Does this really matter in terms of teaching and engagement? Most of the time, I think not and the "concern" expressed about professors being political in the classroom seems to me to be grossly exaggerated. In terms of scholarship, social scientists are schooled to be objective research scientists. We go where data lead us.

⁷ Rosendale, Matt (@MattforMontana). October 26, 2017, 1:41 p.m. Tweet.

⁸ Many years later I discovered that Rehberg's staff had sent Brian Barrett to sit in my class a week or two before Denny showed up to get a sense of my teaching style – and I would suspect – whether I was a member of the "liberal academic elite."

students on several other occasions. Each time he visited, we would talk about Washington and his role as Montana's lone Congressman.

Once I made the decision to write the book, I drove to Helena, Montana to see Rehberg announce his candidacy. During the excitement that followed, I grabbed Brian Barrett, who I had met and communicated with over the past few years. Barrett served as Rehberg's communications director for his last House campaign. I explained my intention to write a book about the Senate race, and told him – and subsequently Rehberg and Tester – that I was writing a social science treatment of the election. This was most certainly not a "Kitty Kelley tell all" story about the campaign.⁹

Barrett then pulled in Rehberg's Chief of Staff, Jay Martin. Both said they were willing to pitch the idea to their boss. Over the next few months, I went back and forth with Martin until I finally arranged a conference call with Rehberg's trusted political team, Erik Iverson and Jake Eaton. They, I discovered, were the real gatekeepers with the power to grant access – not Martin or Barrett. Iverson had served as Rehberg's chief of staff for about 5 years, while Eaton started as an intern in Denny's office and served in various capacities on Rehberg's congressional staff and his various reelection campaigns.¹⁰

Iverson and Eaton, during our phone call, confirmed Rehberg's willingness to grant me access because (as they put it), I impressed Rehberg both in the classroom and as a commentator on political events. We established the rules, which were fairly simple. The Congressman would be allowed to go off record when he saw fit (it happened only once or twice), and that our conversations on the record would be embargoed until after the campaign. Finally, Iverson and Eaton agreed to be interviewed during the campaign and after as necessary.

My path to accessing Rehberg was different from the ones Fenno took to reach his congressmen. The fact that Rehberg had gotten to know me and was comfortable with me, no doubt, was important. But I believe two other factors were crucial to his cooperation.

First, I had earned a reputation as a non-partisan, unbiased source for the Montana media and national news outlets who covered Montana politics as detailed above. It is a reputation that I had assiduously cultivated because I enjoyed the work and believed it to be an important public service as a professor

⁹ Kelley wrote several unauthorized biographies known for their salaciousness.

¹⁰ Erik Iverson, interview with the author, January 24, 2013; Jake Eaton, interview, with the author, November 24, 2012.

working at a land grant institution. ¹¹ Serving in that role likely helped gain access. But there's another reason Rehberg was comfortable giving me a ringside seat and, perhaps, felt it easy to be – in my estimation – exceedingly candid in our conversations throughout the campaign. I had a political past at odds with that of most academics in two important respects. I had walked the walk: I had worked in 1996 on a mayoral race, a presidential campaign, and two US Senate campaigns as a paid political professional. And those four candidates were all Republicans from across the party's political spectrum. ¹²

In a world of partisan polarization where Republicans especially are sensitive to the perception that the intelligentsia is liberal, my partisan past certainly had benefits. And, truth be told, I was not shy about this past with Republicans. But it is also fair to say that my past as a "partisan hack" does not define me today as a political scientist. Because of that past that I was interested in politics and it is why I left it behind for a life of scholarship. On this point, I differed from Fenno in terms of my starting point. But I do not disagree with his refusal to participate in partisan politics. I think, on that point, objectivity and access over the long haul demands cessation of political activities.

My partisan past and media "fame" helped gain Rehberg's trust in my estimation. I had to work harder, though, to cultivate the trust of Senator Jon Tester's gatekeepers because of that same partisan past (a past I did not hide from them and which, frankly, any Senate staffer worth their pay could have ferreted out on their own). Add to the mix the fact that I did not have a relationship with Montana's junior senator. I had never met him. In fact, when I first reached out about this project to Tom Lopach, Tester's chief of staff, his response was discouraging. Here's how I characterized the conversation in an e-mail to my wife:

¹¹ I had slipped into the role largely by default. Before moving to Montana, one of my former colleagues at Indiana University South Bend, Elizabeth Bennion, pushed me into helping the local television stations cover politics during the congressional midterm in 2006. Over time, under the tutelage of well-respected local CBS television anchor Mike Collins, I became used to providing live commentary in quick, digestible sound bites. I also discovered that I enjoyed sharing political science's insights with a wider audience. Upon moving to Montana, I just kept going.

¹² Which is illustrative of my essential pragmatism: You take the political jobs you can get. I wonder, given the ideological purity sweeping both parties, if one could do the same as easily today. I suspect those days are long gone.

¹³ The life of a campaign operative was brutal then and has only gotten worse in my estimation.

¹⁴ I last donated to candidates in 2008, when I gave small donations to the presidential campaigns of John McCain and Barack Obama. My partisanship today is a bit more complicated than my past may suggest.

They [Team Tester] are not inclined at the moment to have me follow them around. As he [Lopach] put it, it will be a tough race and he's got to keep Jon focused (they had discussed this eventuality in advance). But, in other ways the conversation was fruitful. He's open to revisiting this again in 6 months, and they are willing to give me everything I might want/ need AFTER the race is over. I told him that the Rehberg folks were inclined to give me access, and said I was likely going to move forward with that and I would let him know what they do grant me as a courtesy [to them].¹⁵

Could I blame Team Tester? Not one bit. Had the shoe been on the other foot, I would not have been eager to give access to someone with a record of partisan activism for the other side, no matter how long ago, in the middle of one of the most competitive Senate races in the cycle. Give access to someone who worked for Republicans? Forget about it.

I decided that persistence, forthrightness, and my good charm would win the day. Given that I analyzed politics for local and statewide news outlets, I began attending Tester's public events as a member of the media. I introduced myself to Tester's staff members, and in each case, explained why I was attending and that I would be writing a book. I got to know Andrea Helling, Tester's DC-based press secretary, and she gave me access to Tester's media events as a member of the press. She also introduced me to the senator for the first time. If I had to do the book from Rehberg's perspective alone, I would, but it was not going to be for a lack of trying.

I credit two "moments" that broke the access logjam with Tester. The first was getting to know Aaron Murphy, then Senator Tester's Communications Director, who eventually moved to the campaign full-time. Aaron called to introduce himself after I had been following Jon and talking to Andrea about the project. It is my belief that Murphy understood, as a communications director and former news director himself, that unequal access to Rehberg put Team Tester at a possible disadvantage. In order to ensure that my political analysis for the press would not be unduly swayed by the time I spent with Rehberg, I think he concluded that Team Tester had to provide similar access. Murphy said he would arrange for me to interview Tester up on his farm in Big Sandy, in north central Montana. I thought that this interview, on Tester's home turf, was not only a golden opportunity for me but also a test I had to pass unequivocally. It would be an opportunity for Tester and his people to get a cut of my jib.

But a month before that interview happened, another moment clearly signaled my good intentions. Tester was home for a series of public forums on

¹⁵ E-mail exchange with Hilary MW Parker, February 7, 2011.

¹⁶ Murphy now serves as Tester's chief of staff.

¹⁷ I invited my wife along for the trip to take photographs as she is much better than I at this.

veterans care and to tour flood damage along the Yellowstone River. Excessive spring rains and a late melt from an above normal snow pack had ripped up the riverbed, exposing and then breaking an oil pipeline laying downriver from a major refinery in Laurel. This breech released more than "63,000 gallons ... into the river before the flow was shut off" (Rogers 2012). Tester wanted to observe the spill for himself and talk to the folks involved in clean-up efforts.

Tester began the day in Helena with an event at Fort Harrison, followed by events in Bozeman and Billings. I literally left Bozeman at five in the morning to make Tester's first event and then drove to each successive event at speeds well above the legal limit to keep pace with the senator and his staff throughout the day. After Tester's final meeting in Billings with Native American veterans, Andrea – with whom I kept in touch at each event – invited me to join Tester as he met, first, with folks coordinating the cleanup efforts and later toured the location of the oil spill. Press attended the briefing, but otherwise, it was closed to the public. This was my first behind the scenes look at Tester. I believe that my diligence in following Tester throughout the day and my behavior at that meeting (which amounted to being unobtrusive) helped secure a final time and date for that first interview in Big Sandy. My repeated interactions with Tester and his staff allowed trust to be built while confirming my expressed motives. As the campaign went on, access became easier and less problematic to obtain, under the same rules I had established with Rehberg.

What access did I ultimately obtain from both campaigns? Generally, both campaigns granted drop in visits with the candidate throughout the election that lasted for at least half a day (and often much longer). These visits included time alone with the candidates, usually in the car as we rode between events. I saw them at rallies (large and small), fundraisers, at meetings with key political allies, press availabilities, town hall meetings, and tours of businesses. I frequently shared meals with each, where our conversations continued. I spent the bulk of 3 days with Jon Tester on the road, supplemented by a lengthy interview in 2011 and another following the election in 2013. I spent election night at Tester's campaign headquarters, with some access to Tester throughout the evening and the following morning, plus greater access to Tester's staff during that 12-hour period in Great Falls. I spent 4 days with Rehberg on the road, one day at Rehberg's campaign headquarters in Missoula, and a few hours at his campaign office in Bozeman. A post-mortem interview also occurred on Congressman Rehberg's last day as a Congressman. I also dropped by several engagements held by the candidates that were open to the public throughout 2011 and 2012. Finally, all the campaign principals from both sides sat down with me for 45–90 minute interviews in Montana and, in two cases, in Washington, D.C. in December and January following the election.

One final point about reflexivity as it related to access concerns the position from which I observed the campaign during my time on the road. In entering a slaughterhouse to understand violence and power dynamics in modern, industrial America, Pachirat (2009) stresses how different his experience would have been had he been invited as a "guest of management" (location 2965). Quite simply, what he witnessed was a function of his being an employee – and even that changed dramatically when Pachirat's position in the slaughterhouse moved from the freezer and kill chutes to quality control (2009, 2011). Where he was and what he did affected his experiences, the power relationships he observed, and generated his key observation that physical space played a vital role in maintaining those relationships. All of this, he reported, would have been restricted had he visited the slaughterhouse as a researcher (2009). Clearly, my views of the Tester and Rehberg campaign would have been quite different had I decided to access the campaign as volunteer (more as a participant than as an observer). Given that my interest was not in the campaign's hierarchy or power relations but in how the candidates crafted and communicated their presentations of self in a shared geographic space, a different access strategy would have been suboptimal for my purposes, even if very different perspectives might have been offered.

The Observer as Participant

My starting point to soaking and poking was quite different from Fenno's. My career choices prior to joining the academy created both opportunities and obstacles he did not face, while my conscious decision to pursue the path of a public intellectual likely helped – rather than hindered – access to my research subjects. In another important respect, I departed from Fenno: I would continue to comment on Montana politics as an analyst while researching my book. I would carefully balance my commitments to Congressman Rehberg and Senator Tester while providing political analysis to the media when requested. If an interviewer's own experiences and ascriptive characteristics can affect responses to questions, the types of questions asked, and the interpretations of answers, then providing commentary about a campaign while studying it has the potential to create contamination effects that would be hard to anticipate.¹⁸

¹⁸ Lin (2000) writes a thoughtful essay about her race, gender, and education and how those ascriptive characteristics may have shaped her inquiries and the responses she received from inmates. Her concluding advice is apt: "When researchers confront their own bias with honesty and matter-of-factness, rather than with fear and denial, they push forth knowledge in the understanding that all knowledge is imperfect" (194).

Of all the choices I made during the process of writing the book, this was the one fraught with the most peril and without an easy answer to a fundamental dilemma the choice created. How could I balance three competing desires: the publication of a book requiring me to keep the confidences I granted to my principal subjects; the provision of media analysis to help the public make sense of — with the wisdom of social science research — the events they witnessed during the campaign; and the minimization of any contamination effects from my observing and commenting on the campaign? This would be no easy trick, and I wrestled constantly with the implications and consequences of my choice.¹⁹

Fenno's own decision, in one sense, was the easy path. He very consciously remained unobtrusively in the background while traveling with his members of Congress – when he participated in events, it was to gain access, trust, and enhance his observational experience. It is clear that observation precedes participation in his calculation, with the "O" capitalized.

Fenno flatly refused to provide media commentary in any of the campaigns he witnessed, and from my scan of historical newspapers, when Fenno did provide media commentary, he did so about Congress or about congressional careers broadly as a researcher who had spent decades researching the institution – and he did it after his research for *Home Styles* and his Senate books had been completed.²⁰ As he himself wrote, "I deliberately keep a low public profile – in the face of countless opportunities to do otherwise" (1978, p. 262).

But Fenno faced the choice to become a more active participant when Senator Dan Quayle was picked from obscurity to be the Republican Vice Presidential nominee in 1988. Fenno had literally, sitting in his desk, a completed manuscript about Quayle's first term in the Senate (1990, p. 5). The public hungered to understand the previously unknown and obscure Quayle; Fenno could feed this desire. Fenno wondered: Should he strive to get his book out before Election Day? Should he grant media interviews about Quayle – especially given the fact that

¹⁹ There is another complication. Fenno notes that he found himself wanting "his" politicians to succeed, to win (1978, p. 277). In the same vein, I felt protective of "my" politicians. I wanted them both to win, even though I knew they both could not. I felt comfortable with Tester and Rehberg, and enjoyed spending time with each. This presented another challenge: how to remain detached as an observer of the race when I spoke with the media without compromising either candidate or my access. The answer was to put on my political science hat: What would I say as a political scientist analyzing **any** race? Beginning there helped put me into the right frame of mind when answering media inquiries, while avoiding any conflict between my competing interests.

²⁰ I simply searched for Fenno's name in Lexis Nexis, Google Newspapers, and ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

the emerging portrait of Quayle varied considerably from his own observations over a 6 year period?

In the end, Fenno remained silent because he feared that doing otherwise would put his work and scholarship at risk. "Our business" he explained, "is to generalize about the political world – to go out and report back – for the benefit of our colleagues who never go there. If we are to be helpful to them, however, they must be willing to accept our descriptions and to invest in our hypotheses, which they will do only if they find our work credible" (1990, p. 17). If participant observers seek too much publicity and spend too much time in the world of journalism or the world of practical politics, our work would be seen as damaged goods by the referees we value the most: our political science colleagues. In this respect, I view the world quite differently, perhaps because of my pre-political science career or the fact that the world today is a much smaller and more interconnected place than even 5 years ago (let alone in 1988).

In Fenno's world, the walls surrounding the ivory tower and the academic study of political science were much higher and harder to breach (from within or without). But, in the years since Fenno wrestled with his Quayle dilemma, those walls have crumbled in the face of the Worldwide Web. Increasingly, political science scholarship is evaluated beyond the ivory tower in the real world of politics. A new generation of scholars aims to break down the artificial barriers hindering not just the rigorous analysis of politics but its dissemination to a wider audience. Blogging and tweeting by political scientists are becoming the norm, and while peer-review publication remains the gold standard for tenure and promotion, this engagement in the wider world brings its own rewards.²¹ The sheer act of communicating political science research to the public through social media imposes a singular clarity of writing and expression that improves the scholarship we produce in those peer-reviewed outlets. I was not content to allow political scientists alone to render judgment on my scholarship; I needed to maintain my media presence.

²¹ The April 2011 issue of *PS: Political Science and Politics* contains a symposium on "pracademics" – or the nexus between academics and political practice. Among essays on consulting and media outreach, it includes essays on participant observation and blogging. Of particular interest is John Sides' article on blogging (2011). It is hard to credit who began this movement into the blogosphere among political scientists, but surely, the development of the *Monkey Cage* blog by John Sides, David Park, and Lee Sigelman were instrumental in pushing the boundaries of scholarship outside peer-reviewed journals whilst simultaneously introducing peer-reviewed scholarship to a wider audience in digestible and tasty bites. *Mischiefs of Faction* (http://mischiefsoffaction.com) is another key site that has aimed to fill a void left by the *Monkey Cage*'s sale to the *Washington Post*.

The choice to remain engaged was also driven, in part, by the realities of practicing political science in a small state. We are a tiny fraternity in Montana. At present, three of us explicitly study American politics. And, during the 2012 campaign, two longtime observers of the political scene, Jim Lopach of the University of Montana and Craig Wilson of Montana State University Billings, could not provide press commentary because of personal conflicts. Montana is a small town with long streets, as the saying goes. Jim Lopach's nephew was Tester's chief of staff, and Craig Wilson's son worked for Denny Rehberg's campaign. I was, in a real sense, among the last political scientists standing that the media could rely upon consistently for commentary.

Remaining active in the media required a careful consideration of how to engage. I feared at the time, first and foremost, that I would slip and violate my confidences with Tester and Rehberg. In hindsight, this was less of a problem than I had initially believed. Given that my project necessitated watching, talking, and learning from Rehberg and Tester throughout the campaign, I already had to section off mentally the things I observed when I spent time with each. In practice, this simply meant continuing to do the same when I talked with reporters. I would report nothing I had seen along the campaign trail to the media and, instead, keep those thoughts and observations to myself – revealing them only when I published the book.

When doing interviews with journalists, I kept my distance professionally by repairing to a set of rules that I had already developed during my years providing on air commentary. I set the goal, in every interview, to give the audience one nugget of political science that would push them to think about the political world a little bit differently. This kept with my pedagogical goals in the classroom – if my students read *The New York Times* or the local paper differently because of what they had learned in my classes, my most important learning objective had been achieved. When I was asked questions about the campaign by reporters throughout the 2012 Senate race, I would always go back to the pearls of wisdom gleaned from the literature on Congress and elections.

The second set of rules followed from the first: I would not pass judgments on statements made by the candidates during the campaign. I would not play the role of a fact checker, either. I would restrict myself to explaining events and the actions of candidates as any political scientist would. This meant I would explain, for example, how candidates frame arguments in campaign ads, what fundraising numbers said about the competitiveness of the campaign, and how

²² Today, they are myself, Rob Saldin at the University of Montana, and Jeremy Johnson at Carroll College.

the candidates used particular themes representing, in part, the brand reputations of their respective parties. And, over time, I decided to be passive rather than active in my commentary. This meant I would respond to media requests as they were made, and eventually, cease blogging.

Why did I refrain from blogging alone? It became clearer to me, over time, that my blogging as a political scientist might cross too far into the realm of participation and could, in a small way, unduly affect perceptions about the campaign. Although I was careful to use events during a campaign to illustrate some political science theory – and very often these blogs by their nature were balanced and gave both sides reason simultaneously to cheer and grumble – as the campaign got more heated and more intense (remaining truly too close to call with public polls all knotted up within the margin of error) – the opportunity to shape the campaign's meta-narrative among the statewide media became altogether too risky from my perspective. Responding to a reporter's inquires was one thing, but pointing out something based upon my own analysis of the data that could alter lines of inquiry moving forward for a multitude of reporters – with unforeseen consequences for Tester or Rehberg – outweighed the benefits of engagement. It might also risk the access for which I had fought so dearly. This was a line in the sand that could not be comfortably crossed.

A third set of rules concerned who I would engage from the media. Just as political polarization has affected the conduct of politics and made politicians more wary, polarization has also affected the world of the media. The traditional world of print, radio, and televised journalism is struggling to compete with arrival of the internet. And as many Americans lament the partisan takeover of cable news, this is occurring at an even more rapid pace online. Organizations on the left and the right are spending considerable sums supporting their own "media" organizations reporting events from a predetermined partisan perspective while parroting partisan talking points. I generally avoided the pitfall of providing my nonpartisan analysis to these organizations more interested in scoring political points than reporting the news objectively.²³ I learned quickly to restrict myself to mainstream (or as Sarah Palin might call them, "lamestream") media organizations that did not espouse a hidden (or overt!) political agenda.

My final concern was screwing up when I spoke to reporters – and not in the sense of revealing confidences, but in saying something that was flat out wrong – and my error causing either campaign heartburn as a result. Twice I had difficult conversations with Erik Iverson and Aaron Murphy because, in one case, my

²³ Two examples include mediamatters.org (from the left) and mediatrackers.org (from the right).

remarks by a reporter were misinterpreted and, in the other case, I cited statistics from memory that were simply wrong to a reporter for the *Wall Street Journal*.²⁴ In both cases, I tried to remedy the error by publishing and circulating blogs.²⁵ In the grand scheme of the campaign's conduct, these were minor mishaps unlikely to have any effect on the campaign's outcome. But, in the short term, they damaged me in the eyes of the campaigns and, I feared, could hinder future access. In both cases, I became far more circumspect in my remarks.²⁶

To Tape or Not to Tape: Senator George Allen and the "Macaca" Moment

In 2006, Virginia Senator George Allen unwittingly introduced Americans to the racially-loaded word "macaca." Allen, running in a competitive race against former Secretary of Navy Jim Webb, attended a campaign rally in the southwestern part of the state (Craig and Shear 2006). Democrats had hired someone to follow Allen around and record his every public utterance – what we now call a tracker – a practice that seems to have emerged in the 2006 campaign cycle. Allen, after taking the microphone, introduced the young man to the Republican audience, "This young fellow over here, with the yellow shirt, macaca, or whatever his name is. He's with my opponent. He's following us around everywhere." That young man was an Indian-American, and the term "macaca" a racial slur. The tracker captured the moment and posted it to the new website, *YouTube*, where the video went viral. That moment was widely heralded by political commentators as wounding critically Allen's election campaign; he went on to lose to Webb by less than 10,000 votes in November.

The "macaca moment" changed the rules of the political game because now anybody with a digital video camera could document a candidate's public utterances and post them for immediate access by anyone, anywhere, anytime. Trackers became ubiquitous features of the campaign landscape in the US, and now the technique has been exported abroad. I witnessed trackers following

²⁴ See Carlton (2012). The incorrect statistics concerned the advertising dollars spent on television support or opposing Tester and Rehberg.

²⁵ See Parker (2011, 2012).

²⁶ I learned to be exceedingly careful when talking to junior reporters, and to never cite statistics while sitting in the car waiting for my daughter to finish her horseback riding lesson—without access to my computer to confirm (or disconfirm) my memory!

²⁷ You can watch the video here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r90z0PMnKwI.

Rehberg and Tester during the campaign, as well as the efforts both campaigns undertook to complicate the lives of trackers looking to capture that atomic bomb of an unscripted moment. In one instance, Rehberg's State Director Randy Vogel – who was always at Rehberg's side and drove him throughout the state – banged a U-turn on a busy street in Helena to shake off the Democratic tracker. Vogel gave me quite a scare, as I was following in a separate rental car and had to think quickly both to keep up with Vogel and to avoid getting hit by oncoming traffic.

The rise of trackers had the potential to change how we approach collecting our data as participant observers. The data of participation observation are the glimpses we get while watching politicians ply their trade and the conversations one has between scheduled events. Like Fenno, I, too treasured time in the car between events as the opportunities to fire off my arsenal of questions - questions I sent to the candidates in advance of our travel. As the conversation ebbed and flowed, I would ask other questions as necessary and, in some cases, questions I had hoped to ask never got asked and questions emerged that I could never have anticipated asking. I had a series of standard questions that I would put to both candidates so I could compare their experiences. This allowed me to demonstrate the different considerations and choices each had made in crafting their representational experiences while sharing the same geographic constituency. Their answers, along with the interviews I had with their staffs and other Montanans, were the raw material I used to knit my narrative about representation and the campaign. The most important decisions I had to make on the fly were which questions were essential given the time and which ones should be asked as the conversation unfolded. The choices became more clear with experience.

Because of the trackers, because of "macaca", I no longer had a choice about whether to use a digital recorder to capture my interviews. Fenno did not because he decided he would lose more authenticity than he would gain in accuracy. Lin (2000) intended to record her interviews with prisoners, but when she entered her first prison, found that she could not bring a recorder through security (182). In a not-so-dissimilar vein, the decision to record my interviews or not had been taken out of my hands by George Allen's remarks and the emergence of campaign trackers. Even though I did go off the record with the candidates (rarely) and more frequently with other interested parties, the implicit assumption became clear: Everything was potentially on the record. Even if I had not recorded my interviews, it would not have mattered, because both campaigns taped every utterance independently. And, following the campaign, every interview I conducted with Tester's Senate and campaign staff was also recorded by

Communications Director Aaron Murphy, who personally sat in on every interview save one.²⁸

Would the remarks made have been more revealing or candid had the tape recorder or, in the case of my Tester staff interviews, Murphy, been absent? There is no way to know for certain except that it was my impression from the beginning that both candidates spoke to me directly and openly.²⁹ Over time, with repeated interactions, they did seem less carefully scripted. During my first sit down with Senator Tester, his distaste for Rehberg could not have been clearer. It shows, in my mind, his willingness to be frank. I began asking about why Tester inserted himself into the contentious issue of land use and wilderness expansion and his answer drifted to Rehberg.

And to be honest with ya? Since this is being recorded? That's what this election is about. This election is about somebody that wants to bring people together to work together. And somebody who thrives on division. And Dennis Rehberg thrives on division. And you can play that clip. Because it's a fact. And it's very distasteful to me personally. Because there's a lot of Republicans out there that I like. Those people don't thrive on division.³⁰

What you cannot read into Tester's remark is his tone and facial expressions, both of which demonstrated utter distain for his opponent. Tester really did not like Rehberg, and it was written all over his body. I took this opening to ask about representational styles and how Tester's differed from Rehberg's and senior Senator Max Baucus'. Tester went to Rehberg first:

"My difference with Rehberg is I am there not for my own personal benefit. My quality of life out here is far better than my quality of life in Washington, DC. No ifs, ands, or buts about that. I go back to do the policy and work with some really good people back there because I want to make the country a better place. If you take a look at Dennis Rehberg's record for the last ten years, you're going to see somebody that has looked at his own self-interest first. Exclusively." 31

Tester did not respect Rehberg one bit in my estimation. And he did not have any problem telling me, even with the recorder on.

²⁸ Rehberg's campaign did not stipulate that a representative join my interviews with his staff. This might be because he lost, but I do not think so. It just was not Rehberg's style. He remained open and comfortable with me throughout the campaign and after. Murphy used the opportunity of sitting in to clarify the rules for various statements and give some background, and I found his presence helpful and not stifling in the slightest.

²⁹ And so did the staffers working for each of the candidates.

³⁰ Jon Tester, interview with author, August 16, 2011.

³¹ Ibid.

In a very different way, Rehberg did not respect Tester, either. In describing his response to Senator Tester's offer to restrict outside spending during the campaign, Rehberg was similarly direct about why his team one-upped Tester by offering to restrict campaign spending to money raised only from individual Montanans – excluding registered lobbyists. His counter-offer also required both candidates to return any money already collected from non-Montana donors or special interest groups. Rehberg explained that "we're not stupid ... We ran the numbers. And by the time he gave all his money back and we gave all our money back, he would have been \$1.5 million in the hole and I would have had about \$100,000 to the good" (Parker 2015, pp. 132–133). Rehberg was quite comfortable telling me that his whole pledge was designed simply to put Tester in a bad spot and force him to look hypocritical on the question of campaign finance. The conversation was completely on the record and signaled to me Rehberg's craftiness as a political tactician and the pride he took in his gamesmanship.

Rehberg, as befitting his pre-Congressional career as a campaign operative for Congressman Ron Marlenee and Senator Conrad Burns, would always delve into tactics and strategy during our conversations. He was a student of politics, and the lessons he learned from running previous campaigns and studying others were always used to justify the decisions his own campaign was making. Rehberg knew that Tester would raise more money and that he would have to husband his resources carefully for the fall – and if he did that – he would win because he and his team were smarter and craftier than Team Tester. During a trip in spring of 2012, the Tester campaign had gone up heavily with a series of positive spots about the Senator. I asked Rehberg about Tester's strategy. Rehberg was not terribly concerned, and he referenced the South Dakota race in 2004, where incumbent Democratic Senator Tom Daschle faced off against John Thune, the state's former at-large congressman:

What Thune did is he saved all of his money 'til the end, didn't go up until August. And then when he went up, he stayed up and he stayed up heavy. But he resisted jumping in early. In that way, you can control your message.³²

He continued, discussing the volume of ads Team Tester had launched and the need for patience concerning his own advertising:

Do you get to see how much-, they've run 3500 gross rating points attacking me on various issues and it didn't move the needle at all. And that's gotta be disheartening to the Tester campaign. He's up with his positive ad and yet I'm beating him on favorable, unfavorable.

³² Denny Rehberg, interview with the author, April 4, 2012.

He's got the money to burn personally. He's got more cash on hand than I do. This is a long way of getting at the answer but what I'm gonna suggest is that I have to make a decision: do I believe the Rasmussen numbers or do I need to go out and do my own brush fire [poll] and find out are those numbers real or not? And if those numbers are real, do I want to waste any money now when nobody's paying attention or do I want to ... keep it until the end of the race because that's when I'll need my money to control my issue rather than having to rely on Crossroads or somebody else to hopefully run the right message 'cause who knows if they're going to or not. So I've got to decide whether I want to save my money and control my message.³³

Clearly, Rehberg engaged himself heavily in the day-to-day management of his own campaign, and that tactics mattered to him. Implicit in his remarks is that he can win the race not only because his views are more reflective of Montana, but also because he and his campaign team are more politically astute than Tester's. If only Rehberg makes the right move with his ads and his resources, he will be the senator in November. In the case of both Tester and Rehberg, participant observation provided a different perspective of the two candidates than one obtained from watching campaign ads or simply observing them at a public meeting. With varied perspectives, a richer portrait of both emerges. Much as Pachirat (2011) saw the slaughterhouse differently in the freezer, kill chutes, and from the catwalk, participant observation helped me see representation in a way most quantitative scholars never do.

The Ethics of Going on the Record: Protecting Sources and Triangulation

As anyone engaged in participant observation knows, an important degree of discretion is required even with on the record conversations. Mindful that trust earned necessitates responsibility, I was careful with what conversations I chose to report in my book and which observations were central to telling the story. I, like others who watch politicians, saw and recorded things candidates and members of their staff might find awkward should they be reported. There was no need to share those things, so I did not – even if told to me on the record with the consent of the person I interviewed. In one instance, at the last minute, I carefully edited out a few sentences of the book that may have been read as an overly negative portrayal of an event and could cause my source some embarrassment. I also

purposely kept some sources on background in the interest of protecting their careers, as they are still actively engaged in the praxis of politics and I wished to retain their perspectives without causing them undo imposition. That said, I want to be clear: I did not witness anything unethical or illegal during my time on the campaign trail. The overriding impulse among the staff and candidates I interviewed was to be honest, frank, and direct.

The desire to be careful with one's subjects and how to portray them accurately while doing no harm is more crucial than ever to maintain access both for myself and for other scholars in the future given the rise of viral, gotcha politics. The stakes today are much higher for candidates and their staffs who are under the harsh glare of the media 24-7-365, even when on vacation or simply puttering around outside doing chores. As long as a camera is available or screen capture a few keystrokes away, candidates are stingier in the trust that they give and more careful in the things they are willing to say or write. This makes discretion on the part of the researcher ever more important to their ability to engage as a participant observer.

One final point is worth considering. How did I know – or does any participant observer know – that what I saw was real? How do we know that we are not simply being played by our subjects? This is particularly problematic when studying political elites because they are perhaps the most prone to "saying things to make oneself look good" (Lin 2000, p. 192). One answer is perhaps we do not, but that is not satisfactory. Much as Lin suggests, I attempted to verify as best I could the statements my subjects made by utilizing other tools in my methodological toolkit (Ibid). If a member of Congress says they are primarily concerned with constituent service, then a review of their press releases should confirm that, for example. Rehberg found himself attacked repeatedly by the Democrats for being a legislative lightweight. I asked him about this, and he suggested that appropriators like himself legislate less because their efforts focus primarily on marking up appropriations bills in committee and the distribution of earmarks. Sure enough, an examination of House Appropriations Committee members and bill sponsorships confirmed Rehberg's claims (Parker 2015, pp. 88–89).

Participant observation also does not mean observing the member alone. It means bringing our powers of observation to bear on other actors around the member, such as their staffs and constituents. If we think of ourselves as critical observers, it helps serve as a check on us becoming captured by the politicians we watch. It reduces measurement error. It also reminds us to find other data to complement our interviews and road trips, submitting those observations to the appropriate rigorous analytical techniques. Ideally, we are neither quals nor quants; we are (or should aspire to be) mixed methodologists as social scientists.

Conclusion: The Lessons of Participant Observation

The "skills" of the participant observer "are neither widely taught nor widely practiced in contemporary studies of congressional politics" Fenno recently wrote (2013). Those seeking to study congressional politics learn the language of statistics and, increasingly, web-scrapping and textual analysis using big data and quantification. These techniques have advanced the discipline dramatically, and in many cases, confirmed what Fenno theorized and observed sitting in cars and attending political rallies throughout the 1970s (Grimmer 2013; Grimmer, Westwood, and Messing 2014). Like quantitative methodologists, it is essential for those who watch, listen, and learn over the shoulders of politicians to not only keep doing so, but to hone collectively those skills that often are learned through trial and error. Like quantitative methodologists with their listservs and data repositories encouraging the transparency and collaboration essential to good scientific discovery, we, too, must share our experiences so that others are encouraged to take the plunge as participant observers while avoiding some of the pitfalls that might hinder future access. These conversations are even more essential in our hyper-polarized and connected world where even the smallest mistake or misstep – either by a candidate or the researcher – is apt to be a shot heard around the inter-webs in less than a millisecond.

But these conversations must happen across disciplinary subfields and the "separate tables" within political science (Almond 1988) because it is not just incumbent upon qualitative researchers to be mindful of how their actions can undermine future access and trust. It is also the responsibility of those who do quantitative work, especially those doing field experiments. A poorly designed survey or field experiment can damage trust and access just as readily as an ill-considered media interview or betrayed confidence. In fact, within days of my book being published, political scientists at Stanford and Dartmouth launched an experiment in Montana studying the effects of injecting partisanship into a non-partisan judicial election (Johnson 2018). This ill-advised project had serious repercussions for social science research beyond Montana, while also threatening future access to the very politicians I studied.³⁴

Many of my colleagues have chimed in on this issue and provided extensive commentary elsewhere.³⁵ What the incident drove home for me was the essential

³⁴ Tester was livid. He called the experiment "voter manipulation" and "he demanded an investigation" (Dennison 2014, cited in Johnson 2018).

³⁵ See Blattman (2014), Bonneau and Kanthak (2014), and Bartlett (2014).

need for greater collaboration and communication among political scientists who do research in the practical world of politics. The researchers at Stanford and Dartmouth seemed to never consider the possible political repercussions of their experiment. This point is echoed by Johnson (2018, p. 618), who castigates them for not considering "concerns about the community" in whether the experiment was ethically appropriate. He further notes that the Institutional Review Board (IRB) process used to screen research projects for potential harm to participants does not expressly consider potentially deleterious impacts to the larger community. The researchers also never contemplated reaching out to the political scientists working in the place they were studying to understand any possible political consequences – let alone actively consider how the experiment itself might undermine those engaged in research on the ground.

Most importantly, however, the event reminds us all to take seriously the notion of contamination effects whether we soak and poke or not. Our scholarship, quantitative, qualitative, or experimental, has the potential to affect the political communities surrounding us. ³⁶ Of course, that is the great irony in this instance. The findings from the Stanford-Dartmouth experiments would likely be used to better inform policy-makers of the effects of non-partisan versus partisan elections in judicial settings and perhaps lead to changes in how judges are selected. That is all to the good. But at the same time, their recklessness hurt the discipline *writ large* among the public and policymakers we hope to engage and inform.

I end with a plea: Political scientists must not be content to wall ourselves off in the ivory tower collecting data and publishing the results in our journals. We need to do more than speak to each other and to be content with the judgment of our peers alone. The advantage of going out into the world and having contact with politicians is not just in the testing of theory or collection of new data. We should follow Fenno and do more soaking and poking because it helps those we seek to understand – politicians and practitioners – appreciate and gain insight on what political scientists do (Curry 2017). It also protects the discipline because as we engage in participant observation, we are forced to think more carefully, willfully, and purposefully about the choices made when studying the political world. It also makes plain the costs of our interventions in that world – as well as the clear benefits. The more political scientists chose to "go home," the more likely we will think not only about the possible contamination effects of our

³⁶ Johnson (2018) urges that in these situations that the "ethics are complex" and that even political science experiments "implor[ing] recipients to vote as a civic duty" can "influence vote tallies" that can affect election outcomes (618).

research in the short term, but the implications of how we engage in the political community for other scholars now and in the future. We are in the business of measuring social effects. Equally important, though, is having the presence and patience to ask first whether we want to be responsible for producing those effects in the first place. This is something all social scientists need to consider, regardless of our preferred methodology.

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