majors in a very different discipline. He suggests that his students spend a day or two in the unfamiliar class taking fieldnotes. Of course, they must check ahead to see what permission they might need to attend the class.

Michael's student Amy Lambert visited a sociology class with her friend Jenna. Amy is a graphic design major who loves art, music, and English. "I guess I am left-brained challenged, which explains my inability to do math and science.... My friends are going for a bachelor of science as opposed to a bachelor of arts." When she attends Jenna's class for the first time, she tries to take double-entry notes. As she records her observations on the left side (which she labels "Record"), she notes her personal reactions on the right-hand ("Respond") side of her notes. She notices doodling, sleeping behaviors, noises from notebooks and backpacks, pencils and pens, zippers and shoes, notes on the board from the previous class, and scientific charts on the wall. As an observer—someone who is not a registered student in this class—Amy becomes highly conscious of the underlife of this class.

Record	Respond
Middle of classroom	Feeling nervous...pensive...is everyone wondering who I am?
Observing seating arrangements...males females equally dispensed. I am sitting near my friend Jenna.	Am I in someone's seat?
Someone mumbles from the back of the room. I see people looking at me.	Stop looking at me!
Some students are taking notes. Someone walks out of the classroom...a male with a 'do-rag.	Where's he going? The bathroom? Water fountain?
There are scientific charts in this room.	It must double as a science room as well.
Teacher speaks, "Police suffer from job-related stress."	I think to myself, "Who doesn't?"

The teacher paces while talking and uses hand gestures.	
Multicultural class—blacks, whites, Hispanics.	
Pages being flipped.	My throat hurts. Obviously, students are not paying attention because pages are being flipped and the teacher isn't referring to the book.
Pen scratching.	
Teacher glances at me.	She's curious about what I am writing. I wonder if she'll ask to see my notes before I leave.
Many guys have shaved heads in this class.	Is that like a "criminal justice" thing?
Teacher brings up topic of "evaluation." "Evaluation of any job is difficult—but especially in bureaucracy."	Does she think I'm evaluating her?
Many people are doodling shapes and geometric figures.	People who doodle geometric figures are more likely to be left-brained, thus, more logical—more logical than me? Probably.
Someone's watch beeps loudly.	Ahh…wakeup call!
Many students carry water bottles.	I'm thirsty. I need a drink. Soda. Yes. Soda.
More questions…no answers.	I know these answers! I want to answer so badly!

There are notes on the board from a previous class.	I think these are for forensics?
I hear people talking down the hallway.	A sign of life!!
Students begin to pack while the teacher is still talking. Zippers zip and people are stretching.	The teacher must be annoyed with the class when they get ready to leave before she is done speaking. She must feel they are not paying attention to her. I'd be pretty mad if I were in her shoes. But I think students do it unconsciously.

Later, Amy freewrites four different times about her visit. Each time, she writes a short paragraph that focuses on a different feature of the class. Here are some excerpts from them:

Freewrite 1. "With heads resting in their hands as a prop to keep them from falling dead asleep right then and there, was one main observation I made. Others just had their arms crossed and looked as if in a daze. Some fiddled with pens—I heard the incessant sound of pens scratching throughout the period. I am tired. I am thirsty. I wouldn't want to die of dehydration. That would be sick."

Freewrite 2. "I remember students doing some intense doodling in class. I glanced at a few people's doodles who were sitting around me and noticed many geometrical figures. I read once that people who draw more geometric figures are more logical than those who doodle freely and organically. 'Organically' would be the art term. I tend to doodle hearts and flowers and squiggles, which I have come to believe represents my artistic personality as well as my free spirit and right-brained mind."

Freewrite 3. "Are you a brown-noser or are you a slacker? Or perhaps you vary between both extremes. While sitting in on a sociology class, I noticed that many of the students seated in the back of the room were out of it. The students in the front row, although half asleep (as were those in the back row), were more attentive....I think it's not only the fact that when you're seated in the front row, the teacher is right there but also because the more adventurous and scholastic students want to be closer, symbolically speaking, to knowledge. If you are sitting straight up with your stomach muscles tightened and a pen in your hand ready to write, you are more alert and ready to learn."

Freewrite 4. "The classroom needed some spunk, some fun charts and posters. I think classrooms need more beauty. They need cute curtains and colorful chalk and bright paint on the walls. I think it would be fun to take notes from colorful chalk. I think even colored blinds if they didn't want to do the curtain thing. That would be very feng-shui."

Organizing Your Fieldnotes

Like Amy, most of us need to train ourselves to become better observers of our surroundings by exercising our vision along with expanding other senses. In her book *A Natural History of the Senses,* Diane Ackerman writes that "seventy percent of the body's sense receptors cluster in the eyes, and it is mainly through seeing the world that we appraise and understand it" (230). Of course, seeing can also be deceptive; we can become overreliant on what we think we see, screening the world through predetermined filters.

Anthropologist Paul Stoller suggests that personal experiences affect what people see and how they think. We experienced this ourselves when we rented a house in Maine together to write this book, and searched for the mailbox that the owner said was attached to the garage. Elizabeth returned empty-handed from her first mail run and reported to Bonnie that the only nearby box read "169." When we complained to the owner, she laughed and said, "Oh, that really means 199. The nine turned upside-down into a six, and we never fixed it." "How very Maine," we both thought, as we reprimanded ourselves for not reading these numbers with the same "gaze" that the postal carrier, the owner, and perhaps all Downeasterners do. Ethnographic fieldworkers teach themselves to see in new ways. They test what they think they see against their preconceptions and assumptions.

As art historian John Berger writes, "We only see what we look at. To look is an act of choice" (8). In your first trip to the field, details might seem so familiar that you do not lift your pencil to record a single thing. You don't record sounds or smells or textures; you passively wait. You're frustrated. You decide to change field sites. You have not yet learned to look. Seeing—establishing a gaze—requires receptivity, patience, and a willingness to penetrate the outer layer of things.

Our student Karen Downing studied a glamour photography business called Photo Phantasies (which you'll read more about later in this book). Karen took seven pages of fieldnotes on what she saw when she gained entry to Photo Phantasies for the first time. Figure 2.3 shows two excerpts from her notes (two visits on the same day). Notice that her fieldnotes come from descriptions of the site and interviews with staff and customers.

Like Karen and Amy, you should develop a personal, systematic way of taking fieldnotes. Your system should allow enough room to record details at the site, but it should also allow space to expand your initial impressions away from

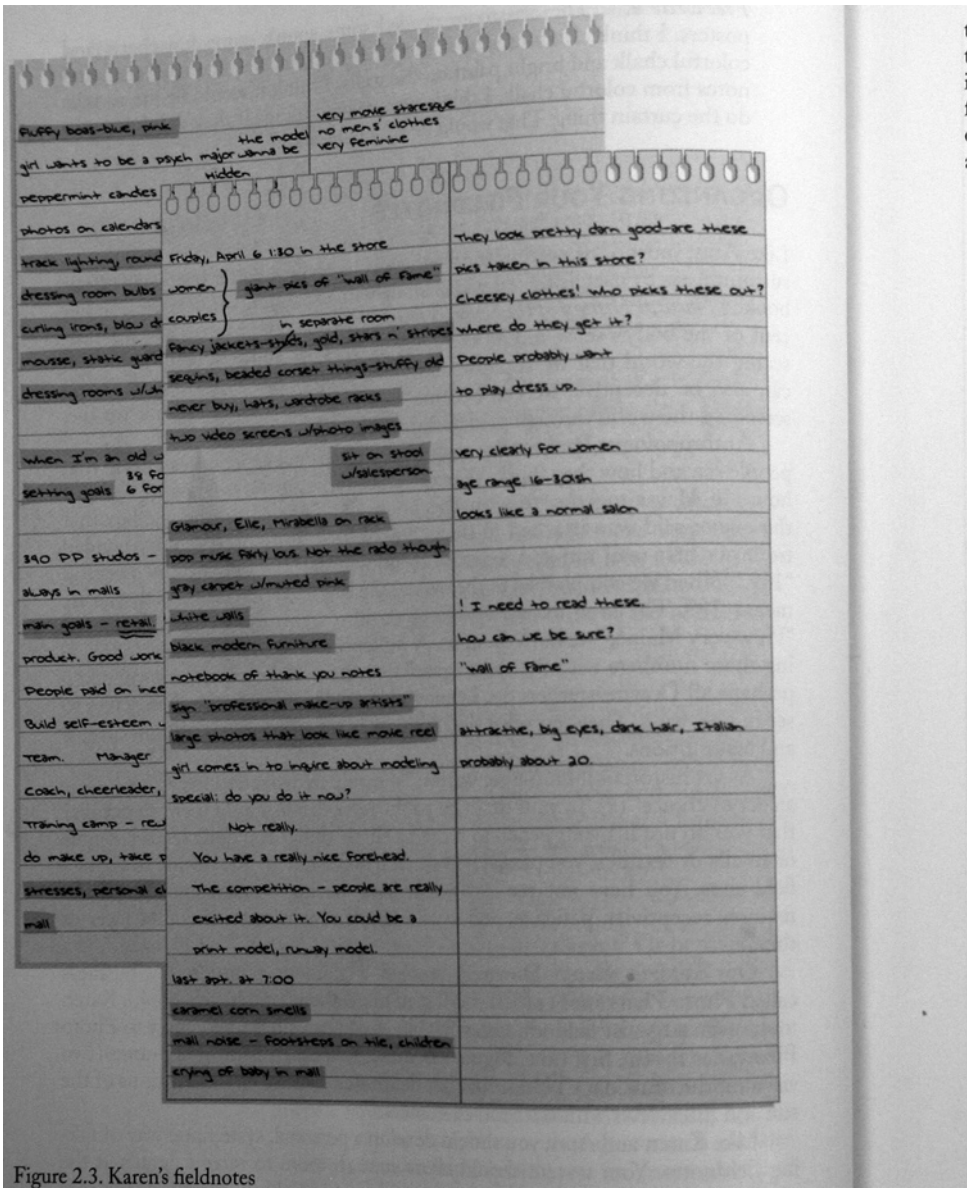

Figure 2.3. Karen's fieldnotes

the site. Fieldnotes are your evidence for confirming theories you make about the observations you record. They are the permanent record of your fieldworking process, and they become part of your research portfolio. Without accurate fieldnotes, you have no project. Although each fieldworker develops his or her own system, any set of fieldnotes needs to include all of the following details in an organized way:

- Date, time, and place of observation ("Friday, April 6, 11:45 in the store")
- Specific facts, numbers, details ("last appointment at 7 p.m.," "3 customers present," "sign: 'professional makeup artist'")
- Sensory impressions: sights, sounds, textures, smells, tastes ("caramel corn smells, footsteps on tile, children crying, pop music playing fairly loud, gray carpet with muted pink, white walls, black modern furniture, notebook of thank-you notes")
- Personal responses to the act of recording fieldnotes and how others watch you as you watch them ("Giant pictures of Phantasy Phaces. They look pretty darn good. Are these pics taken in this store?")
- Specific words, phrases, summaries of conversations, and insider language ("Girl inquires about modeling special. Asks, 'Do you do it now?' Response: 'Not really, but you really have a nice forehead. You could be a runway model.'")
- Questions about people or behaviors at the site for future investigation ("dressing rooms are small—they don't want you there for long")
- Continuous page-numbering system for future reference ("4/4 studio visit, page 5")

Sharing Your Initial Fieldnotes

BOX 7

Purpose

It's a good idea to spend some time at your possible fieldsite making yourself feel at ease there, before you start taking fieldnotes. Once you do begin writing, it's also a good idea to get feedback from one or more colleagues who can help you identify strengths and weaknesses in your initial notes.

Action

Take a set of fieldnotes at a site you are considering or at which you have decided on becoming a **participant-observer**. Note important information like

time, location, date, weather, and your vantage point. You may also draw a sketch or a map of the space, indicating shapes, objects, focal points, and movement patterns. Listen and look at the people there, and record as much information about them as possible. Create a consistent shorthand or code that you understand to develop a notetaking scheme that you will be able to follow throughout your project. Practice ways to differentiate between verifiable information (12 spotted cows) and your own subjective responses to or reflections on the data ("Yuck. It stinks. It reminds me of my great-uncle's outhouse"). Once you have 10 pages of notes or so, review them, and try to write a short summary of the fieldsite using your best details, so that a research partner will understand them. While you may develop a personal code (as Margery Wolf's or Roger Sanjek's fieldnotes show), at this point, your notes should be clear enough to share with someone else. This is your first step toward shaping your work for an audience.

Bring your fieldnotes and your summary to a research partner for sharing. Here are some questions you and your partner should consider as you read and respond to one another's fieldnotes:

1. Are the notes readable? Are the pages numbered and dated?
2. What background material does someone need to understand the history and location of this place?
3. Does the researcher include information about her subjective feelings as she observes?
4. What other details should she include so that another person could see, hear, and become immersed in the daily routines of this place?
5. What details are most interesting? What would you like the researcher to write more about?
6. What other data do you need to confirm some of the researcher's initial observations about this place?

Response

In one of our classes, Simone Henkel read Tara Tisue's fieldnotes on the morale captains at an annual university event, the dance marathon. The dance marathon is a charity fundraiser, held in a large auditorium. Students volunteer to dance for hours; the more hours they dance, the more money they raise. The morale captains, whom Tara observes, are the leaders who keep students' spirits up. After reading Tara's study, Simone responded to the above questions as follows:

1. The notes are neatly printed and numbered and dated. The location of the site is also noted.
2. The background material regarding the history of the dance marathon included where it started, how long it's been happening here at our uni-

versity. Tara might include the details of what happens at various other sites, since every university will shape this event a bit differently depending on the time of year and the students who choose to participate.

3. I am not sure what feelings Tara brings to her site. This is interesting that she excludes her feelings since Tara has been involved prior to this year. Tara might include how she thought the first year she was a morale captain herself.
4. Tara offers a good picture of what the people are doing, the feeling of being there (smells, sounds, sights, etc.). I can picture the auditorium because I know what it looks like. I think a more detailed description would be helpful, specifically, an expanded description of the auditorium.
5. The most interesting description was of all the water bottles, the soaked red T-shirts, the pony tails flying, the scuffing sounds on the floor, and the specific songs they played over the speakers.
6. I think I'd like to hear more about how the morale captains meet regularly, how long before the event itself, and who trained them. It would also be interesting to know what other students think about the dance marathon through a series of interviews. What about students who won't go? I'd also like to know what they think about the event!

Analyzing Your Fieldnotes

Most fieldworkers write their notes while they're in the field, but some find themselves in situations where they can take only minimal notes on site. They must return to their desk to flesh out and expand the scanty notes they took while they were in the field. Bonnie and Elizabeth have both worked in teacher-preparation programs in which students are often required to observe classrooms. In such sites, observers see so much activity and evoke so many emotions and memories that they find it impossible at the time to write it all down. When we do fieldwork in schools, we follow the advice we give our students. Before you go back to your busy life with all its distractions, take some time to sit quietly and write in your notebook. Expand your fieldnotes by reading them, by adding details of conversations, sensory impressions, and contextual information, by noting your observations and reflections, and by jotting down possible questions and hunches. Analysis begins with reviewing your notes.

Just as fieldworkers develop many systems for notetaking, they invent, develop, and devise systems for organizing, coding, and retrieving data. Colored folders, highlighters, stick-on (or "sticky") notes, hanging folder boxes, and three-ring binders can be a researcher's best friends. Computers, too, have organizing features that can help you label and find pieces of your fieldnotes when you need them. Accumulating a solid set of fieldnotes is only one step in the process of creating a fieldwork project. You probably know that taking notes in a