



NOTE ON NAMES

The ethical rule of thumb on ethnographic naming practices is to give pseudonyms to anyone who is not a public figure. The practice requires differentiating between names that are easily substituted and therefore irrelevant to the analysis, names that are already “public” and therefore either impossible to conceal or integral to the analysis, and names that are associated with copyright and must by law be used as markers of ownership of other words. This book, however, complicates this rule immensely. It follows the historical construction of two discursive communities we call publics, and the most important characters in it are men and women who straddle the shifting border between them. Decisions about which names to use or conceal require, therefore, judgments about the specific publics in which each name commonly circulates. Moreover, this text is not isolated, but is already implicated in networks of texts which address their audiences under quite different circumstances than academic publishing. Paraguay’s national newspapers and several activist blogs covered events described in this book, using both the names of the participants and the names of the anthropologist who happened to be standing by. Given this history, pseudonyms would offer only a thin veil of anonymity to many of the key characters in my book.

I have therefore settled on a far more idiosyncratic naming practice. With the permission of my primary informants

in Vaquería, I have not sought to change their identities; anyone who wished to could figure out who they were anyway. I have not changed the names of most of the communities in which I lived and worked, which could also be easily gleaned from available records. I have, however, changed the names of certain places and of people whom I was not able to ask for permission to reveal. I have concealed the names of most of the people I've called new democrats; since I more often treat these people as tokens of a type, I found it much easier to disguise their identities than those of the specific characters I deal with in the campesino movement. I have also been deliberately vague about people whose politics were at odds with those highlighted in this book, but who were nonetheless generous enough to share their time and opinions with me.

The line between what counts as private and public is also difficult to place in relation to state employees and documents. I have avoided naming bureaucrats who agreed to speak to me off the record, and periodically made changes to the narrative or to aspects of their official position so as to make their identities harder to trace. I have changed document numbers for materials to which I was given access but which were not public so as to make them harder to retrieve. In these cases I have also changed the names that appear in the documents. Some of the documents were given to me in photocopied form by activists who treated them as public, and in these cases I followed their example. That is, I have been careful not to leak state documents which I was given permission to view privately in official settings, but I have not tried to conceal those government documents that already being shared among activists.

I spoke at length with several of the people whose real names appear in these pages about the risks that the text might pose. Some had asked me to use their names when speaking to the media, and asked me to do the same in this book. It is not that people saw no difference between newspaper stories and ethnography, nor that they held simply to some romantic notion of “having their voices heard.” Rather, as will become clear, they understood how complex the life of any document can be once it wanders away from its author, but made such documents all the time in the hopes of changing their circumstances, and encouraged me to make my own in that light. The problem of naming is not, in this case or any other, entirely solved by ethnographic convention or “informed consent.” Like all of the other words, the names in this book are also irreducibly political.