

AUTOETHNOGRAPHY, PERSONAL NARRATIVE, REFLEXIVITY

Researcher as Subject

◆ Carolyn Ellis and Arthur P. Bochner

◆ Overview: Extending the Handbook Genre

"Hi, glad it's you," I say, relieved to hear Art's voice on the other end of the line.

"You sound upset. What's the matter?" Art asks.

"Oh, it's been a zoo in the office today—long distance calls, forms to fill out, a barrage of e-mail, one student after another. I'm feeling that end-of-the-semester panic. I'd hoped to finish reading class papers and turn in semester grades, but I haven't gotten to them yet. How's everything at home? Are the dogs okay?"

"They're fine," Art replies quickly, "but I'm not. I started working on our chapter for the *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. The more I think about it, the more frustrated I become."

"I thought you really wanted to do this."

"Well, the first edition of the *Handbook* didn't sufficiently highlight autoethnography and personal narrative. So I initially thought it would be a good opportunity to show how important it is to make the researcher's own experience a topic of investigation in its own right."

"Well, the timing is right now to do that," I respond. "When the first edition was published a lot of academics were trying to figure out how to write their way out of the crisis of representation, but there weren't many examples of au-

AUTHORS' NOTE: Thanks to our graduate students at University of South Florida and to Mitch Allen, Norman Denzin, Rosanna Hertz, Yvonna Lincoln, Laurel Richardson, and William Tierney for commenting on the chapter manuscript. Carolyn Ellis gave a short portion of this article as a keynote address at The International Advances in Qualitative Methods Conference held in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, February 1999, and published it in *Qualitative Health Research* (Vol. 9, no. 5, September 1999, pp. 653-667) as "Heartful Autoethnography."

thors who made themselves and their personal experience a central focus of their research. Over the past 5 years, however, that's changed significantly, what with the beginning of the Ethnographic Alternatives series, Denzin's emphasis on personal writing in *Interpretive Ethnography*, Behar's *The Vulnerable Observer*. . ."

"Granted, there's been a wave of interest in more personal, intimate, and embodied writing," Art assents.

"So what's the problem?"

"I think we've underestimated the constraints imposed by the genre of the handbook chapter as a form of writing," Art continues, apparently deep in thought.

"But you've written many handbook chapters before," I point out. "Why is this different?"

"Because those chapters conformed to the conventions of the handbook genre. They were essays, not stories. But in this piece we want to *show*, not just tell *about* autoethnography. Look at any handbook on your shelf and what you'll find is that most chapters are written in third-person, passive voice. It's as if they're written from nowhere by nobody. The conventions militate against personal and passionate writing. These books are filled with dry, distant, abstract, propositional essays."

"That's called academic writing, darling." When Art doesn't laugh, I continue in a more serious tone, "But some of the authors in the first edition of the *Handbook of Qualitative Research* wrote in first person."

"Yes, but the 'I' usually disappeared after the introduction and then reappeared abruptly in the conclusion," Art replies.

"And the 'I' usually was a 'we,' and an ambiguous 'we' at best, which sometimes referred to the authors as writers of the chapters and sometimes included all of us, whoever we might be," I add.

"And the authors almost never became characters in the stories they wrote . . ."

"They couldn't," I interrupt, now immersed in the conversation, "because their chapters weren't really stories. They included little in the way of dialogue, dramatic tension, or plotline, for that matter."

"But, look, handbooks do provide a service," I continue, fearing that Art will decide not to collaborate on the chapter. "They provide citations and sources, a sense of history, and arguments others can use as justifications for their own work."

"I don't question that they serve an important purpose. Hundreds of students have been inspired to do qualitative research by the first edition of the *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, for example."

"That's true, and we can't criticize handbook writers for failing to do what they're not asked to do."

"But we can ask why authors aren't encouraged to write academic articles in the first person," Art retorts. "Why should we take it for granted that an author's personal feelings and thoughts should be omitted in a handbook chapter? After all, who is the person collecting the evidence, drawing the inferences, and reaching the conclusions? By not insisting on some sort of personal accountability, our academic publications reinforce the third-person, passive voice as the standard, which gives more weight to abstract and categorical knowledge than to the direct testimony of personal narrative and the first-person voice. It doesn't even occur to most authors that writing in the first person is an option. They've been shaped by the prevailing norms of scholarly discourse within which they operate. Once the anonymous essay became the norm, then the personal, autobiographical story became a delinquent form of expression."

Just as I'm beginning to doubt that we can do this project, Art says, "This morning I wrote out some of my concerns in conventional social science prose. Maybe this will give us a place to start. If you have a minute, I'd like to read it to you."

Relieved, I say, "Sure, go ahead." I glance toward the large stack of term papers. They'll have to wait.

Art reads:

Like most social scientists educated in the 1960s and 1970s, I was socialized into the legacy of empiricism. I developed an appetite for generalizable abstractions and unified knowl-

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edge. The first social science handbooks were published when I was in graduate school, and they fed this hunger for received knowledge. My professors pressed the point that scientific knowledge is cumulative and linear, so every once in a while scholars have to step back and assess the state of the field. Ironically, these assessments sometimes were referred to as "state-of-the-art" essays (an art that was supposedly science). That's what a handbook did—it gave an objective, neutral read on the evidence. The authors were the experts, but they wrote as if they were anonymous. Because it wasn't important who gathered the evidence or who judged and weighed it, handbook writers followed the conventions of using a passive voice that erases subjectivity and personal accountability.

After I earned my Ph.D., I became increasingly circumspect about the possibilities and limitations of the human sciences. In the mid-1970s, one of my colleagues, who was teaching a graduate seminar on "the rhetoric of science," suggested that I study the growing literature on "the crisis of confidence" in social science. I began by reading Kuhn (1962), who showed that the building-block model of science lacked foundations; then Rorty (1982), Toulmin (1969), and other philosophers who illustrated how the "facts" scientists see are inextricably connected to the vocabulary they use to express or represent them; Lyotard (1984) debunked the belief in a unified totality of knowledge, questioning whether master narratives were either possible or desirable; poststructuralist and deconstructionist writers, such as Barthes (1977), Derrida (1978, 1981), and Foucault (1970), effectively obliterated the modernist conception of the author, altering how we understand the connections among author, text, and readers; under the influence of Bakhtin (1981), the interpretive space available to the reader was broadened, encouraging multiple perspectives, unsettled meanings, plural voices, and local and illegitimate knowledges that transgress against the claims of a unitary body of theory; feminist critical theorists such as Clough (1994), Harding (1991), Hartsock

(1983), and Smith (1990, 1992) promoted the unique and marginalized standpoints and particularities of women; and standpoint boundary-crossing textualists such as Trinh (1989, 1992), Anzaldúa (1987), and Behar (1993, 1996) opened our eyes and ears to the necessity of exposing how the complex contingencies of race, class, sexuality, disability, and ethnicity are woven into the fabric of concrete, personal lived experiences, championing the cause of reflexive, experimental, autobiographical, and vulnerable texts.

In the wake of these developments, I doubt whether a handbook chapter can help guide the work of those who have turned toward autoethnography and personal narrative if it holds to the voice and authority of a form of writing that this work seeks to transgress. How helpful would it be to list references, define terms, abstract from and critique exemplars, formulate criteria for evaluation, or theorize the perspective of the "I," so readers can make our knowledge theirs? No, we need a form that will allow readers to feel the moral dilemmas, think with our story instead of about it, join actively in the decision points that define an autoethnographic project, and consider how their own lives can be made a story worth telling.

When Art stops reading, I say, "Well, that's clever. Although you started with the 'I,' you quickly fell into using the handbook genre to argue against writing in the handbook genre." I can't stop laughing. "Reminds me of how so many of our texts argue in postmodern abstract jargon for greater accessibility and experimental forms."

"See how powerful the conventions are?" Art agrees, now chuckling as well. Then he adds more seriously, "Let's just write to Norman and Yvonna and bow out. Think of the time we could spend on the beach instead. Get some immediate gratification for a change."

"It's tempting, especially given how we've been feeling lately that our life is too dominated by our work—but no way. Not after I've already agonized over writing the section on 'what is autoethnography?' You know how I resist doing this kind of writing. At the same time, I know it's important," I reply, as I hear a knock at my door.

"I don't think I'll be satisfied, nor will you, unless we find a way to transgress the conventions. What if we were to create a story that would work within the handbook genre but also outside it, showing what we do as we tell about it? That could be fun," Art suggests playfully.

"How delightfully paradoxical," I add in a mischievous tone. "But we'd have to be careful not to give the impression that we're being oppositional and advocating that everyone should write the way we do," I warn, expressing something we hear often and try hard to dispel. Then I get back into the irony of Art's idea. "Won't our critics love it—you know, the ones who already accuse us of being irreverent, self-absorbed, sentimental, and romantic?"

Before Art can answer, I tell him I have to go. "Someone's at the door. Bye—Come in," I say in one breath, in response to the third knock.

♦ *Introduction to Autoethnography*

A woman in her mid-40s opens the door and hesitates in the entryway. A large-brimmed, floppy straw hat covered with purple bangles hides her face. A matching scarf hangs loosely around her neck. "Professor Ellis?" I nod. "My name is Sylvia Smith. I'm a Ph.D. student in the Psychology Department. I'm planning to do my dissertation on breast cancer, and your name was given to me as a social scientist interested in research on illness. I'd like you to be on my dissertation committee. Three members of my committee are from the Psychology Department and the fourth is a research oncologist."

"Hold it," I say, my hands extended in front of me to slow down her monologue. "Back up. Have a seat and let's talk about your project."

Sylvia removes her scarf and hat with a sweeping crisscross motion of both hands and continues speaking as rapidly as before. "I want to interview breast cancer survivors to understand how they're adjusting after cancer. I hope to combine qualitative and quantitative ap-

proaches. Send out a survey and then interview . . . oh, maybe 30 women and include African Americans and lesbians, older and young women, professional and working-class women. That way I can generalize . . ."

"How'd you get interested in this topic?" I interrupt.

"Well, uh," she says, now slowing down and looking at me quizzically, "I've had breast cancer." Then, going back to her rapid-fire, assertive style, "But I won't let that bias my research. You can count on that."

"Of course you will," I say, and she immediately assumes a downcast, defeated posture, before I add, "as you should."

"What do you mean?" she asks, looking straight at me with penetrating eyes. "I thought I had to keep my personal experience out of my research. If I want my study to be valid, I can't mention to my participants that I've had cancer, can I?"

"Hold that question," I say again, and move my chair closer to hers. "Would you be willing to tell me a little about your breast cancer first? It'll help me understand more about your academic interest in the topic. Are you okay talking about your own experience?"

"Of course," she responds, "but I didn't think anybody at the university would be interested in my personal experience." She breathes deeply and slowly begins her story about the lump she discovered 7 years before, her mastectomy, and follow-up chemotherapy. Then, "And it's had a big impact on my family, especially my relationship with my daughter, and how I see myself . . .," she says, her voice trailing off.

"How has it impacted your relationship with your daughter?" I ask quietly.

"She has to worry about getting cancer as well now. You know, the genetic link, and we seem to have trouble talking openly about the risks and about our feelings."

Sylvia continues to talk about her daughter, and after a while, I ask, "And your self-image?"

"I could write a book about that," she says, shaking her head back and forth. "You know, I'm a therapist. I thought I could deal with it all. But it's hard to feel like a whole person. I don't mean because I lost a breast. Good riddance, I say to

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that. They were always too big anyway. I had breast reduction on the other one when I had reconstruction. It's just . . . well . . . my life has changed so drastically, except the day-to-day, well actually that's not all that different . . ."

She becomes animated as she tells her story. Sensing that she is comfortable and desires to keep going, I continue asking questions. Her story inspires thoughts about myself. How would I feel if I had a breast removed? As she talks, I glance at her small breasts, then casually glide my hands across my own large ones. I can't imagine their not being there. Wouldn't I feel incomplete, desexualized? Did she really feel "good riddance" or is that a cover?

" . . . And the hair," I hear her say through my thoughts. "Just look at my fuzz. It never really grew back like before. Shaving it was the most difficult yet exhilarating thing I've ever done." The thin, inch-long brown and gray strands don't move as she casually tosses her head from side to side. My fingers reach for my fine-textured, shoulder-length brown hair—I'd feel naked without it. I even resist pulling my hair back from my face. I wonder why she cuts hers so short now, as if she's drawing attention to having had cancer. But what about the hat and scarf? Does she use them in case she wants to "pass"? I wonder.

Sylvia and I are about the same age. This could happen to me. No, it couldn't. I get an annual mammogram.

" . . . I'd had a mammogram just a few months before I found the lump," her voice intrudes into my thoughts.

But I do self-examinations every month, I argue back from inside my head.

"I found it during my monthly self-exam," she continues, shaking the false predictability of my world. I listen intently, understanding that Sylvia has a lot to teach me.

"Anyway, I'm interested in other women's experience," she says, adding hesitantly, "you know, how it compares to mine. That's not something I've admitted before, the personal part, I mean."

I nod. What do I do now? I don't want to wean another student off the science model and deal with a science-oriented committee. And

I'm wary of getting involved in another study that simplifies, categorizes, slices and dices the illness process. But Sylvia is a therapist and forthcoming about her feelings and what happened to her. Maybe her study could explore the feelings associated with breast cancer and be useful for other women. The pain on Sylvia's face, in spite of the casualness of her words, also makes me think that this study might be a useful exploration for her. And I know it could be a valuable experience for me as well. But what am I getting into?

"Do you have any idea what I do?" I ask.

"Just that you study illness and do qualitative work. Nobody does qualitative research in my department. But I've taken a qualitative course in education and I think I could get my committee to accept grounded theory for my dissertation research."

"I don't use grounded theory much anymore," I say. "Most of what I do is autoethnography."

"What's that?" she asks, writing the word autoethnography on her notepad as she looks at me.

"I start with my personal life. I pay attention to my physical feelings, thoughts, and emotions. I use what I call systematic sociological introspection and emotional recall to try to understand an experience I've lived through. Then I write my experience as a story. By exploring a particular life, I hope to understand a way of life, as Reed-Danahay says."

"Who?" she asks, pen poised in the air.

"Reed-Danahay, an anthropologist who wrote a book on autoethnography."

"How do I get a copy?"

"Don't worry about that yet. There's plenty of time to read *about* autoethnography. I want you to *experience* autoethnography first."

I ignore Sylvia's confused look, as I dig through my file cabinet. "So if I understand you correctly, the goal is to use your life experience to generalize to a larger group or culture," Sylvia speaks to my back.

"Yes, but that's not all. The goal is also to enter and document the moment-to-moment, concrete details of a life. That's an important way of knowing as well."

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"So, you just write about your life? That doesn't sound too difficult," Sylvia says casually.

I turn around, stare at her for a moment, as though I'll get a sign as to whether I should promote autoethnography to Sylvia. When no sign is forthcoming, I say, "Oh, it's amazingly difficult. It's certainly not something that most people can do well. Most social scientists don't write well enough to carry it off. Or they're not sufficiently introspective about their feelings or motives, or the contradictions they experience. Ironically, many aren't observant enough of the world around them. The self-questioning autoethnography demands is extremely difficult. So is confronting things about yourself that are less than flattering. Believe me, honest autoethnographic exploration generates a lot of fears and doubts—and emotional pain. Just when you think you can't stand the pain anymore, well, that's when the real work has only begun. Then there's the vulnerability of revealing yourself, not being able to take back what you've written or having any control over how readers interpret it. It's hard not to feel your life is being critiqued as well as your work. It can be humiliating. And the ethical issues," I warn, "just wait until you're writing about family members and loved ones who are part of your story."

Sylvia holds on to her chair, her eyes wide. I smile and let out the breath I've been holding. "I'm sorry. I get really passionate about all this," I say more gently. "Of course, there are rewards too—for example, you come to understand yourself in deeper ways. And with understanding yourself comes understanding others. Autoethnography provides an avenue for doing something meaningful for yourself and the world..."

"Ah, here they are," I interrupt myself as I pull two stapled papers from my autoethnography file. "The one on top is 'Survivors,' a paper I wrote about my brother's death. The other one's a chapter from Butler and Rosenblum's book *Cancer in Two Voices*, a co-constructed narrative about a woman with breast cancer and her lesbian lover who takes care of her."

"Co-constructed?"

"We'll talk about that later. For now, just see how you respond to these stories. I think that af-

ter you've read them, what I've been saying will be clearer. If you're still interested then, leave me a note and I'll mail you some other materials."

"One more thing," I add, pointing to the syllabi on my desk. "I'll want to meet often and you'll have to read the assignments from my classes on 'illness narratives' and 'communicating emotion.' Also, I want you to meet with Armin Bochner, my coauthor, who teaches courses on narrative and, by the way, also happens to be my husband." Her down-turned mouth changes to a smile for a brief moment, until I add, "These are minimum requirements if I'm going to be on your committee."

"Oh, my. I don't know if I'll have time, given my program," she says. "I still have to take 'Tests and Measurement' and 'Advanced Experimental Research Design.' I hope to finish my course work during this coming fall, and then take my prelims in early spring and finish my proposal by the beginning of next summer."

I shrug my shoulders as I stand and open the door. My exuberance, the warnings, all the requirements—any of these could scare her off. Oh, well, better if it happens now than later. Suspecting this will be the last I see of her, I'm glad I've given her an easy way out. Sylvia winds her scarf around her neck, throws her hat along with the papers I've given her into her large open bag, says good-bye, and quickly scurries from view.

Two days later, I arrive at school and find a faxed message from Sylvia.

Dear Professor Ellis:

This is some of the most powerful writing I've ever read. I identified with your grief over losing your brother so suddenly. You reminded me of how I felt when I found out I had cancer. So did Butler and Rosenblum. I recall experiencing that kind of turmoil, confusion, and meaninglessness. This work violates everything I've been taught about social science research, but I'm fascinated and want to know more. Will you mail some materials to help clarify the origins and practices of autoethnography? Maybe some kind of a literature review would suffice. While you're at it, do you mind including a few more autoethnographies?

I smile and pull out articles from my autoethnography file. Jago, Kiesinger, Kolker,

Ronai, Tillman—it—and a section I have just written. Denzin and Lincoln's *Handbook of Qualitative Research* read the draft. Autoethnograph

♦ What Is Autoethnography?

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Ronai, Tillmann-Healy—that ought to do it—and a section on defining autoethnography I have just written as part of a chapter for Denzin and Lincoln's second edition of the *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. I pause to read the draft, which is titled "What Is Autoethnography?"

◆ What Is Autoethnography?

Autoethnography is an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural. Back and forth autoethnographers gaze, first through an ethnographic wide-angle lens, focusing outward on social and cultural aspects of their personal experience; then, they look inward, exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, reflect, and resist cultural interpretations (see Deck, 1990; Neumann, 1996; Reed-Danahay, 1997). As they zoom backward and forward, inward and outward, distinctions between the personal and cultural become blurred, sometimes beyond distinct recognition. Usually written in first-person voice, autoethnographic texts appear in a variety of forms—short stories, poetry, fiction, novels, photographic essays, personal essays, journals, fragmented and layered writing, and social science prose. In these texts, concrete action, dialogue, emotion, embodiment, spirituality, and self-consciousness are featured, appearing as relational and institutional stories affected by history, social structure, and culture, which themselves are dialectically revealed through action, feeling, thought, and language.

The term autoethnography has been in circulation for at least two decades. Although anthropologist Karl Heider referred in 1975 to the Dani's own account of what people do as autoethnography, David Hayano (1979) usually is credited as the originator of the term. Hayano limited the term to cultural-level studies by anthropologists of their "own people," in which

the researcher is a full insider by virtue of being "native," acquiring an intimate familiarity with the group, or achieving full membership in the group being studied (p. 100).

Like many terms used by social scientists, the meanings and applications of autoethnography have evolved in a manner that makes precise definition and application difficult. It seems appropriate now to include under the broad rubric of autoethnography those studies that have been referred to by other similarly situated terms, such as personal narratives (Personal Narratives Group, 1989), narratives of the self (Richardson, 1994b), personal experience narratives (Denzin, 1989), self-stories (Denzin, 1989), first-person accounts (Ellis, 1998a), personal essays (Krieger, 1991), ethnographic short stories (Ellis, 1995d), writing-stories (Richardson, 1997); complete-member research (Adler & Adler, 1987), auto-observation (Adler & Adler, 1994), opportunistic research (Riemer, 1977), personal ethnography (Crawford, 1996), literary tales (Van Maanen, 1988), lived experience (Van Maanen, 1990), critical autoethnography (Church, 1995), self-ethnography (Van Maanen, 1995), radical empiricism (Jackson, 1989), socioautobiography (Zola, 1982), auto-pathography (Hawkins, 1993), evocative narratives (Bochner, Ellis, & Tillmann-Healy, 1997), personal writing (DeVault, 1997), reflexive ethnography (Ellis & Bochner, 1996a), confessional tales (Van Maanen, 1988), ethnographic memoir (Tedlock, 1991), ethnobiography (Lejeune, 1989), autobiology (Payne, 1996), collaborative autoethnography (Goldman, 1993), ethnographic autobiography (Brandes, 1982), emotionalism (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997), experiential texts (Denzin, 1997), narrative ethnography (Abu-Lughod, 1993), autobiographical ethnography (Reed-Danahay, 1997), ethnographic poetics (Marcus & Fischer, 1986), native ethnography (Ohnuki-Tierney, 1984), indigenous ethnography (Gonzalez & Krizek, 1994), and ethnic autoethnography (Reed-Danahay, 1997). Nevertheless, social scientists often discuss autoethnography as a subtype of some other forms, such as impressionistic accounts (Van Maanen, 1988), narrative ethnography (Tedlock, 1991), interpretive biography (Denzin, 1989), new or experimental ethnography (Ellis & Bochner, 1996b), sociopoetics (Ellis

& Bochner, 1996a), or postmodern ethnography (Tyler, 1986).

Various methodological strategies have been developed in connection with autoethnographic projects, although they may be applied to other forms of qualitative research as well. These include systematic sociological introspection (Ellis, 1991b), biographical method (Denzin, 1989), personal experience methods (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994), feminist methods (Reinharz, 1992), experiential analysis (Reinharz, 1979), narrative inquiry (Bochner, 1994), consciousness-raising methods (Hollway, 1989), co-constructed narrative (Bochner & Ellis, 1992), and interactive interviewing (Ellis, Kiesinger, & Tillmann-Healy, 1997). In some disciplines, terms endemic to a particular field have evolved, such as in sociology, personal sociology (Higgins & Johnson, 1988), autobiographical sociology (Friedman, 1990), sociological autobiography (Merton, 1972/1988), private sociology (Shostak, 1996), and emotional sociology (Ellis, 1991a); in anthropology, anthropological autobiography (Brandes, 1982), native anthropology (Narayan, 1993), indigenous anthropology (Tedlock, 1991), autoanthropology (Strathern, 1987), self-conscious anthropology (Cohen, 1992), anthropology of the self (Kondo, 1990), anthropology at home (Jackson, 1987), anthropological poetics (Brady, 1991), and autoethnology (Lejeune, 1989); and in communication, rhetorical autoethnography (French, 1998), performance autobiography (Miller & Taylor, 1997), and autoethnographic performance (Park-Fuller, 1998). Increasingly, however, autoethnography has become the term of choice in describing studies and procedures that connect the personal to the cultural, frequently appearing in titles of books, theses, sections of books, articles, special issues of journals, and book series (for example, Clough, 1997; Deck, 1990; Ellis, 1997, 1998a; Ellis & Bochner, 1996a; Gravel, 1997; Herndon, 1993; Lionnet, 1989; Pratt, 1994; Reed-Danahay, 1997; Trotter, 1992).

Autoethnographers vary in their emphasis on the research process (graphy), on culture (ethnos), and on self (auto) (see Reed-Danahay, 1997, p. 2). Different exemplars of autoethnography fall at different places along the contin-

uum of each of these three axes. Researchers disagree on the boundaries of each category and on the precise definitions of the types of autoethnography. Indeed, many writers move back and forth among terms and meanings even in the same articles. Recognizing this limitation, I will mention, for heuristic purposes, a few widely used expressions that provide a sense of the range of approaches associated with autoethnography.

Although reflexive ethnographies primarily focus on a culture or subculture, authors use their own experiences in the culture reflexively to bend back on self and look more deeply at self-other interactions. In native ethnographies, researchers who are natives of cultures that have been marginalized or exoticized by others write about and interpret their own cultures for others. In texts by "complete-member researchers," researchers explore groups of which they already are members or in which, during the research process, they have become full members with complete identification and acceptance. In personal narratives, social scientists take on the dual identities of academic and personal selves to tell autobiographical stories about some aspect of their experience in daily life. In literary autoethnographies, an author's primary identification is as an autobiographical writer rather than a social scientist, and the text focuses as much on examining a self autobiographically as on interpreting a culture for a nonnative audience (see Deck, 1990).

In reflexive ethnographies, the researcher's personal experience becomes important primarily in how it illuminates the culture under study. Reflexive ethnographies range along a continuum from starting research from one's own experience to ethnographies where the researcher's experience is actually studied along with other participants, to confessional tales where the researcher's experiences of doing the study become the focus of investigation.

Feminism has contributed significantly to legitimating the autobiographical voice associated with reflexive ethnography (for example, Behar, 1996; Behar & Gordon, 1995; Krieger, 1991, 1996; Personal Narratives Group, 1989; Richardson, 1997). Many feminist writers have advo-

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