

Prologue Introduction

*E*xpressions of Ethnography is an edited collection of essays that demonstrate the creative potential for novel forms of expression to speak of cultural experiences. Ethnography has a rich history replete with both political and aesthetic undertones. In Part one, chapter 1 of this book, I provide an overview of ethnography, which takes to task the colonial underpinnings of ethnographic practices. I also develop an overview of the changing story of ethnography. Ethnography has metamorphosed over the years so that varying strains of ethnography have developed. These different perspectives may vary with respect to the guiding theory, the style of engagement, or the way the ethnographer expresses the cultural practices under study.

Part two or *Ethnographic Perspectives* offers the reader an overview of several different ethnographic perspectives from individual contributors. In chapter 2, Pamela Chapman Sanger provides a review of feminist ethnography that puts past criticism of feminist ethnographic contributions to rest, once and for all. Feminist ethnographers have given us not only new theoretical insights, but also new methods as well as new forms of representation. In chapter 3, Jim Thomas expertly describes critical theory as a guiding theory for ethnographers. H. L. Goodall, Jr., discusses a new interpretive ethnography, in chapter 4. This new approach derives from interpretive ethnography and draws on more current perspectives such as postmodernism. Bryan C. Taylor, questions the blurring of theoretical positions and argues that a more reflective and careful look at the theoretical distinctions between postmodern and other perspectives is needed. Taylor provides an overview of the guiding principles of postmodernism before offering the voices of 9–11, in chapter 5. Maria Cristina González provides an eloquent discussion of the de-colonial ways of knowing culture, in chapter 6. Through the four seasons of ethnography, an alternative approach to engaging and representing culture, González challenges traditional, colonialized forms of

ethnography and offers alternative ways of being an ethnographer. Finally, in chapter 7, I write of the beauty and logic involved in ethnography. I ask ethnographers to consider taking an aesthetic approach—“a rigorous and creative manner, a vulnerable, sensitive, dynamic and pulsating engagement with cultural ways of being in the world” in hopes that “poignant portrayals and mesmerizing images of cultural practices” might touch all our lives.

Part three, *Dialogue and Interview as Expressions of Ethnography* focuses on dialogue. Traditional ethnographies relied in large part on interviewing individuals. The vibrant meaning of the term, interview, has faded over the years. It has been relegated to mean a systematic and formulated way of asking questions of another person. Yet, “inter,” which means with each other, together, between, or mutual, and “view,” which means to look and consider, deserve further attention. Marifran Mattson and Christina W. Stage breathe new life into an old term, while William K. Rawlins provides not only new terminology, but also new ways of engaging and expressing the inter-view as dialogue. Elaine B. Jenks brings dialogue and inter-viewing to new heights with her story. After I read it, I thought to myself, “I would like to meet her.” Then I realized that I already have met Elaine, perhaps not in-person, which relied on my old bias of “seeing” her, but rather I have met her through this phenomenal chapter.

Part four, *Personal Narrative as an Expression of Ethnography*, highlights the personal narrative in bas relief from the traditional ethnography. In short the authors provide chapters that espouse rigorous ethnographic principles and practices while telling their own stories within a framework of “others’” stories. Bob Krizek sets the stage for understanding the personal narrative as both a means and expression of ethnography. This approach demands that the personal narrative move beyond the individual and develop connections with the culture. Paage K. Turner does just that in her moving story of birth, continuing her award-winning research on midwifery. Sarah J. Tracy relies on traditional methods of observation and interviewing. Based on her award-winning work, Tracey’s personal narrative as a researcher is woven within the chapter.

Part five, *Short Stories as Expressions of Ethnography*, demonstrates how the short story can act as a means of expressing cultural phenomenon. These chapters are less concerned with showing the rigors of their practice or linking the narrative to cultural background and more concerned with creating an image that speaks of struggle, of people, of relationships, of love, of loss, of tragedy, and of hope. Lisa M. Tilmann-Healy, Christina E. Kiesinger, and Patricia Geist-Martin each offer compelling stories. Following Tolstoy’s dictate these authors infect others, stir emotion and sometimes, as in the chapter by Julie M. Crandall and Mary Helen Brown, simply offer us a cultural “moment in time” which allows us to reflect on who we are as cultural beings.

Part six, *Novels as Expressions of Ethnography*, suggests that our cultural selves can be portrayed rather expressively through the genre of the novel. Fred-

erick C. Corey and Catherine Becker, each, provide the reader with excerpts from their in-progress novels. Each one draws the reader into unique cultural circumstances, yet in this chapter the two novelists weave their different “places” in the world into a compelling chapter about ethnography.

Part seven, *Artifacts as Expressions of Ethnography*, tells us that it is not only the place, but also the artifacts found in those places that create cultural experiences as well as express it. In chapters 20 and 21, Dean Scheibel and Amardo Rodriguez, respectively, write about the expressiveness of artifacts. Each tells of how artifacts create a reality beyond any surface interpretation. They each offer rich and compelling interpretations of graffiti as cultural expression.

Part eight, *Genealogy and Post-colonial Identities as Expressions of Ethnography*, brings together four authors who each work in the area of genealogy and cultural construction of identity. Jason E. Combs sets the stage by offering theoretical insights that give way to the conclusion that the study and practice of genealogy lends itself to the expression of identity and culture. Nick Trujillo uses his genealogical research to tell the story of his grandmother’s ethnicity. In telling Naunny’s story, he is in part telling his own story of cultural identity. Devika Chawla uses family history to guide her own reflexive study of personal identity in a postcolonial era. The short story is without a doubt a wonderful portrayal of how so many people find themselves walking in two worlds as a result of colonial influences. Finally, in chapter 25, I tell the story of my trip to the Qualla Boundary (a.k.a. the Cherokee Reservation). The trip was part of a larger ethnographic project to write a novel—*Echoes of Silence*—about my great-great-great-grandmother’s life. She was a Cherokee woman who lived through what is often called the “Trail of Tears.” My own story speaks of cultural identity and hints at the diaspora produced by colonization.

In the end, an epilogue is offered to address future possibilities for the study of culture through ethnography. As it becomes more apparent that cultures are not static and that colonization (past and present) has caused cultures to collide, we need to be exploring new avenues in the expression of ethnography.