

## INTRODUCTION: AUTOETHNOGRAPHY, PERSONAL NARRATIVE AND REFLEXIVE WRITING AS A METHOD OF INQUIRY<sup>1</sup>

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The special issue of *Human Affairs* on *Autoethnography, personal narrative, and reflexive writing as a method of ethnographic inquiry* aims to introduce some of the contemporary methodological perspectives on ethnographic essayistic and writing as a specific postmodern genre and method (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). The articles are based on examples of various approaches to ethnographic writing as alternatives to the realist (Van Maanen, 2011) or report-writing styles (Anderson, 2001) that still predominate in the humanities and social sciences. They explore evocative versus analytic (Anderson, 2006) autoethnographic approaches to research and writing; personal reflections and impressionist narratives (Van Maanen, 2011) of challenging fieldwork experience; and reflexive collaborative writing experience as postmodern genres and methods and are applied to critically approach, theorize, and delve into various inspirational topics.

In “Revealing ethnographic mediations through reflexive writing: A collaborative exploration of tarot and astrology as a not-knowing approach”, *Adam Wiesner* and *Mónica Cornejo-Valle* examine the ethnographic process by experimenting with two communication devices they have used in their fieldwork: tarot readings and evolutionary astrology. For the purposes of developing a collaborative experience of reflexive writing, the authors openly reflect on their different backgrounds and together interpret their ethnographic experience as a process of uncovering the unknown while also revealing the way in which the not-knowing approach (Anderson, 1997) strengthens the collaborative aspect of writing.

“‘We are fed up... being research objects!’ Negotiating identities and solidarities in militant ethnography” by *Magdalena Sztandara* probes the rethinking of feminist ethnography, its methodological limitations and challenges, and “the practical and ethical dilemmas of research and knowledge production” (Speed, 2006, p. 71). Sztandara proposes

<sup>1</sup> The special issue on *Autoethnography, Personal Narrative and Reflexive Writing* was supported by the research grant *Reflexive Writing as a Method of Ethnographic Inquiry* (VEGA No. 2/0088/19).

that Jeffrey Juris' concept of "militant ethnography" offers a way of moving beyond the divide between research practice and engaged participation while problematizing the positionalities and solidarities that emerged as a result of her long-term fieldwork on women's disobedience, disloyalty, and dissension in the public space in selected (post-) Yugoslav cities.

Soňa G. Lutherová's contribution "'Do not use the word anthropology!': On the struggle of artistic and scientific selves in anthropological film-making" is not just an ethnographic reflection of scientific and artistic practices in anthropological documentary film-making, but is also an engagingly written personal insight into the role of a mother. Reflecting on the dividing aspects and defined borders of scientific versus artistic work in the complex field of anthropological film-making, enmeshed in the richness of everyday life, Lutherová brings to the fore a focus on the stories of the self, the process of change and reinvention, and the integrity of one's blurred identities.

In "A provocative dissonance: Evocative academic writing", Joshua Bernard Baum describes his first steps into autoethnography when exploring the strengths of evocative writing through research on childhood sexual abuse. The article brings important insights into the debate on the division of the evocative versus analytic approach in autoethnography. Although the author reveals his affinity for the realist tradition (Van Maanen, 2011), using the metaphor of soundtrack dissonance he aptly explains how embracing the qualities of evocative autoethnography increases the sensory experience, expands understanding, and creates a more complete relationship with the reader.

The powerful impressionist narrative "The closer we are, the harder it gets" written by Monika Vrzgulová revisits twenty years of collaborative oral history with her partner in research, a female holocaust survivor, Mrs. H, who also happened to be her friend. Apart from reflecting on selected events and situations, the paper touches on the sensitive topic of loss and grief in a field that—despite being an inescapable part of human life—is rarely discussed as part of the research experience. In a way, then, the paper is an attempt to sift through materials and memories that trigger painful emotions related to losing a partner in research and a dear friend.

The important topic of building strong bonds in research is further explored by Petra Ponocná in "Friendships in the field: Methodological recommendations for autoethnographic context". In her contribution to Leon Anderson's concept of analytic autoethnography (Anderson, 2006), Ponocná comments on the connections she formed with her main research partners during her fieldwork in Mexico City. Apart from using autoethnography and reflexive writing to analyse the theme of friendship, the article also addresses the perception of death as an inextricably linked aspect of Mexican culture.

The benefits and challenges of Leon Anderson's analytic approach are also examined in "Autoethnography in the study of football fan culture: Theoretical and methodological reflections by way of football rivalry research" by Seweryn Dmowski and Piotr Załęski. The authors' critical perspective focuses on the conceptualisation of a research project on football rivalry and the role autoethnography played in the process. Partly constructed as a scholarly discussion between a junior and a more experienced academic, the study presents their differing viewpoints on the utility of autoethnography as a method applied in the specific context of their research.

Aneta Wysocka closes the article section with “The autobiographical ‘self’ in Ryszard Kapuściński’s empathetic journalism”. Weaving together numerous fields of study in her essay—including stylistics, poetics, cognitive linguistics, journalism, and history—Wysocka looks for signs of Kapuściński’s “self” hidden in the Polish journalist’s reportage works, as well as in the manner in which narrative identity is perceived, using the peculiarity of reportage as a genre.

Our issue concludes with a book essay written by Tereza Zvolská that informs our work in writing personal narratives and autoethnography from feminist perspective.

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