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This is the author's manuscript

Original Citation:

Availability:

This version is available http://hdl.handle.net/2318/1679712 since 2018-10-30T15:33:56Z

Published version:

DOI:10.1423/91084

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12 October 2024

“Good ethnography is autoethnographic, and good autoethnography is ethnographic”: A dialogue with Carolyn Ellis

Luigi Gariglio[1] and Carolyn Ellis[2]

> *Ethnographic I*. I love the playfulness. “What is the role of the ‘I’ in ethnography?” you might ask. Is the ‘I’ only about the eye of the researcher, the researcher standing apart and looking? What about the ‘I’ of the researcher, the part that not only looks but is looked back at, that not only acts but is acted back upon by those in her focus. Is ethnography only about the other? Isn’t ethnography also relational, about the other and the ‘I’ of the researcher in interaction? […] What can be gained from making the ‘I’ a part, or even a focus, of ethnographic research?
> Carolyn Ellis 2004, IXX

The origins of autoethnography date back to the 1970s (Adams, Holman Jones, and Ellis 2015); however, only twenty years later a more coherent body of work has developed and attracted attention. Carolyn Ellis has been a liminal scholar in autoethnography since the 1990s and she has contributed strongly to the institutionalization and international recognition of autoethnography within the social sciences and the humanities. She has put lived emotion at the center of her research and writing throughout her entire career[3].

Carolyn grew up in the mountains in a small town in Virginia and did well in school. Although her parents had only elementary school educations, they supported her in pursuing her passion for higher education. She first went to the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia, then she worked for a year as a social worker. She received her M.A. and Ph.D in sociology at Stony Brook University on Long Island in New York. Her dissertation was an ethnography about isolated fishing communities (Ellis 1986) in which she adopted a reflexive stance. Despite enjoying statistics and quantitative approaches to social science, she was more interested in qualitative research, particularly symbolic interactionism. She was mesmerized by Erving Goffman, and his *Presentation of Self* (1959), *Behavior in Public Places* (1963a), *Interaction Ritual* (1967), and *Stigma* (1963b). She also

[1] University of Turin, Department Culture, Politics and Society.
[2] University of South Florida, Department of Communication.
[3] She started and chaired the ‘sociology of emotion’ section of the American Sociological Association (with Candace Clark).

appreciated engaging ethnographies, such as *Tally's Corner* (Liebow 1967) and *Street-Corner Society* (Whyte 1943).

In 1985, she began to write about the death of her brother and also about the illness and death of her romantic partner. This work initiated current-day autoethnography and was developed alongside the books and articles of scholars on similar paths, such as her partner and co-author Art Bochner, as well as Norman Denzin, H. L. "Bud" Goodall, Jr., Ron Pelias, and Laurel Richardson. Her contributions in autoethnography have grown from that time. As of date, she has published seven monographs, six edited books, and more than 150 articles, chapters, and review essays. She has edited two book series and presented keynote addresses and workshops in sixteen countries. She is the author of such classic autoethnographic books as *Final Negotiations: A Story of Love and Loss, and Chronic Illness* (Ellis 1995, a revised and extended edition currently in production), and *The Ethnographic I*: *A Methodological Novel about Autoethnography* (Ellis 2004). *The Ethnographic I* is possibly the most read book of autoethnography literature;[4] it is very instructive, imaginative and beautifully written. She also is one of the editors of the *Handbook of Autoethnograph*y (with Stacy Holman Jones and Tony E. Adams) now published by Routledge, and of *Autoethnography* (with Adams and Holman Jones) published by Oxford University Press in the 'Understanding Qualitative Research' series. Her most recent book is *Evocative Autoethnography: Writing Lives and Telling Stories* (with Arthur Bochner).

Carolyn has an open and inclusive approach to research, ethnography, and autoethnography in particular. While some scholars suggest a continued use of the "classic" analytic-evocative distinction proposed by Leon Anderson (2006) in a special issue of the *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* as a heuristic device to understand the field of autoethnography (see also Inkler 2017, pp.4-5), Carolyn prefers to focus on the usefulness of stories and "story as theory" rather than categories and types. Carolyn also demonstrates interest in autoethnographic approaches from a variety of perspectives, such as critical, queer, global, and exo-autoethnography. As well, she shows

[4] Google Scholar shows 3034 citations (January, 25th 2018)

an unusual ability to respond to critics humorously, yet cogently, as the following quote shows brilliantly.

> *Sir Social Science* Rants: Autoethnography isn't sufficiently realist or scientific; it's too aesthetic and literary. Your data aren't real data. Your approach is not rigorous. […] The literature review? The hypotheses? Science shouldn't be literary, aesthetic, emotional, or therapeutic. Autoethnography isn't legitimate social science. […].
> *Madam Post-Structuralist* Rants: Autoethnography is too realist and linear. You autoethnographers are naïve realists who think you can reveal the secret self. The self is an illusion; it's unknowable. […] Be more critical! […].
> *Ms. Aesthetic* Rants: Autoethnography isn't sufficiently aesthetic […] and it is too concerned with being science[…]
> Ellis 2009, pp. 371-372.

Nowadays, Carolyn's sociological imagination and passion are as strong as ever. Yet, as she describes interesting projects for the future, including revisions of her best-known autoethnographic works, a new book on *Compassionate Interviewing* (see Ellis 2017)—which she states is more ethnographic than autoethnographic—as well as other collaborative research projects, she suggests, "I want to move more into the background and give space to younger scholars who are now expanding and taking farther the kinds of things that Art [Bochner] and I have done. That feels right to me at this point."

During her career, Carolyn has generously given of her time and energy to students, and she has been interested in working with collaborators and reaching wider audience outside academia – writing for "real people" – rather than only for those usually influenced by academic publications. In order to accomplish these goals, she has interacted and worked with videographers, artists, musicians, and photographers. Notwithstanding her modesty, she has also made two outstanding documentaries about Holocaust survivors: "Behind The Wall" (which is online[5]) and "Groaning from the Soul." She has presented both of these films in several film festivals, at conferences and universities, and at the Florida Holocaust Museum[6].

Luigi Gariglio: First of all I'd really like to thank you for this opportunity to interview you and to work with you on this conversation by exchanging e-mails back and forth several times. I am delighted to talk to you. I'd like to ask you about autoethnography (Adams, Holmes Jones, and Ellis

[5] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w9es0TQkj8s (15/1/2018).

[6] The core themes of the paper were triggered in a Skype conversation between the authors (5/10/2017). The writing was conducted cooperatively via e-mail. Luigi thanks Carolyn for her hard work and generous cooperation and Carolyn thanks Luigi for asking insightful questions and shepherding this project through to completion.

2015; Ellis, Adams and Bochner 2011), the approach that is now beginning to be institutionalized around the world (Gariglio 2017). But just a few words about me first. I have been working as an adjunct professor in visual methods (Gariglio 2010, 2016a) and sociology of communication for quite some years and I have also been working and teaching in the field of photography and documentary. I got a Ph.D in Sociology in the University of Milan and during the last fifteen years I have become more interested in doing academic ethnography. In the last few years, I have studied prison violence ethnographically (Gariglio 2016b, 2018b); I am now working as a research associate at Turin University, doing ethnographic work on involuntary treatment and admission and on mechanical restraint in psychiatric acute yard settings. I am project manager of a multidisciplinary team composed of sociologists, psychiatrists, and Law scholars, and headed by the sociologist Mario Cardano. I appreciate your work for several reasons; above all, because you have contributed to blurring distinctions between humanities and social science in new ways.

Carolyn Ellis: Thank you.

LG: Being a sociologist as well as a photographer (Gariglio 2007, 2008) I always felt I had to do research more properly, meaning "more scientific". That's why, when I found out about the autoethnographic approach I was inclined to follow analytic autoethnography (Anderson 2006, 2011) despites its detractors (e.g. Denzin 2006).

CE: I understand. I really appreciate everything you have just said. In 2003 and 2004, Art Bochner and I were invited to Finland.[7] There we worked with scholars in the creative arts. Before this we had

[7] Multicultural Art Education, University of Art and Design, Department of Art Education, Helsinki, Finland; University of Jyvaskyla Research Centre for Contemporary Culture, Jyvaskyla, Finland. (Guests of Inkeri Sava and Marjatta Saarnivaara)

Ellis, C. and Bochner, A. (2004) "What's the Point? Crossing Boundaries and Keeping the Conversation Going," In *In the Landscapes of Art and Research: Festschrift in the Honour of Marjatta Saarnivaara*. Publication of The Research Centre for Contemporary Culture, Jyvaskyla, Finland, pp. 111-124.

Bochner, A. and Ellis, C. (2004) "Our Writing Lives: An Introduction to Writing and Research—Personal Views," In *Writing and Research—Personal Views*, edited by Marjatta Saarnivaara, Erkki Vainikkala and Marjon van Delft. *Publications of the Research Centre for Contemporary Culture*, University of Jyvaskyla, Jyvaskyla, Finland, pp. 7-19.

Bochner, A. and Ellis, C. (2003) "Art as Inquiry: Continuing the Conversation," In Kohtaamisia taiteen ja tutkimuksen maastoissa [Encountering Art and Inquiry], Edited by Varto, J. [Juha], Saarnivaara, M. [Marjatta] & Tervahattu,H. [Heikki]. Hamina, Finland: Akatiimi, pp. 150-159.

encouraged social scientists to do more artistic, humanistic work. But this trip helped us to realize for the first time the tremendous potential of what we were doing for those in the creative arts who wanted to be able to do "scholarly work".

LG: I see.

CE: Our approach resonated with art and music educators. They were able to use autoethnography to speak from their hearts and from their artistic talent as opposed to twisting themselves into pretzels in order to do more traditional social science work. I am really glad that you see the cross-over between creative arts and autoethnography.

LG: Yes, exactly.

CE: That's why your interest in autoethnography is so intriguing to me.

LG: Before we continue, would you introduce yourself for readers? Talk about your personal trajectory, and what led you to what you have been doing over your academic career. In particular, I am interested in why you decided to develop another research approach, rather than use documentary, photography, journalism, or simply ethnography.

CE: My degrees are all in sociology as is your Ph. D. I am an ethnographer at heart and everything I do is from the perspective of an ethnographer. I think I was an ethnographer at birth. Even as a child, I enjoyed observing everything that went on around me and thinking about what people were doing and saying. What am I thinking? What are my feelings? I was curious to figure out what was going on for others and for me. And so I am kind of a natural ethnographer in that way.

LG: Can you tell us something about your childhood? Your youth and your family? What music and literature you liked? What films or artists affected you?

CE: Interesting questions. I grew up in the mountains of Virginia outside a small town of three thousand people. I had a lot of freedom as a child and spent most of the time when I was not in school playing sports in the neighbourhood. The only films I saw growing up were the ones showed on our local screen, which usually were Westerns, though I did go to see *The Sound of Music* and *Gone with*

the Wind in Washington DC. They were amazing and opened my eyes to how narrow my cultured world was in my small, southern town.

We had one local radio station that played mostly country music. I used to hide under the covers at night to listen on my transistor radio to the one station I could get from New York City. If I'm not mistaken, I listened to Cousin Brucie playing rock and roll. (I still listen to him on Sirius Radio on Saturday nights.) I used to dream of traveling to New York and experiencing all there was to experience. I remember getting my first record player and my first record was "Peggy Sue" by Buddy Holly, released in 1957. We would play that record over and over and I still remember all the lyrics.

I also remember begging for and getting a tape recorder—a small reel to reel one—that unfortunately never worked, though it cost my parents $100, a fortune in those days. I wanted so badly to record voices and thought it would be amazing to hear my own voice as well as the voices of others and our conversations. So perhaps I already was a budding interviewer then—and autoethnographer!

I always loved learning, and I did well in school. My father was a contractor and my mother was his secretary—or CFO, Chief Financial Officer, as I like to think about it now. Though my parents had only elementary school educations, they supported me when I wanted to go to College of William and Mary.

After College I worked for a year as a social worker and then went on to graduate school in sociology at Stony Brook University for my M.A. and Ph. D.

Though I love sociology and will always identify as a sociologist, I found myself somewhat disappointed with this discipline in graduate school. I wanted to study and understand the world around me, how it affected me and others, and how we acted back on it. I wanted to take a symbolic interaction approach. In some ways that micro-perspective was looked down on in sociology. Instead, abstraction and macro-theory and analysis, particularly quantitative analysis, were privileged. Thankfully I enjoyed statistics and did well in it, and I learned to appreciate macro-theory.

For my dissertation research though I wanted to do ethnography, which was my love, so I did fieldwork in isolated fishing communities (Ellis 1986). I was very satisfied with that work because it allowed me to live with the people and try to experience the world they lived in through their eyes and feelings. That's where my passion lay.

LG: Thank you for sharing these biographical details. You have already written beautiful and touching words about your past and your relationships in *Final Negotiations* (Ellis 1995) and

elsewhere (Ellis 2004). If I may, I'd like to ask you to tell me something more about the classic ethnography you liked the most.

CE: I fell in love with Goffman's work, especially *Presentation of Self* (1959), but later *Behavior in Public Places* (1963a), *Interaction Ritual* (1967), and his work on stigma (1963b). I loved well-written and engaging ethnographies, such as *Tally's Corner* (Liebow 1967) and *Street-Corner Society* (Whyte 1943). My favourite classical theorist was [Georg] Simmel.

LG: To be honest, Goffman is one of my favourite sociologists too. I was proud when Didier Fassin endorsed my book and described my approach "in the Goffman lineage". Anyway, returning to your research approach, if nor epistemology, do I get it right if I say that already at the time of your Ph. D. you saw yourself as potentially being part of the story?

CE: I was hesitant to include myself as a character in my ethnography of the fisher folk, because I wanted to do good ethnography that was rigorous and "scientific." So I tried to follow the rules for doing realist ethnography and do what my primary professor at Stony Brook, Jerry Suttles, and the literature instructed me to do. For example, keep distance from what and who you are studying, write as the authority; avoid bias and getting too involved. Keep the focus on them. But I did begin to creep into my stories of the fisher folk and I found that kind of writing that showed us talking and doing activities together to be much more vivid and engaging than the more abstract descriptions of the "typical" and commonplace that I had been taught to do. I think my *entrée* into autoethnography really started in those stories, though I didn't know it at the time.

After publishing this book manuscript, I did some survey work on emotions. Then my brother was killed in an airplane crash, and my partner was in the final stages of a terminal illness. I wanted to understand what I was going through and feeling, in the middle of all this loss. Abstract sociology wasn't helpful. I found I wanted to write about my experiences, so I began keeping field notes about what was happening. I began to observe and introspect (Ellis 1991) about my experiences in an ethnographic way, which was very therapeutic actually. I also thought that what I was writing was good sociology about relationships and emotions. So, that's what got me started in autoethnography. I wanted to incorporate self-reflection into what I believed ethnography could become and into what I thought sociology should be. I still wanted to be a scholar, I still wanted to be a social scientist, but I wanted to do more personal and relational exploration and storytelling.

LG: This is very interesting. Yet, I am thinking that at that time, a lot had occurred in ethnography already, hadn't it? I am thinking about poststructuralists and postmodernists and the *writing culture* debate. They were all, in different ways, trying to merge, or to overcome the separation between the humanities and the social science, weren't they? They were all very interested in language. Am I wrong? What was and what is your position towards postmodernism? Were you sitting comfortably within postmodernism? Were you trying to move beyond postmodernism? Was postmodernism too detached for you?

CE: Your questions are interesting. I am not sure I have a thought through response for you because the definition of postmodernism keeps changing; it is in process all the time. Some qualitative folks are now doing what they call "post qualitative". There are ways in which I think my work fits with postmodernism and ways in which it doesn't. When I started doing narrative writing, at first I thought I was doing it in isolation. Well, I was, but some of the postmodernists, for example Clifford Geertz and others in anthropology, were advocating experimental writing. They were questioning traditional social sciences and writing abstractly about how we need new methods. So they really were developing a theoretical space into which I could fit. I saw this and I began to feel that I was part of this movement, doing what they were advocating with their more abstract prose.

LG: You are referring to the "writing culture debate", aren't you?

CE: Yes, exactly. I felt part of that but I didn't want to write the abstract way they were writing. I wanted to write concretely and tell stories with emotions, that moved people. I wanted to bring a literary perspective to social science.

LG: Let's return to what you introduced a minute ago. Can you please say something about post qualitative? What's its importance for you and for autoethnography? And what's your relationship with that position?

CE: I am not in any way an expert in this perspective though I have tried to grasp it. My understanding is that is a critique and letting go of humanistic qualitative methods. I am receptive to some of the ideas being presented, such as bringing the material, nonhuman, and other forms of life into our studies—really decentering the human. I appreciate their focus on being rather than doing. I like their

questioning about how we do qualitative work, the practices we take for granted, such as interviews and observations, even data. I appreciate that they point out that qualitative research is our invention, not something real outside of that. But I feel they are calling the whole enterprise of qualitative research into question, and I'm not sure how they want to "fix" it or change it. What will research look like for them? Or will there be research? I find much that these advocates write very difficult to follow. And to be honest, though I try to keep up with the "new," I just want to keep doing what I'm doing—writing concrete stories of self and other that touch peoples' lives. That's my calling.

LG: You just said that there are ways in which you fit within postmodernism and ways in which you do not fit into postmodernism. Can you elaborate a bit on that, please?

CE: Really, I don't think much in these categories. Certainly the questioning about truth, representation, and objectivity that occurred in postmodernism helped create a space for my work. I am grateful for that. But I find that most scholars who write about postmodernism emphasize power and critique, and that philosophical position doesn't speak to me as much as one of caring and compassion. Rather than describe myself as a postmodernist, I am more of an interactionist, who is interested in everyday, concrete and emotional life experiences. And I want to write in an expressive, inviting storytelling way rather than in a more jargonistic and philosophical style. So in those ways I don't fit.

LG: Now I get the point, thank you. You started our conversation by saying that you view yourself as an ethnographer. I see this in much of your writing from the beginning until now; I think—though maybe I am wrong—that Art [Bochner] is much more worried than you about autoethnography being cannibalized by ethnography with the goal to incorporate it. Can you expand on the relationship between ethnography and autoethnography a bit more? There are qualitative methods, then there is ethnography, which is a part of qualitative methods. What about autoethnography? How does it fit? Is it a method as it reads in the Oxford University Press book on autoethnography (Adams, Holman Jones, and Ellis 2015)?

CE: I have been an ethnographer from the beginning of my career. I have never rejected ethnography. Instead I have wanted to expand ethnography, so that it includes not only realist ethnography and grounded theory—the approach in which I was educated. I still see this approach as useful for various kinds of problems. But to me autoethnography magnifies what you can do with ethnography. To me

good ethnography is also autoethnographic and good autoethnography is also ethnographic. I see a very close relationship between the two. Indeed reflexive ethnography comes very close to autoethnography. Many realist ethnographers are good friends and colleagues of mine and we have more in common than we have differences. I understand and accept what they are doing. I think most now embrace some aspects of autoethnography and I think autoethnography has influenced realist ethnographers to a large extent so that many now position themselves in their work, sometimes appearing as characters. Most do believe that you should be reflexive about yourself as a researcher. But still many don't quite accept that a story, a good story can be theoretical as well. It's probably true that I approach autoethnography much more as an ethnographer than does Art Bochner, my partner and co-author.

LG: Yes, as far as I know and get it, I would agree with you on this. Why do you think it is so?

CE: Art [Bochner] wasn't educated as an ethnographer; in fact, he was educated more as a theorist and quantitative methodologist. But when he got interested in autoethnography, his focus was more on aesthetic and meaningful writing, on autoethnography as art and literature, than as ethnography. I think that now we overlap much more than we have in the past because we have worked together so much and have so much influence on each other. But you can see in his work the different prospective he is coming from. And yes he tends to take a more protective posture toward autoethnography than I do, not wanting more mainstream ethnographers to cannibalize it, in your words.

LG: From my reading of both of you, I agree with this.

CE: Art is concerned that traditional ethnographers are watering down autoethnography and flattering it out, forgetting the "evocative"—a crucial part of autoethnography—and he doesn't want that". I'm more likely to take the position that the more people who are doing autoethnography the better! And the more ways they are doing it, the better!

LG: I am very fascinated by your openness and your welcoming attitudes and inclusiveness towards new autoethnographic perspectives and agendas. Autoethnography is out there and there is nothing or nobody who can stop it. Returning now to reflexivity and reflexive ethnography, I am wondering what is your position about the ways in which ethnographers write accounts of the world out there and reflexive accounts of their relationships and experiences in the field. I would question whether

from your perspective this distinction between the world out there and our relation with it can be separated at all? What do you think about writing the reflexive account on the one side and the real stuff, the substantive stuff, on the other? In other words, do you think it is possible to separate your understanding or comprehension of the world "out there" from your "experience of it"? Is there a significant difference between autoethnography and ethnography on this point or not?

CE: I see the overlapping of ethnography and autoethnography as substantial, and I think that, for the most part, most qualitative researchers have the same goals. We are trying to understand – I love the expression – what's going on here? Autoethnographers tend to privilege the position of the self, so that the self has a significant role whether as a researcher interacting with other people or as a person whose life is the focus. In ethnography the "data" are your interactions with and observations of other people. So if you want to understand what's going on there, you have to understand your own role in the exchanges and how you might affect what you observe. For me, this is where autoethnography and ethnography come together.

Recently, my graduate class in autoethnography read an article by Leon Anderson, in which he describes his project as analytic autoethnography. Then they read a piece of mine, called "I hate my voice" (Ellis 1998). I asked them: "what are the differences?" And they could see little difference in the two pieces because I included framing, theory, methods, and literature along with the personal stories. And in Anderson's piece on skydiving, he does the same. But I think there is still a difference in our orientation: he wants to use story to find comparisons, types, and themes and conclude with more abstract explanation. While I might do that in some of my work, my goal is to privilege the story as a way of understanding social life. Though he and I have some differences in our emphasis, what we do is quite similar, and I respect his work, contributions, and openness to what I do.

LG: I see your point. Yet, can you say more about the differences? You say they are minimal; I am not sure about that. What do you mean by saying that they are very similar? That there is no need to make a distinction? Or, that evocative autoethnography (Bochner and Ellis 2016) had already done what apparently analytic autoethnography is all about, its specificity? And what's your relationship with Anderson's position a bit more in detail?

CE: Since you pressed, yes there are other differences. For example, we see our work in evocative autoethnography as existing between humanities and social science, and encompassing them both. You can see this in our strong emphasis on good literary writing that evokes readers to care, feel,

empathize and react, possibly doing something on behalf of social justice. As far as I can tell, Anderson writes analytic autoethnography as social science and he writes more in the social science tradition, seeking to represent rather than evoke, and to be value neutral rather than value centered like evocative autoethnography. Realist theorists in general, including Anderson, seek to generalize rather than focus on the particular. I doubt realist ethnographers will ever fully embrace story as theory as we do. Stories to them primarily are data. But to be fair to Leon, I think his work has moved somewhat closer to what we do in the sense that I think his writing has gotten more evocative, with some of it blurring the boundary between evocative and analytic autoethnography. In general, I'm delighted to see ethnographers incorporating aspects of personal experience, emotionality, and vulnerability in their writing, as Anderson does. We discuss all this more fully in our book, *Evocative Autoethnography* (Bochner and Ellis 2016).

LG: I also tried to include evocative texts in my 'Doing coercion' book (Gariglio 2018b). Yet, when I tried to do my first autoethnography (Gariglio 2018a). I felt more comfortable staying on the analytic side, as you just said, and writing more as a social scientist would. I think you're definitely right, maybe what pushed me in that direction was my goal to generalize rather than focus on the particular. I think I get your point. From my perspective and limited knowledge, this is all very interesting. Seen from the outside I can say that I noted – yet, that's only an impression - that after Anderson's analytic autoethnography paper you started to use that word "analytically" more frequently than before. I see that when I compare your first papers with the more recent book you published with Oxford University Press, as well as the Handbook of Autoethnography. After the debate on analytic ethnography was published in JCE, I felt that in evocative autoethnography there was more awareness of the necessity to deal with the analytic dimension. In the very beginning, and in particular in Art's papers, analysis was treated as marginal, if it was considered at all. My impression as someone who is still an outsider in autoethnography – as I am – is that the debate about analytical ethnography was useful to expand the field of autoethnography in a way. In the very beginning the word analytic was treated very critically; afterwards, you even started to use it, to incorporate it into your own definition of autoethnography as a whole, as it occurs in the last book by OUP, *Autoethnography*; and I felt it as a good reaction somehow stimulated by Anderson's proposal. Maybe that kind of reciprocal critique helped autoethnography to expand. Am I wrong?

CE: It might be true that Leon's article made us think more about the role of analysis. And it certainly helped autoethnography to expand, because more realist ethnographers and others felt more at ease with what Anderson was describing than what we were doing. But to be honest, many of my articles and chapters have included analysis, even before Anderson wrote his piece. I just didn't emphasize it in the same way as Anderson; I wanted it to play an equal or subsidiary role to story, though I did think it added to what and how we know. I go back to my "I hate my voice" paper, published in 1998, where I argued that both kinds of knowledge—personal and categorical—worked together. Here let me quote from that piece:

> Telling and analysing my personal story not only helped generate and make visible the category of minor bodily stigma, it also provided a way through. The categorical story offered a name to my experiences where before there was only dread; the personal story connected real people with feelings to the labels, where before there were only tactics of concealment and denial. This research helped me understand the inextricable connections between categorical and personal knowledge (Ellis 1998, p. 535).

Art's position is an interesting one because he always has been a theorist, and an excellent one. And most of his autoethnographic stories are a seamless integration of analysis, theory, and personal narrative. But he wanted to make sure that we didn't get side-tracked as we argued for the value of story in and of itself as theory.

LG: This is interesting.

CE: I'll tell you one more quick story. Very early, this is back in the early 1990s, I was teaching a course in qualitative methods and emphasizing autoethnography and storytelling, and making the case that stories can be theoretical. I had assigned one of my stories, "Maternal Connections," which doesn't include literature or theory in the traditional sense. The students started telling me they didn't want to do a research project with literature and theory; they just wanted to write a story like I had. And I said "no, no, no, we are now going too far." You have to be able to do a qualitative research project with all the parts, including analysis. I felt I had gone overboard trying to prove a point with my claims about stories as theories. I think that's what happens. You have to take an extreme position sometimes to get people's attention. So I continued making the case that a good story can be a good theory, and that theory is only a story, but then I also added that, depending on the project, both traditional analysis and story can and should work together. I told my students they had to learn to do it all.

LG: When you say story, this is something that always puzzles me. Do you mean something like chatting, or interviews, or your field notes, or what? Do you mean a text referring to something happening "out there"? Or do you mean something different from pure literature or fiction? Or both? What do you mean more precisely?

CE: That's a very good question. I often connect stories and autoethnography because the ways we present our autoethnography is usually through stories that have literary qualities. So, when I say story I really mean personal stories, whether it's my personal story as a researcher or my story as the focus of my study, or the personal stories of participants that I work with. I like to privilege story and not divide experience into categories, where the story then becomes the story of the categories rather than the story of experience.

LG: I see. Let's move to another issue you discuss frequently in your writing. You often have stated that you think autoethnography could also be a way to address wider audiences and a public beyond the academy. How would you fit autoethnography, if you would at all, into the public sociology agenda or discourse?

CE: I would like to do more of that than I have been able to do. I had always hoped that my stories of grief and loss might somehow get into hospitals and hospices and be used as a stimulus to help people think and talk about what they are going through, and to feel they are not alone. So, rather than give them an institutional self-help film, give them a story and let them talk about their story in relation to the one they read. That hasn't happened so much in those settings.

But I have had some success in getting my work out into the public in at least two ways. The first is through my classes where students take my stories home to relatives and friends. One student told me recently that they talked about one of my stories in her sorority and she put it on the sorority website. The second is through my work with Holocaust survivors. I have made two films about this work: "Behind The Wall" and "Groaning from the Soul." The first is online. I've presented both of these films as well as my research in a number of community settings, including multiple times at the Florida Holocaust Museum, and at film festivals.

LG: I guess you refer to the film you made with a survivor who was a co-author, right?

CE: Yes, with a survivor, Jerry Rawicki [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w9es0TQkj8s]. Sometimes he and I present together. Steve Schoen, a communication scholar, has also worked with me as a videographer. I hope to do more of this when I am no longer teaching at the university.

LG: That would be wonderful! Let's now move on to another important theme in sociology, the sociology of emotion. You were very much into this field from the very beginning and yet, you are rarely referred to as a sociologist of emotions now. Am I right?

CE: Yes. I was one of two people who started that group, The Sociology of Emotions section in the American Sociological Association. The other was Candace Clark. We were the first two chairs of the section. As an ethnographer and interviewer, Candace studied sympathy rules, while I was devoted to studying the lived experience and the concrete expression and feeling of emotion. . I was involved in the Section for a long time, but then when I moved from the Sociology to Communication Department at University of South Florida, I became less involved. Because I had Communication PhD students then, I started to go to all communication conferences and eventually stopped going to sociology conferences. I found that trying to attend both took too much time and travel. That's part of what happened. But the other thing that happened is the group eventually got co-opted by the more traditional qualitative scholars, as well as quantitatively-oriented scholars who wanted to quantify and measure emotion, for example, look at facial movements and artificial intelligence. To my limited knowledge about that group now, I think it is pretty much the same.

LG: I see, but what about the liminal figure of Hochschild, the qualitative scholar best known for her work on emotion? She does have a significant impact in the field of emotion, doesn't she?

CE: Yes, she does. Her work is excellent and well-cited, and many scholars have picked up on her idea of emotion work. I appreciate this concept but I sometimes think we have enough studies of emotion work. I'm still more interested in the lived expression of emotions, and frankly I don't see much of that coming out of the Sociology of Emotions folks.

LG: I basically agree with you. So, returning to the distinction of analytic-evocative that you introduced before

CE: which is not unlike the distinctions that arose in the sociological study of emotions.

LG: I guess you refer to the difference between some scholars interested in lived expression of emotions, and others more interested in quantification and categories. I see the point; yet, I think sociology is also about typologies, categories and numbers. For this reason I think the analytic-evocative distinction is a good heuristic tool for trying to understand the shifting and fuzzy boundaries within the field of autoethnography, those more oriented toward lived expression of emotions and those more oriented to categorization and generalization. Having said so, I was wandering whether you could suggest any other dichotomy, space, or poles by which to map the field of autoethnography beyond the analytic-evocative distinction?

CE: I did some of that in the appendix in "Ethnographic I" [Ellis, 1995]; I set up qualitative work as a continuum between the two poles of art/literature and science, but of course the poles are not real, they are ideal types. Then I connected methods, goals, assumptions, and so on to each side of the dichotomy.

LG: I have read that, but now I wonder whether you could say something more, or different from that now? Something more "useful" as a way to map the different autoethnographies out-there?

CE: That's a good question but I'm not sure I have a better scheme that encapsulates all of autoethnography, but I probably need to think about it. On a few occasions when I presented these two poles of art-science, traditional social scientists rejected some of my assumptions, even though I kept saying these poles were ideal types and there was more overlap than difference, that what was important was the idea of a continuum of approaches. Laura Ellingson has taken this all further than I did in terms of looking at the poles and the middle, and she likes to talk about crystallization as a metaphor for thinking about qualitative research.

Jimmy Manning and Tony Adams also look briefly at the different kinds of autoethnography and how to evaluate it [8]. They come up with social-scientific autoethnography (analytic autoethnography), interpretive-humanistic autoethnography, critical, and creative-artistic. Their distinctions might be useful for evaluating autoethnography

[8] (https://tonyeadamsdotcom.files.wordpress.com/2015/09/manningadams-auteothnographypopularculture.pdf).

Others such as Heewon Chang (2008) have used other schemes.

LG: Do you agree with the idea that analytic-evocative distinction can be a useful dichotomy at least to start to map the different types of autoethnography out there? A very rudimental one, yet kind of useful, or not?

Maybe, though it doesn't feel that useful to me really, especially give the overlap that seems to me to be increasing. But, for the most part, as I've said, I'm not that attracted to types and categories and figuring out what fits where. I know that's what sociologists do, but I'm not a traditional sociologist anymore. I prefer to think about the stories we can tell, how to tell them, and what their purpose and usefulness is for improving our lives, others' lives, or the society we live in.

LG: Ok, I see. Well, moving towards the conclusion now, I'd like to ask you about your experiences in working in teams. In particular I wanted to know whether you ever had occasion to work in teams with ethnographers? Could you imagine a research group in which ethnographers and autoethnographers would collaborate and work with one another on the same project?

CE: I'd be very open to being a part of a team where I might work with folks with different kinds of ethnographic orientations. Scholars have approached me to do that but I always had my own project and so I haven't been able to join in any of those. I think that would be wonderful.

LG. I see; but have you ever asked a "traditional" or, to put it differently, a realist ethnographer to join one of your projects?

CE: No, I haven't. Usually I like working alone, though I have co-authored with a number of people, usually Art or former students. My Holocaust work might be perfect for that kind of teamwork. When I began it, I worked as a team with my graduate students. But, for the most part, we were all like-minded.

LG: Ok. So far, we focused on what has happened in autoethnography over the past years. What about the future? What's coming next? What do you think autoethnography will look like in the

future? Or simply tomorrow? What do you think is missing so far? What has to be "pushed" further? Is there anything you regret about the way it has or has not expanded?

CE: Oh, those are wonderful questions. You ask great questions. [pause] Well, I would very much like for this perspective to move more into the public realm, as I said previously. I know that those in the public who have been exposed to it find it very useful. I see what happens when I present stories in my classes and the students talk with each other about them and give them to other people. They tell me these stories transform their lives, both graduate and undergraduates say that. And I see it happening every semester. I've only tried a few times to place a story into a popular magazine, without much success. It's too easy to just send my pieces to academic journals where I'm pretty sure they will be published. I don't have contacts in the literary world, which would be helpful. I have advised students to submit to popular magazines, so we'll see. And I've suggested to Art that he write some pieces for the *Chronicle of Higher Education.* He's really good at that kind of essay writing. I might like to do some of that as well.

I still have my projects: I'm just finishing the revision of *Final Negotiations*, and I have a contract to revise *The Ethnographic "I*". I also want to do a book on *Compassionate Interviewing, which* is a return to a focus on the other and is more ethnographic than most of my recent work, yet is enriched by the thinking I have done in my autoethnography research. But there is a way, even though I am involved in all that, that I want to move more into the background and give space to younger scholars who are now expanding and taking further the kinds of things that Art and I have done. That feels right to me at this point. I see so many people doing work they are calling critical autoethnography, and people doing research in global and postcolonial autoethnography. Some of these positions are challenging what we've done as evocative autoethnography, and I think that's fine. I am all for challenge when I feel as though people are trying to expand and understand more about autoethnography. I don't appreciate critique when people are only trying to tear it down.

LG: I see, I understand what you mean.

CE: So I have been enjoying sitting back and taking in what others are doing, rather than thinking I have to be on the forefront of each development. For example, I read a piece a few days ago about exo-autoethnography [Denejkina 2017].

LG: EXO? What's that?

CE: This scholar was looking at how you talk about something you have not actually experienced, but that you think has had an effect on you. So, for example, look at experiences of second generation Holocaust survivors. Some feel they experience the trauma of their forbearers. They feel the trauma in their body; it got passed to them from parents. At first, I was sceptical, and then I thought, "this idea is fabulous!" It is fabulous because I know many people, some of them second generation Holocaust survivors, who think that they understand something about trauma or feel trauma that they have not actually experienced.

LG: So, to conclude…..

CE: Just one more thing….

LG: yes, please go on.

CE: I would like to touch more people like you, people who are into music and art, to get their prospective. I am interested in not just taking autoethnography to you, but in your bringing your prospective and sensibilities to autoethnography. Brydie-Leigh Bartlett and I (Bartleet, Brydie-Leigh and Ellis 2009) did some of that with music and autoethnography. I'd like to do more. I have seen how artistic scholars light up when they discover autoethnography. I want to see autoethnographers light up when they discover music and art and performance.

LG: I think that's very interesting and can lead to new research experiences and perspectives. Yet, to be honest, I think that's already in your *oeuvre*, in your writing and in your film. It is already really all there.
Yes, others can move further in that direction and new collaboration can be developed, but it is all there already, indeed.

CE: Thanks. I'm always open though to new perspectives and learning more, expanding and taking things farther.

LG: Do you have anything else you want to add to our discussion, taking into account that autoethnography has pretty limited visibility within Italian sociological journals? There are very few persons involved in it in Italy. One of them is Marco Marzano (1999, 2001, 2004).

CE: Marco has visited us in Tampa, and he just sent me a new piece to read. Angelo Benozzo also has done some autoethnography. He comes to the Congress that Norman Denzin organizes each May. I hope other people from Italy will come to that conference.

LG: Is there anything else you want to add? Anything relevant that is missing and that you want to add? Any personal comment? Any clarification of your position?

CE: You have asked wonderful questions. There are a lot of other topics we could talk about, but you really hit on some important ones. I would like to add that autoethnography is worldwide. I get email from people all over the world and I—and other autoethnographers--have given talks all over the world. I spoke in Italy some time ago, invited by Angelo Benozzo[9].
It only takes one person, like you, to get it started in a new place. For example, I have a friend, Marcin Kafar in Poland who has promoted autoethnography and gotten it off the ground there (Kafar and Ellis 2014). I would certainly help you if that was something you wanted to do in Italy.

LG: Thank you and take care.

CE: Lovely to meet you, bye.

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