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Chapter 1

THE ETHNOGRAPHIC SELF AS RESOURCE: AN INTRODUCTION

Peter Collins and Anselma Gallinat

The purpose of this chapter is to provide, briefly, the disciplinary context in which the idea of the self as resource in doing ethnography has emerged. We will delineate the relevant developments in the discipline with particular regard to 'anthropology at home', the reflexive turn and auto-ethnography. We will briefly introduce the work of scholars who already apply the kind of integrative approach we propose and then go on to detail the implications of such research and writing for methodology and the discipline at large. These include issues such as authenticity, 'playing the native card', memory and memorisation, ethics and honesty, and the question of whether this may lead from an anthropological 'double vision' to a 'split personality'. Throughout we shall relate this volume's chapters to this discussion and the overall thesis.

Making Visible: the Ethnographer Brought into Focus

The assumption that we can better understand ourselves through understanding others has a long history. It suffices to say here that this apparently simple thought was the seed that slowly developed into what we now call anthropology. By 1900, intrepid individuals were leaving home with the intention of understanding other ways of life. To cast matters in black and white, there was a time, before 1970, when anthropology was almost entirely a matter of isolating the other. The person or self of the anthropologist remained unseen and mostly unheard. Like the movies, the conceit was that we (the viewer, the reader) had direct, unmediated access to the lives before us, that is, without the facilitating role of film crew, director, editor and so forth. The film gives us an objective representation of life itself.

But there's the rub – it was the realisation that ethnography is representation, or life at least once removed, that caused what was and continues to be a reappraisal of the anthropological enterprise. The present volume is set in that tradition of reappraisal.

The adage was that anthropology sought to understand the other – at least partly in order better to know oneself. This approach to anthropology was epistemologically grounded in a fairly straightforward scientism. Here was the anthropologist and over there, ontologically discrete and entirely separate from him or her, were the objects of his or her attention – the other. Anthropology was a science, maybe not quite like physics or chemistry but similar enough to claim, or at first assume, a measure of objectivity in its practice. Anthropological accounts of others were therefore fundamentally realist. The aim of the fieldworker was to collect, accumulate, classify and analyse social facts. Language was considered a neutral tool that enabled the anthropologist to identify social phenomena and describe them exactly and truthfully. The discipline overall should be the accumulation of these facts. The personal identity of the anthropologist was an unimportant detail, though best practice assumed that the anthropologist, commencing their observations from outside of the frame should ensure that they took precautions to stay out. This is not to say that they chose to remain separate from the action during fieldwork. After all, at least since Malinowski's work on the Trobriand Islands, anthropological practice involved more or less systematic participant observation: the anthropologists should live among those whose lives they were attempting to understand for an extended period of time. But this was a practical strategy and was understood as a principle that distinguished the modern anthropologist from the Victorian armchair scholar who sifted through data gleaned by those – soldiers, traders, missionaries, colonial administrators – who had travelled there instead. It was certainly not a part of Malinowski's plan that anthropologists should place themselves in the ethnographic frame and he was careful to erase, wherever possible, the traces of his own presence in the field.

This means that, on the one hand, the anthropological endeavour gained legitimacy from 'being there' so long as evidence of 'doing there' was eradicated. In the field it was necessary to be 'with' the other as only in that way might one contextualise beliefs and practices in a holistic account of another culture: 'to realise *his* vision of *his* world' (Malinowski 1961 [1922]: 25). But Malinowski did not consider it necessary to include himself in his academic presentation of Trobriand life and kept his personal feelings and observations to his diary. This diary, published posthumously in 1967, is one of the more significant waymarks of our current journey as it remains a painful reminder that *doing* ethnography is inevitably intertwined with the rather subjective and deeply human *being* in the field.

Even those with just a passing acquaintance with the recent history of anthropology will know that by the 1970s the character of ethnography had undergone considerable change. For a variety of more or less connected reasons, including the influence of the postmodern turn, anthropology began to take a growing interest in the self of the anthropologist, or at least in the relationship between self and other. The possibility that anthropologists – and anthropology as an increasingly institutionalised practice – may have had an impact on the representation of ‘an other’ culture gave rise to an increasing awareness of anthropologists’ position in the field. There was a growing recognition that Radcliffe-Brown might have been wrong and that the anthropologist can never be an entirely neutral ‘device’ for describing and explaining other cultures. The time had come when anthropologists felt obliged to confront the uncomfortable fact that they were always already implicated in ‘the field’; that they were, inevitably, constructing what they came to re-present.

Writing Culture

Making room for the self in ethnography depended partly upon the loosening of textual conventions. *Writing Culture* (Clifford and Marcus 1986) has become iconic of significant and identifiable tendencies within the discipline – including reflexivity as a necessary component of doing fieldwork, the importance of critique, a growing interest in the textuality of anthropology (the so-called ‘literary turn’), and the further possibility of doing ‘anthropology at home’ by the time of its publication. Although it would be overstating the case to cite *Writing Culture* as the cause of a paradigm shift, the book undoubtedly presented the most concise and subsequently most influential position statement of a new self-conscious and critical anthropology. We will consider a number of these trends here: reflexivity, ethnography as a form of writing, anthropology at home and auto-ethnography, and the employment of anthropology as cultural critique. We would argue that in one way or another each of these tendencies relates more or less directly to the emergence of the anthropologist’s self in their ethnography. The tendency among anthropologists to attend more explicitly to the self was not merely a product of anthropology. Giddens (1991) and others have shown that reflexivity has been a part of the ambient climate of late modernity, a practice that characterises the world view of not only scholars but also the public at large. Indeed it might be argued that this text itself is another example of the modern tendency to dwell reflexively on the self.

Jay Ruby’s edited collection, *A Crack in the Mirror* (1982), preceded *Writing Culture* by four years and anticipated some of the themes found

there. The chapters in Ruby expertly indicate the inevitability of subjectivity in the ethnographic account comparing this to the sphere of cultural production. As the book aims to make the data-gathering process transparent (1982: 18–19), there is the stark realisation that at the centre of every ethnography lies the self of the anthropologist. From the 1970s on, there has been a growing tendency to acknowledge this presence, to have the anthropologist's self step from behind the camera and acknowledge her presence, both to herself and others (see also Coffey 1999). However, as Dyck says in his chapter here, it is unfortunate that this reflexivity has become a kind of reflex that is all too often confined to a preface or introduction as the new badge of ethnographic legitimacy. The information provided is often eclectic, limited and little commented upon (Salzman 2002); the text proceeds as before and little is gained. The actuality of the influence of the anthropologist's self on data collection and writing therefore tends, all too often, to be ghettoised and its consideration not properly developed. As Kohn remarks, in this way reflexivity also often appears rather static pointing to the anthropologist as a similarly static filter of the observed culture. In this volume Collins and Kohn make the case for a more processual form of reflexivity.

There are several notable instances, however, in which the self-awareness of the anthropologist has radically reshaped the form of their ethnography. One thinks particularly of Rabinow's *Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco* (1977), Dumont's *The Headman and I* (1978), Crapanzano's *Tuhami* (1980), Shostak's *Nisa* (1981), Dwyer's *Moroccan Dialogues* (1982). We should note Pratt's observation (1986) that such accounts are often secondary, following on from more standard objectivist texts – Rabinow, for example, published *Symbolic Domination* (1975) two years before *Reflections* (1977). It is also worth noting that earlier texts exist which point towards these more experimental works – Sydney Mintz's *Worker in the Cane* (1960), for example. In these cases, a concerted attempt is being made to foreground the dialogical nature of ethnography both as a fieldwork practice and as published text. On the one hand, the voice of the other is foregrounded and, on the other, the self of the anthropologist is made explicitly and constantly present. Whatever these texts achieve, they certainly confirm the impossibility of objectively representing, ethnographically, an unproblematic other. In this volume Šikić-Mičanović makes it equally clear that ethnographies, regardless of the details of their production, are jointly constructed by the ethnographer and her research participants and that the inclusion of the self of the ethnographer in the field is, in many cases, a precondition of ethnography.

These realisations are clearly apparent in the 1990s which witnessed an increasing use of self-narrative as well as biography in ethnography, for example Okely and Callaway's *Anthropology and Autobiography* (eds, 1992)

and Reed-Danahay's *Auto/Ethnography: Rewriting the Self and the Social* (1997). More importantly, feminist monographs such as Abu-Lughod's *Writing Women's Worlds* (1993) and Behar's *Translated Woman* (1993) showed how one could write experience-near ethnographies that reveal subjectivity without losing academic credibility.

A more recent example is Rapport's short essay, 'Hard-Sell or Mumbling "Right" Rudely' (1997). Here, Rapport places his self squarely at the centre of the action. He is drawn, after receiving an invitation and promise through the post, to a city centre hotel in the hope of receiving a substantial prize of some sort. Rapport describes his slow and steady humiliation at the hands of timeshare salesmen in a manner that is likely to cause his reader both amusement and discomfort. Unsurprisingly, he leaves the hotel after a gruelling and embarrassing two-hour 'hard-sell', with nothing more than the continued and now heavily tarnished promise of that prize – a prize that never materialises. Rapport offers an 'experience-near' auto-ethnography, an account that many of his readers will feel uncomfortably familiar with – the unfulfilled promise of free enterprise. Rapport's work, both in this essay and more generally (see especially Rapport 1994a), reflects and develops a more explicit connection with forms of writing that are traditionally thought of as 'fiction'.

Even these examples suggest, by their heterogeneity, that 'the literary turn', as it is often called, is hardly a coherent movement in anthropology. There are at least three separate, though admittedly overlapping, developments here. First, there is a movement towards experimentation in the style of ethnographic writing itself. Perhaps the most notable examples include Stephen Tylor's essay in *Writing Culture*, along with the biographical and dialogic examples cited above. If one accepts that ethnography is a 'form of writing' (this is impossible to deny, even if one refuses to countenance departures from the standard genre), then there is no reason not to experiment with non-standard forms. Such experimentation has been taken further in sociology than in anthropology under the label of 'auto-ethnography'. One might, for instance, look to the collections edited by Ellis and Bochner (1996; see also their extended meditation on experimental forms in Bochner and Ellis 2002). Their earlier collection includes, for example, an account of the life of a mentally retarded woman by her (sociologist) daughter, a first-hand account of a bulimic, an extraordinary case study in child sexual abuse and a wistful piece on the author's father's journey across America in his Model T Ford in 1924. In each case, and despite the apparent idiosyncrasy of the topics, the author draws on the quotidian in order to illuminate more general themes.

In this collection, Dona and Dorothy Davis turn their attention to the experience, and in particular their experience, of being identical twins. This is as 'experience-near' as ethnography gets. They intimate, at one point, the

possibility of existential unity, arguing, not that one individual may contain several selves, but that two individuals may share, at least for an instant, one self. In this case, and, indeed, in all cases here, experimental writing takes a back seat as the form and content of ethnography as a methodology are interrogated. Indeed, that case of the Davis twins' contribution is especially interesting and indicates not only the tenacity of the standard format of ethnographic writing but also its capacity to contain even the most unusual fieldwork: perhaps this is due to its flexibility – or, of course, to the ingenuity of the writer.

The second movement is the treatment of ethnographic texts as texts. During those years when the major paradigm in anthropology was characterised by its scientificity there seemed no point in bringing the ethnographic account itself under scrutiny. After all, texts in other scientific disciplines did not undergo the lit. crit. treatment. Perhaps it was the interpretive turn spurred by Clifford Geertz' work (1973) that prepared the ground for this possibility. Indeed, Geertz himself led the way with what turned out to be his most controversial book – *Works and Lives* (1988) – and Van Maanen published *Tales of the Field* (1988) in the same year, both books dealing with the rhetorical devices employed by influential anthropologists. Indeed the minor furore caused by *Works and Lives* indicates the suspicion with which some anthropologists viewed foregrounding anthropological writing (Spencer 1989). There have long been texts that are in a sense ambiguous with respect to genre (think of Bohannan 1954; Powdermaker 1966; Briggs 1970), which early on highlighted the inevitable subjective nature of ethnography as method and texts. If taken to its logical conclusion this realisation requires critical reading. More recently, there have been texts that at one level at least may well be seen to be fictional accounts, though each case needs to be treated as something *sui generis*. We are thinking particularly of Michael Jackson's *Barawa and the Ways Birds Fly in the Sky: An Ethnographic Novel* (1986) and Michael Taussig's *The Magic of the State* (1997). Indeed, here are two anthropologists, a New Zealander and an Australian, who most clearly exemplify a kind of experimentation that the editors of *Writing Culture* sought to encourage (though without providing specific direction). Michael Jackson has published not only non-standard ethnography (1989, 1995, 2002a, 2002b, 2005) but also novels and volumes of poetry (1986). And there is a continuity across genres in Jackson's work, facilitated by an existential perspective. Taussig, too, has been among the most adventurous ethnographers. In *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wildman* (1987), he commends a certain ambiguity in ethnographic writing – at least in dealing with the kind of field in which he works:

Killing and torture and sorcery are real as death is real. But why people do these things, and how the answers to that question affect the question – that is not answerable outside of the effects of the real carried through time by people in action. That is why my subject is not the truth of being but the being of truth, not whether facts are real but what the politics of their interpretation and representation are. (1987: xiii)

It is evident from this passage that Taussig writes the way he does for a purpose and that purpose is critique. Taussig is not unconcerned with describing the everyday lives of Colombian people but he is considerably more interested in the political consequences of what he describes along with the moral and political standpoint adopted by the ethnographer. Indeed, critique is a purpose of the ethnographic genre that is flagged by several of those contributing to *Writing Culture*. Talal Asad had some time before edited a collection of articles interrogating the political implications of doing anthropology during what he called ‘the colonial encounter’ (1973). And, indeed, Marcus and Fischer’s *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* was published in 1986 – the same year as *Writing Culture*. Marcus and Fischer complain (p. 111) that recent accounts of ‘predicaments’ in American culture ‘fail to take account of the existing domestic cultural criticism’; indeed, ‘they are careless precisely about that which would be sacred to anthropologists in considering other cultures – indigenous accounts’. The chapters in this collection do not make the same mistake. Rather, they consider their informants’ voices as well as their own engagement with their informants as the core of ethnography. Nor do our authors wish to continue to dwell overlong on the predicament of ethnographic representation. In contrast, this volume seeks to take ethnography a further step forward, rather in the manner of Bruner: ‘The problem is now two-fold: on the one hand we want to continue and deepen the critique, to correct its excesses, to explore and conceptualise new facets of our predicament as ethnographers in a postcolonial post-industrial era, on the other hand, we have to move ahead with the common ethnographic enterprise’ (1993: 2).

Finally, a few anthropologists have begun to mine works of literature for ethnographic data – this is fieldwork in fiction as it were and the third movement in anthropology following the ‘literary turn’. Mary Douglas has been carrying out such work for more than forty years, taking the Bible as her primary source. Some readers will be critical of our characterisation of the Bible as fiction; the case is clearer with regard to Rapport’s work on/in E.M. Forster (Rapport 1994a), Paul Benson’s edited collection (1993) and the work of Handler and Segal (1990). In relation to the latter it is worth quoting from Rapport’s review of that text: ‘Jane Austen’s consistent attention to the subtleties of social life allow her

fictions to be compared to anthropological studies, in regard both to what she represented and how it was narrated. Austen's texts can be treated as ethnographic data and so as analytic exemplars of intercultural defamiliarization and intercultural translation' (1994b: 216–217). Rapport avers that fiction (or at least some fiction) can stand as 'indigenous accounts'. Strathern, in *After Nature* (1992), draws similarly on a number of British writers, including Beatrix Potter, in order to illuminate national understandings of kinship.

These developments not only shaped the writing of culture by generating more experience-near accounts and cultural critique and by facilitating a more considered exploration of the connections between literature and anthropology, but clearly also had an impact on the doing of ethnography in the field. The increasing legitimacy of ethnography undertaken 'at home' constituted a further breach of the 'normal paradigm'.

Anthropology 'At Home'

We can use Strathern as a tie here, as we consider the growing tendency of anthropologists to carry out what is generally called 'anthropology at home'. As well as carrying out ethnographic research in Elmdon (Strathern et al 1981), a village in Essex, and on English kinship more generally, Strathern also posed some difficult questions for any who assumed that doing anthropology at home was a straightforward matter. Her typically subtle argument boils down to the claim that 'We cannot conclude that non-Western anthropologists will stand in the same relationship to their own society of culture as a Western anthropologist does to his/hers' (1987: 30). It is a question of there being different systems of self-knowledge from one to the other. According to Strathern, the kind of self-knowledge system existing among Mount Hageners, for example, prohibits one of their number carrying out native anthropology in the way that a British citizen might carry out anthropology at home among the British.¹ But this is in any case all too crude – in 2009, what can we possibly mean by 'British culture'? The important question here is the extent to which we can think of ourselves as 'native' to any particular group (see Narayan 1993). What kind of experience do we need to claim membership of a particular group, category or community – what markers are required to be considered a member by others? It is obviously not enough to be British to count oneself a 'native' in regard to Coventry Sikhs.

The unspoken rule in British and American anthropology was that one 'went away' to the field. Only by establishing significant physical distance between one's home and the field could sufficient objectivity be obtained.

Fieldwork at home was considered the province of sociology. This sentiment was further nurtured by an underpinning assumption that the country of one's birth represented a more or less homogeneous culture from which one must escape in order to find a legitimate and equally homogeneous 'other'. American anthropologists had long studied 'other cultures' on their doorstep – Native American Indians. British anthropologists, on the other hand, were not so fortunate, and were expected to follow Radcliffe-Brown and Malinowski to distant lands – in Oceania, Africa, Asia. From the late 1950s onward and for a variety of reasons – the increased cost of undertaking fieldwork far from home, difficulties in obtaining research permits and the growing awareness that in an increasingly multicultural Western society 'the other' is all around us – anthropologists were increasingly turning to geographically closer groups and places (Jackson 1987).

Max Gluckman, in Manchester, was an early proponent of 'anthropology at home' and influenced his students in their choice of field site, including Frankenberg (1957). Littlejohn's *Westrigg* (1963) was a further notable contribution to the anthropology of Britain, which dried up rather before a rebirth in Manchester during the 1980s (Cohen 1982, 1986, 1987; Rapport 1993, 1994a). Some Manchester scholars undertook fieldwork in factories and in public institutions, further breaking down what it was to 'do anthropological fieldwork'. It is worth noting, further, that those among Gluckman's students, including Turner, Van Velsen, Epstein, Mitchell and others, who continued to work 'away from home' in situations of very rapid social change experimented freely with both fieldwork methods and the construction of ethnographic texts. Messerschmidt (1981) and later Moffat (1992) broached the subject from an American point of view.

The tendency to stay 'at home' has presented anthropology with a number of challenges. For instance, the accountability of the anthropologist to those they have studied is more pressing – particularly when research participants speak the language in which the ethnography is written and may obtain copies (see Brettel 1993). Furthermore, at home the impact of one's research, because of its greater accessibility, might be very great indeed – in either a positive or negative way. As a result the administration of research ethics has grown apace.

Since the 1980s the conduct of ethnography in the country of one's upbringing is no longer especially contentious within the discipline. It is probably no coincidence that the majority of authors gathered here have carried out fieldwork 'at home'. The question of whether one 'should' carry out research away from home in the first instance, as claimed by Jackson (1987: 14), seems to us increasingly irrelevant. As Strathern points out (1987: 16), 'the preliminary question [is] of how one *knows* when one is at home'. Collins (2002) has written about this matter in relation to his fieldwork among British Quakers, arguing that one is never simply 'at

home', and the assumption of the role of ethnography is enough to create a sense of difference if that is felt to be required for epistemological reasons. Obviously, there are also shades of 'at homeness'. Gallinat, in this volume, refers to that collective memory of times past – *Ostalgia* – the ambivalent feeling of Germans who were, until 1990, East Germans. Having grown up in East Germany, Gallinat experienced events and emotions, circumstances and situations much in the same way as many of her research participants. She is perfectly able to remember these experiences and presents them alongside the experiences of others. However, she is equally aware of the responsibility she has as an anthropologist to hold up her own as well as others' accounts for critical inspection. Whatever the degree one feels 'at home', however, there is always the possibility of drawing on significantly similar experiences to those one is working with in the field. As such, we would argue that a shared sense of a particular past as a means of drawing directly on one's own experiences is less a guarantor of than a stimulus for constructing worthwhile ethnography.

Interestingly, while Strathern acknowledges the likelihood of a greater reflexivity of those conducting fieldwork 'at home' (pp. 17–19), she omits consideration of the ethnographer's self as a resource that could further aid their investigation. However, she critically reflects on the possibility that those being studied 'at home' may feel that they are being exploited – why should they think so? We need at this point, then, to distinguish between the ethics of using oneself as a resource and carrying on our ethnographic research at home – they do not amount to the same thing, even though they are likely to overlap in practice.

Strathern refers to 'anthropology at home' as 'auto-anthropology' (1987). This usage of the terminology is not typical. More often, 'auto-ethnography', rather than 'auto-anthropology', is used in reference to fieldwork in which the ethnographic self is the *only* informant involved, as explained above. The growth of such autobiographical accounts has been exponential since 1990 (Ryang 2000), though such texts remain rare in anthropology. The pieces in this collection rely, without exception, on accounts drawn from both self and others. We do not seek to argue the benefits of auto-ethnography, though that is not to say, either, that we are dismissive of it.

Our point, put simply, is that those who may refer to themselves or are referred to by others as 'insiders' and are thus able to draw directly on personal experiences which may be more or less shared by research participants (see Shokeid 1997) are likely to have a different perspective on the field from those who can plausibly make no such claim. This sharing, we argue, as well as its lack can bring about important insights. Such processes of reflecting on experiences and of recall are about remembering.

Memory

Memory, is dealt with only briefly in *Writing Culture*. In this collection it looms large however. In a way this volume is a reflection on the facts that ethnographers come to the field with memories of their own, that their experiences there create more, and that they deploy these memories in field notes, and, over the years, in writing. In each of the chapters that follow, the author therefore feels it necessary to engage with the place of memory in relation to the ethnographic self.

Of the various kinds of memory, the contributors here are concerned almost entirely with auto-noetic memory – or in Williams James’s terms ‘memory per se’. Auto-noetic or episodic memory involves the ability to recall personal experiences and is different from, for example semantic memory – the recall of ‘facts’ (often characterised as the difference between ‘remembering’ and ‘knowing’ (Tulving 1972). It is associated with other higher-order mental accomplishments such as introspection, reflexivity and anticipation. It is probably true to say that the contributors to this volume are concerned more with the auto-noetic facility more generally, even though several pay particular attention to memory. Collins argues that the self and memory are centrally and similarly involved in all human interaction, and so cannot be excluded from one small part of it, that is, ethnography (see Narayan 1993). Drawing on Schank (1990), he argues that the memory organises experience into retrievable units on which the self draws during social interaction. In this way, then, the self in consort with memory is implicated in ethnography, not only in the field but also in the study. Others, and in particular Coleman and Kohn (and Phipps, if to a lesser extent), argue that the idea of ‘flashbulb memory’, an idea originally introduced by Brown and Kulick (1977) and developed by Endel Tulving (1983, 1993; see also Bruner 1994), is especially relevant in this context. In this case, a present experience sparks a memory of an earlier experience, the connections between them generating further interpretation. There is a proto-analysis of current experience in the light of self-reflection: the self is the incubator of ethnography.

Furthermore, in both cases, however, memory is observed to be embodied, that is, felt directly, rather than understood cognitively (see Spry 2001). Of course, such embodied experiences are open to analysis in the same way as are those experiences felt by others. What is distinctive, unique even, is the experience itself – which gives the ethnographer a peculiar (and seldom discussed) purchase on one’s field. Given that very little has been published on shared (not collective) memories, the Davis twins, in developing the idea of ‘dualling’, are in a position to contribute significantly to the discipline of memory studies. Their claim that their

research contributes to the memory literature at three points (memory as material and embodied, memory as social action and interaction, and memory as shaped by social and cultural processes) accurately identifies the contribution that can be made by anthropology in general to studies of memory. Skinner's chapter is particularly illuminating in relation to embodied experience, indicating clearly the importance of 'shared experience' between ethnographer and informant. In this case, the perception of the other that the anthropologist has experienced dance as she has generates a palpable sense of rapport, the Holy Grail of the ethnographer. Phipps shows how deeply intertwined language learning and practice are with memory processes, and highlights the fact that ethnographers as language learners undergo these processes also. Indeed, the ethnographic experiences related in the chapters below suggest that rapport is likely to be more deeply felt when the embodied aspects of experiences are acknowledged and reflected upon.

Amit and Coleman remind us that forgetting is a key component of memory. Indeed, as Amit avers, given that memory is a process of selection (and of revelation?) then forgetting is a part of remembering. The question of intention arises once more in relation to memory. Neither Coleman nor Amit suggests that the anthropologist should attempt to dredge their memories for relevant experiences. And, indeed, Collins argues that the anthropologist as a competent member of society will always and already draw on their stock of experiences in making sense of the world: what is typical of quotidian life is typical of doing ethnography.

The Self

Whilst this collection does not intend to be a systematic interrogation of the nature of the self, it does seek to reveal certain aspects of the self and, more specifically, the ethnographic self, through its focus on the role of experience and memory in ethnography. The concept of the self in Western society is a relatively modern development. The self itself is a social construction and yet one that is persuasive within the societies where anthropology itself is 'at home'. Giddens (1991) locates the self as a highly reflexive endeavour within 'high modernity' contrasted with traditional societies which ascribed identities more readily through an individual's place within a community. Holstein and Gubrium situate the 'social self' (2000) within Western thought as it has developed during the past century.

Questions of the self and personhood have been of interest to anthropologists for some time, beginning perhaps with Marcel Mauss (1985 [1938]), taken further by Marilyn Strathern (1988) and the many

anthropologists following her (Lutz 1988; Battaglia 1990; Jackson and Karp 1990; Myers 1991 [1986]), more recently explored by Anthony Cohen (1994) and Nigel Rapport (2003). This varied literature dwells mainly on cultural differences in personhood, certainly the main focus in Strathern's discussion of Melanesian 'dividuality' in *The Gender of the Gift* (1988), and to a degree ethnographies on personhood in Melanesia also acted as cultural critiques of individualism in the West. Lutz, working on emotions on the Micronesian atoll of Ifaluk (1988), makes this point apparent by what appears to be a direct comparison of the socio-centric self in Micronesia based on ethnographic research with the Western individual based in her knowledge (experience?) of US American discourses. These early works have long been criticised, partly for their focus on ideologies of personhood rather than everyday practices (LiPuma 1998), and partly for their superficial treatment of the Western self (Kusserow 1999). The individual, typically based in the US American context, has been seen as a single bounded entity that exerts agency and rational choice. On a continuum between socio-centric and egocentric concepts it is usually located on the most egocentric end. More recent work has aimed to address this imbalance, showing that individualist concepts can similarly entail socio-centric notions, and vice versa (LiPuma 1998; Kusserow 1999).

However, the issue of balancing ideologies of personhood with social practice remains a challenge, one that has been aptly taken up by scholars working on narrative. Holstein and Gubrium refer to this as 'discursive practice' and 'discourse in practice' (2000). The former is the focus of ethnomethodologists, they explain, the latter that of Foucauldian analysis. Yet both approaches have a parallel that the authors use to describe narrative self-construction: 'One source of convergence would surely be the recognition of the artful yet locally structured stories that comprise the contemporary self in practice' (p. 103). Holstein and Gubrium, like Giddens (1991) and others, remind us that in this time of high modernity the individual self is constructed across a much greater variety of contexts than at other times in history.

The literary or narrative turn that made this focus possible, also left its mark on anthropology with a growing number of ethnographers exploring self-construction through narratives. Kleinman firmly established narrative as a way of interrogating self-construction in illness (1988). Vieda Skultans's engaging ethnography *The testimony of Lives: Memory in Post-Soviet Latvia* (1998) uses stories related to her in letters and interviews to explore questions of agency, suffering and culture, to name but a few. In a shorter article Skultans explores how her informants engage with their KGB files (2001). The interrogation protocols, she explains, are particular texts in that they are based on a highly restricted and repetitive lexicon, they take on a monological appearance – the language and choice of terminology of the

interrogator is mirrored exactly in the responses of the interrogated; they are authorless – the protocols bear no signature or similar; and they lack representational value thus contradicting her informants' memories of the social realities of the narrated situations. In this situation Skultans observes how her informants re-establish agency and self-identity in their engagement with the files, and with her as dialogical partner. They do so through arguing with the protocols: they read passages, and respond, criticise and correct use of language, facts, they remember, add details on circumstances and persons involved. This harrowing example aptly shows that self-construction requires dialogue and relies on a perception of both the self and the other (see Bruner 2002).

The literature on the self in narrative highlights the social aspects of self-construction. To begin with it requires at least two persons, as Bruner points out: every story requires a teller and a told (2002). Secondly, in modern times contexts of self-construction are manifold. Just like memories, narratives are culturally and contextually bound. They must make sense as stories to the people around. Holstein and Gubrium (2000) go further in arguing that narratives are reactions not only to social contexts but simultaneously serve to shape these contexts. They do so not least because they are also grounded in the experiences of the narrator prior to this particular encounter.

This then means that the self is multiple, socially embedded and emergent, and thoroughly implicated in processes of learning, becoming, experiencing and remembering. This is also what the chapters in this volume reveal about the self in general, and the ethnographic self more specifically. It is indisputable that the self is central to all human interaction. At the very least, we all draw on our own memories in efforts to understand each other. Ethnography as the investigation of human interaction through observation and participation is hence dependent upon the ethnographer's self. Moreover, memory plays a significant part in fieldwork, and perhaps even more explicitly in the study. We do not write down every fieldwork experience – just imagine trying to do so – but rather carry much of that experience around with us as 'head-notes', that is, in our memory. If that is so, the self with its memory will provide a valuable resource in ethnography.

The Ethnographic Self as a Resource

The self can be brought into play intentionally, by holding fieldwork experiences, especially those from different fields, in juxtaposition in order to facilitate the illumination or complication of one by the other. We may choose to undertake projects, as in the case of Dyck and Amit, partly

because of our previous experiences in a field and we might add that Collins chose to study British Quakers as a British Quaker; Skinner was an accomplished dancer before he commenced fieldwork on salsa; Nadel-Klein undertook her study as a fellow gardener, Phipps interrogates language learning as a former student of German, and, of course, the Davis twins have undertaken research on twins for the most obvious of reasons. In each case, they were consciously aware that their selection of field site would enable them to draw on their self-narratives, which would, in turn, enrich their ethnography.

At the heart of each of the chapters that follow is a consideration of what it means to be competent as an ethnographer. Social and cultural competence is developed during the lifecourse and, whilst related to memory, it goes further by relying on embodied knowledge that we are often unaware of. Competence can span vastly different phenomena, from riding a bicycle (or pony, in the Davises's case), knowledge about whether or not to judge somebody else's garden (Nadel-Klein), to being able to speak another language (Phipps). Some of our competences may therefore be required in the field, others will be developed during fieldwork, whilst our ethnographies may show whether we are competent authors and fieldworkers. Competence in culture, one's own or another, is closely related to, and yet a step forward from, cultural intimacy. Herzfeld argues that good fieldwork depends on a social intimacy with informants, which then may lead to cultural intimacy (2000). Yet a question arises. When arriving at the level of cultural intimacy and competence, have we closed the matter to analytic reflection? Or may it be that reflexive consideration of the acquiring of competences would serve to reveal processes of the production of culture and anthropological knowledge that we are looking for? This line of thought harmonises with Phipps's observation that important dynamics are at work at the interstices of expression between the interiorised remembered present and the exteriorised thick description of the field. Furthermore, Larsen, Rapport and Šikić-Mićanović show how situations where we are uncomfortable, feel at fault, struggle with ourselves and others are moments that bring us close to important anthropological insights as we straddle cultural conventions. Through the varied ethnographic examples provided here, we are arguing that such competence relies to an extent on drawing on the self as a resource grounded in either experience or memory or both.

There are hazards. We cannot avoid issues of ethics in admitting the self into the field. The first question we are required to face is the extent to which using the self as a resource is a ploy or conscious strategy. An existentialist might criticise the adoption of such a position as an example of bad faith – as representing ourselves publicly as something we are not. We can assume that there is a difference between experience (for instance

of the unity two people achieve in dance) and the faking of that experience. This is a problem for anthropologists working at home in particular, because the possibility of 'faking it' is likely to be relatively easy. Secondly, we must be careful in implicating family and friends in our ethnography. We may assume that those very close to us 'will not mind' or even that we can speak for them in such matters – this seems to us a dangerous assumption. Do they not become informants the moment they enter our ethnography and therefore deserve the same respectful treatment as informants we met during our ethnographic investigations? Such an issue need not arise, but, when it does, it is incumbent on the anthropologist to face it squarely. Finally, we should ask ourselves *why* on any particular occasion we understand our own experiences to be relevant to the ethnography. If writing ourselves into our texts is a trope, we need to address the epistemological questions arising from this.

Not only serving as a resource for the ethnographer, the self might also be drawn upon by others. We can never wholly determine the way others see us. During interviews our research participants might, more or less explicitly, treat us as a resource in trying to establish our position as regards material or other resources; indeed, a certain symbolic capital might be accumulated merely by being seen as a confidante of the anthropologist. Alternatively, perhaps the ethnographer will be constructed as a conduit, receiving information which he or she will be expected to pass on in the interests of the research participant. There may be other gains, sought for and/or achieved – a greater sense of one's own importance for example, or the opportunity to unburden oneself to an insignificant stranger who can be relied upon to keep ones secrets. Larsen, conducting fieldwork in a small Norwegian village explores these aspects of ethnographic work.

Envoi: Towards an Integrated Ethnography

While Cohen (1994) argues persuasively for a self-conscious anthropology, we argue further that as anthropologists we should draw on our selves as a resource in doing ethnography. The chapters comprising this collection aspire to an approach to ethnography that seeks to achieve something other than reflexivity, though there is little doubt that without the 'reflexive turn' this book could never have appeared. Through this increasingly prevalent ethnographic self-awareness, we are provided with the possibility of a different kind or mode of ethnography. Ontologically, the new ethnography has the potential to be truly dialogical. This clearly has moral repercussions. However, the authors here are attempting to deal less with arising epistemological and ontological issues, and more with a set of methodological problems: given

that anthropologists are far more likely in the twenty-first century to acknowledge a central role of the anthropologist's self in producing ethnography, how can we further shape this development in ways that produce more interesting ethnography?

We have attempted in this introductory chapter both to provide the disciplinary context for the key themes that are developed in the chapters that follow and, more importantly, to argue about the necessity of taking steps forward from self-reflexivity and what has been referred to as auto-ethnography. This volume explores a kind of ethnographic research and writing that utilises the anthropologist's experiences and memories in a systematic fashion. We aim to show how this creates greater transparency in the production of anthropological knowledge and how it serves to produce rich ethnographies. We have chosen to focus on the influential text *Writing Culture* but in doing so are well aware of the danger of glossing over most of the twists and turns of the story. To illustrate this point with a single example, here is a quote from Edmund Leach, one-time doyen of British anthropologists:

The data which derive from fieldwork are subjective and not objective. I am saying that every anthropological observer, no matter how well he/she has been trained, will see something that no other such observer can recognize, namely a kind of harmonic projection of the observer's own personality. And when these observations are 'written up' in monograph or any other form, the observer's personality will again distort any purported 'objectivity'. (1984: 22)

The experiences of anthropologists are often highly relevant for their doing and writing ethnography. This is the case in particular for 'native anthropologists', for whom this may also mean memories from times before their professional training. Therefore, we argue that anthropologists should include personal experiences as data in their analysis. Not to do so seems to us (the authors of this chapter) at best to represent an opportunity lost and at worst a moral transgression. We would go further, however, in maintaining that no anthropologist can afford to omit consideration of the possibility that they may themselves be their own, intimate informants. Yet we acknowledge, reminded by Dyck in this volume, that this must also be a self-critical act. We therefore imagine an ethnography where the voice of the anthropologist, drawing on remembered experience, is one among others, and by this means we demonstrate a self-conscious methodology, which moves between the two poles of conservative self-reflexivity (as criticised by Salzman 2002) and poetic auto-ethnography (à la Ellis and Bochner 1996, 2002). We believe that this approach represents a substantive contribution to and expansion of ethnography.

The Book

The volume addresses the themes outlined above through its chapters. Each chapter addresses one or more of these issues. Some have a focus on memory, others on the self, some discuss anthropology at home explicitly, and others speak about varying fieldwork settings. Through the inclusion of chapters from a range of countries and settings the volume aims for the ethnographic richness and variety that have been the hallmark of the anthropological endeavour.

The book is envisioned to be used as a resource by readers, teachers and students. The chapters have been ordered into three – overlapping – sections. These are ‘Being Self and Other: Anthropologists at Home’, ‘Working on/with/through Memory’, and ‘Ethnographic Selves through Time’. Within each section readers will find a number of contributions that present original ethnographic material from a wide variety of social contexts. The book can hence be read from start to finish following the line of argument we as editors imagined beginning here with the introduction and ending with Fernandez’s thoughtful epilogue. However, chapters can also be read as distinct stand-alone essays, and the book may be dipped into depending on the reader’s interests. Finally, we have attempted in this introduction to make apparent the implicit as well as the explicit connections between chapters though imagine that the reader will, typically, trace other continuities (and perhaps discontinuities) that we may well have missed.

Note

1. There is a subtle difference here, which we will not discuss further in this introduction.

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PART I:

**BEING SELF AND OTHER:
ANTHROPOLOGISTS AT HOME**

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