Doing fieldwork, doing anthropology. Anthropological perspectives, challenges and problems in humanities and social sciences

Educational and pedagogical tool

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About the Author

Michał P. Garapich is an anthropologist, author and co-author of over 60 publications in English, Polish, French, Czech and German. He holds a PhD from Jagiellonian University, Kraków, supervised by Prof. Zdzisław Mach. After a scholarship at the University of Padova, he lectured and conducted research at University of Surrey, and then at University of Roehampton. In 2023 he took the position of Professor of Sociology at the London Metropolitan University, at the School of Social Sciences and Professions. Michał conducted research and wrote on migration from Poland, transnationalism, far-right, deathscapes, resistance, homelessness, nationalism, diaspora, Roma, and intimate ethnography. His fieldwork experience involves Britain, Poland, Ukraine and Peru. He is the author of two monographs: London Polish Borders. Transnationalizing Class and Ethnicity among Polish migrants in London (Ibidem Verlag 2016) and Dzieci Kazimierza (Czarne 2019) for which he received the History Book of the Year Prize granted by Polityka (top Polish weekly magazine). He also co-authored a monograph on migrants' social remittances (Migrants as Agents of Change, Palgrave 2017; with Izabela Grabowska, Ewa Jaźwińska and Agnieszka Radziwinowiczówna).

Michał's research expertise falls in broadly understood migration studies, with the focus on migration from Poland, diaspora radicalisation, nationalism, ethnicity, homelessness, political participation, far-right movements, and social resistance. His recent monograph ventured in the area of intimate ethnography, family studies, emotions in the context of family history and complex Polish-Ukrainian relations. His fieldwork with homeless migrants in London (2010-11) has resulted in a decade long partnerships with various homeless charities for which he, and his students, conducted numerous research projects which aided the charities in their PR, fundraising and improving their practice. For his work with students and charities helping the homeless, Michał was twice nominated for a teaching award (Times Higher Education, Central European University). Currently he is the Principal Investigator in a 3 year (2023-2026) ESRC funded study on participation of migrants from Poland in transnational far-right politics.

1. Introduction to this publication – structure, examples, readings

This publication aims is to equip scholars, in particular Early Career Researchers (ECRs) with a broad and applicable understanding of what are the epistemological, theoretical and historical roots of anthropology and what it means to *do* social anthropology and *use* ethnographic methods. The publication covers broad areas that introduce the reader into historical dimensions of anthropological practice while also rooting it in development of theory. The chapters follow standard textbook format: they introduce the reader into some basic debates, discussions, controversies within anthropology, along with a broader reflection on political and social changes in the wider world. Some areas will be offered examples from Author's own research experience. Due to sometimes delicate nature of ethnographic research practice, many examples are anonymized at the level of individuals, time, place and personal details. Each section will also contain substantial quotes from some classic thinkers and scholars to be used in teaching practice. Each chapter will also contain a list of additional readings that covers the subject, or links to visual material that captures some issues (for example lectures by leading scholars in the field). The Appendix contains specially prepared lecture slides that can be used by scholars, for their own educational or pedagogical purposes. Slides are divided into several subsections and broadly follow the format of this publication.

The publication is an aid, not a comprehensive and exhaustive account of a particular topic in anthropology. Although great care has been taken to reflect on what is happening now in various branches of anthropology, the Author works on few narrow topics and fields, therefore cannot claim to have a full knowledge of other fields discussed in this publication. At the same time concrete, life examples from anthropological fieldwork serve to demonstrate how complex, messy, chaotic but also rewarding anthropology and ethnographic methods can be.

2. Political significance of anthropology and its methods

Anthropology – encompassing social, cultural, linguistic, biological – has rich and complex history reflecting both global political changes of the last two centuries as well as progression of various trends in philosophical and scientific reflection on human species. This chapter presents in compatible, but reflective way what anthropologists did, and how as a discipline it developed in a particular social, cultural and economic context.

In essence anthropology takes the centre of its interest the mankind in a most holistic way. The subject is man in its full humanity – as a species that engages in biological, social, economic, symbolic and political activity, man as social animal and a product of both nature and culture. This reflection is of course as old, as humanity itself. What distinguishes anthropological reflection however is a strong attention and recognition of human unique in animal kingdom diversity – in culture, biology, social formation, politics, language etc. Recognition and making sense of that diversity is the founding principle of anthropology and its cornerstone.

The reflection on this feature of human species is as old as humanity itself. All major philosophers, prophets, poets, thinkers and early scholars recognized this. All also pondered on the status of man in the world. Homer, authors of the Gilgamesh saga, records kept by ancient Egyptians and Maya attest to this – all in their own way reflected and recognized that humans differ among themselves, speak different languages, believe in different gods. In many societies humans also belonged to different species, the concept of one humankind is fairly recent. Interestingly, modern archaeological record of human evolution attest to this – there were numerous humanoids, different species belonging to human evolutionary tree. Some, lived simultaneously.

Herodotus, a Greek historian, traveller and philosopher is probably the most known early thinker who wrote about diversity of ways of being and reflected on its origins, and meaning. In his most famous chronicle, entitled "History", Herodotus writes about the Persian Empire, the main enemy of the Greek city states of antiquity and his descriptions contain plenty of detailed data on numerous cultures, people, societies and ways of life in the Empire. What he also did – which later anthropologists often replicated – is to articulate a view that for him these people were inferior to the Greeks, he uses comparative angle to show how and where they differ, with the aim of showing that cultures, civilisations are organized in a hierarchical order. Some information he collected is very valuable and detailed, but for a contemporary reader it is also highly political – Herodotus writes as a Greek and does not hide it – and it is obvious for him that Greeks way of doing things is superior.

As he has written:

If anyone, no matter who, were given the opportunity of choosing from amongst all the nations in the world the set of beliefs which he thought best, he would inevitably—after careful considerations of their relative merits—choose that of his own country. Everyone without exception believes his own native customs, and the religion he was brought up in, to be the best; and that being so, it is unlikely that anyone but a madman would mock at such things. There is abundant evidence that this is the universal feeling about the ancient customs of one's country.

This quote is often put as the prime example of ethnocentrism, an exclusivist approach to difference seen in hierarchical order. The quote may also serve as a motto for any nationalist slogan, or credo of isolationist, nativist programme. We can also argue that the statement is also empirically anthropologically wrong – after all what about rebels, innovators, revolutionaries and people who simply thought that some aspects of their culture, customs, beliefs is not perfect or in fact, may be detrimental to human development. What about people who change societies, innovators, people who contest, rebel against power. Socrates, who was born after Herodotus did actually held pretty critical views of Greeks and their religion. He was also sentenced to death for his

views. The statement thus is problematic historically as it does not account for change, development and social evolution.

But Herodotus's input in anthropological thinking evident in this quote lies in his recognition that apart from judgments of people whose culture or nation is better or worse, we need also to accept that people do things differently and they have also the right to see their ways of life as superior. Consider this quote about a peculiar custom of decision making among Persians:

If an important decision is to be made, they [the Persians] discuss the question when they are drunk, and the following day the master of the house where the discussion was held submits their decision for reconsideration when they are sober. If they still approve it, it is adopted; if not, it is abandoned. Conversely, any decision they make when they are sober, is reconsidered afterwards when they are drunk.

Combined with the first quote, the logical conclusion after reading Herodotus is that for Persians this is the best way to make decisions, however odd, difficult to comprehend it may be for the Greeks. Read that way, Herodotus in fact gives us a glimpse of another cornerstone of anthropology: cultural relativism.

The concept was developed in early 20th century, but it really encompasses what Herodotus had in mind. We must accept that peoples' ideas and ways of being may be strange, and incomprehensible in our view, but in the view of people who lived and were socialized in that culture, it is the opposite. And we cannot fully understand other people through trying to impose our perceptions into their.

Franz Boas, one of founding fathers of modern anthropology captured that sentiment:

…civilization is not something absolute, but … is relative, and … our ideas and conceptions are true only so far as our civilization goes.

Cultural relativism in essence means that we cannot understand fully other people, other cultures without taking into account their system of values and norms, and that our own

judgments stem from our own culture. In epistemological terms and taken to extremes it means that human mutual understanding is impossible. But it is actually anthropology which contests this – after all Herodotus aimed at describing other people with the hope of understanding their ways of life.

This points to fundamental political nature of anthropological research and its methods, but as we are also people historically rooted in given time and space the knowledge we produce is partial and contingent on who we are, where we live and what moment of history we find ourselves in.

This conclusion however was really brought to the front of anthropology much later, after 2nd World War with the increased awareness of links between anthropology and colonialism. Before that, a most important moment of history of anthropology is the raise of what we today understand as long term anthropological fieldwork.

Long term anthropological fieldwork emerged as a proper method in early 20th century, most notably developed by Bronisław Malinowski, Franz Boas, Alfred Radcliffe-Brown and other scholars broadly seen as founders of structuralist-functionalist school. The method itself emerged in opposition to the so called armchair anthropology, essentially scholars who wrote their work based on second hand accounts (for example James Frazer). Revolutionary at the time it essentially involved spending long period of time doing participant observations – spending considerable time living with people studied, learning their language, socializing, interviewing and learning how they think.

The method remains the basis of anthropology today but its epistemological foundations and positionality in relation to searching objective knowledge has shifted considerably. Early ethnographic research agreed on cultural relativism, but at the same time believed that the anthropologist has unique access and unique understanding which is objective and impartial and that his or hers positionality does not affect people under scrutiny. This position rooted in positivism and naturalism was met with strong criticism few decades later, with increased awareness of anthropology own Western-centric roots and most importantly, its links with colonialism, violence and in case of Nazi scholars - genocide. Furthermore, the impact of postmodernism, so called literary turn pointing to

anthropological connections with literature, structuralism and symbolic interactionism has even further dented the belief that ethnographic knowledge leads to stable, unmovable objective truth. The dominant perspective has begun to emerge, that in social sciences we are in a liquid territory of subjectivity and relativism and what is in fact accessible, is rather other peoples' constructions of truth and reality.

In that space, Clifford Geertz offers some sound, realistic but also empirically grounded assessment. His *Interpretations of Cultures* can be considered one of most important texts in modern anthropology, but is also widely quoted in social sciences and humanities. Here what he has to say about ethnographic methods and search for truth:

What the ethnographer is in fact faced with—except when (as, of course, he must do) he is pursuing the more automatized routines of data collection—is a multiplicity of complex conceptual structures, many of them superimposed upon or knotted into one another, which are at once strange, irregular, and inexplicit, and which he must contrive somehow first to grasp and then to render. And this is true at the most down-to-earth, jungle field work levels of his activity; interviewing informants, observing rituals, eliciting kin terms, tracing property lines, censusing households ... writing his journal. Doing ethnography is like trying to read (in the sense of "construct a reading of") a manuscript—foreign, faded, full of ellipses, incoherencies, suspicious emendations, and tendentious commentaries, but written not in conventionalized graphs of sound but in transient examples of shaped behavior.

The attention to rituals, metaphors, meaning, symbols, constructions of reality has been popular in social sciences elsewhere, most importantly in sociology, whose founding thinkers, like Max Weber has been an inspiration for Geertz. In his famous definition of culture, Geertz directly refers to him, but also captures one of most important aspects of anthropological reflection: change and human agency:

Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning.

It is explication I am after, construing social expressions on their surface enigmatical. And it is not even, finally, meanings that I am after, but rather significances. Culture is not a power, something to which social events, behaviors, institutions, or processes can be causally attributed; it is a context, something within which they can be intelligibly— that is, thickly— described. In brief, a little thicker description is what we need in this life, and that is what, I am here to argue, ethnography, properly conceived as a thick description of particular social situations, does indeed provide. The task of the ethnographer is to make the familiar strange and the strange familiar, to take, as it were, the native's point of view, to get inside his head and see the world the way he does, to delineate the ethos of his culture as that ethos is manifested in actual behavior.

So – in essence this means that an anthropologist is never transparent and has access to limited knowledge only. Furthermore his positionality is affecting the field – who he is, what he does, how he looks like, what ideas he has and in what political context his research has emerged. How others see an anthropologist is very important as it says a lot about particular people responses to key issues: power, knowledge, gender, class, hierarchy, strangers, whiteness/blackness and wider world. But also who pays for research, who decides what is important, what isn't and who listens to the findings? Below, in form of a conclusion are my thoughts about my experiences of researching homeless Polish migrants in London during my fieldwork there in 2010/2011.

My study was funded by Southlands Methodist Trust, and independent charity that supports socially engaged social science. But I also had some research questions from local authorities in Hammersmith and Fulham (a borough in West London), where the issue of homelessness among migrants was also raised numerous times in my meetings with them. So after few months of my research I was approached by a council official whether I could conduct a small study there to find out why homeless people, who seem to be of Polish origin (this wasn't certain) congregate in parks and on pavements. The rationale there was however to also offer solutions what to do with them. I carried out this study but always had a sense that my task was similar to one of early colonial anthropologist – to go out and find out what 'these' people are up to. Why they do what

they do? Are they a threat to social order? Are they here to stay or leave? I was asked several times by local officials for example, why is that Polish migrants drink in parks, on benches. Why don't they go to a pub? My research offered them a clear and fairly non-complex explanation – Poles prefer to drink in parks, not just because it is cheaper. But also because it offers them a sense of isolation from British people who in pubs would approach them, ask and socialize – these particular people in parks were not in the mood of socializing. Also, it is a quite common sight in Poland – working class men do drink in public, it is a standard practice to consume alcoholic beverages outside. My explanation was fairly simple and gave space for the council officials to start thinking about ways to discourage Poles from drinking in parks. I felt this was where class domination and oppression made itself apparent. Council officials had nothing against families having picknicks and drinking prosecos, but congregating men who speak a foreign language and are not very sociable pose a threat and sense of disorder. So in fact, the politics of research were laid bare here.

Additional suggested readings:

- Eriksen, Thomas H. (2001) Small Places, Large Issues: an Introduction to Social and Cultural anthropology. London: Pluto Press (a readable 101-type text)
- Gay y Blasco, Paloma & Huon Wardle. (2007) How To Read Ethnography. London: Routledge
- Ingold, Tim (ed.) (1996) Key Debates in Anthropology. Oxford: Berg
- Keesing, Roger. (1997) Cultural Anthropology: a Contemporary Perspective. New York and London: Harcourt Brace
- Kuper, Adam. (1991) Anthropology and Anthropologists: The Modern British School. Routledge London
- Greetz, Clifford. 1973. "Deep Play : Notes on Balinese Cockfight." In *The Interpretation of Cultures : Selected Essays*, by Clifford Greetz, 415. New York: Basic Books.
- Greetz, Clifford. 1973. "Thick Description : Toward An Interpretive Theory of Culture." In *The Interpretation of Cultures : Selected Essays*, by Clifford Greetz, 3–33. New York: Basic Books.
- Lévi-Strauss, C., 1955, *Tristes tropiques*. Librairie Plon.
- Malinowski, B., 1922, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*. E.P. Dutton.
- Mauss, M., 1950[1923-24], *Essai sur le don. Forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïques*. Presses Universitaires de France.
- Appadurai, A., 1996, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Boas, F., 1911, *The Mind of Primitive Man*. MacMillan.
- Mead, M., 1928, *Coming of Age in Samoa*. William Morrow and Co.
- Douglas, M., 1966, *Purity and Danger*. Routledge & Kegan Paul.

3. Rise of reflexivity

The above developments in anthropological craft meant that anthropologists increasingly became aware of reflexive nature of social research. In essence, reflexivity entails a deeper understanding of own positionality, own privilege or lack of it, own judgements, personality, background – in order to realize how all this impacts the research process – choice of the field, choice of topic, data gathering, emotional reactions, data analysis, dissemination and continuous relations with the field. But reflexivity also refers to the fact that people who are studied and observed also reflect and comment on what is happening. This research attention has been famously shown in Clifford Geertz text on cockfighting in Bali, *Deep Play*. The article is also highly influential proposing the definition of culture as a 'text to be read'.

Reflexive nature of social research therefore embeds more deeply the researcher and research process into the findings and explorations during fieldwork. There are numerous examples of this, listed in the bibliography. One useful description comes from Olmos-Vega et al (2022):

Qualitative researchers engage in reflexivity to account for how subjectivity shapes their inquiry. Reflexivity is tied to the researcher's ability to make and communicate nuanced and ethical decisions amid the com-plex work of generating real-world data that reflect the messiness of participants' experiences and social practices (Finlay 2002a). In other words, their subjective perspective(or "bias") is fundamentally intertwined with qualitative research processes. And while the researcher's perspective has many positive impacts, failure to attend to reflexivity can negatively impact the knowledge built via qualitative research and those connected to it. For example, failing to account for unexpected power dynamics between participant and interviewer can lead to situations where some participants feel pressured to disclose personal details that they are not comfortable talking about, or feel silenced, preventing them from sharing the fullness of

their experience. In such cases, participants can be harmed and data quality suffers. Engaging in reflexivity can help researchers avoid such pitfalls.

Reflexivity as a method and social phenomena comes hand in hand during fieldwork experience. This is why a fundamental tool of an ethnographer in the field is the diary, fieldwork notes that are taken during or immediately after observation of a particular event, situation, interview, ritual, encounters. Notes are also sometimes very messy and chaotic – this reflect the chaotic nature of social life in general. Self-reflection may be difficult to disentangle from observed data, and some anthropologist even try to keep two diaries, one more personal with own emotions, thoughts of intimate nature, another more distanced, about the facts observed, events, talks etc.

Note from the field

To illustrate, I present below an ethnographic note taken as part of my ongoing research into Polish immigrants joining far-right groups in the United Kingdom (funded by Economic and Social Research Council, 2023-2026). The note is from a meeting of activists of Britain First – a British far-right, ultra-nationalist, anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim, nativist political party which had huge online following before it was deplatformed in 2016 (see for more details: Why is Britain First big online? - BBC News). The note is anonymized to preserve the anonymity of the activist who has introduced me to the meeting. The only person not anonymized is the party leader, Paul Golding.

Britain First meeting ethnographic note.

When: early 2024

Where: East London.

Who: Michał, with respondent XX.

The evening can be divided into my time travelling with XX from London Bridge to 000 which was about 4 hours. XX is on crouches moves very slowly and requires attention. He looks scruffy, although for the meeting he shaved his beard. He wears old clothes, and hasn't washed recently, which he explained that this is because he is afraid of getting into shower for fear of falling. If he falls he is unable to stand back. In essence, XX looks like a poor man, neglected and a little sad. He has a deodorant in his pocket to kill the smell.

On our way to 000 he was worried we will be late, he texted an automated response machine from Britain First, and then called them talking to an answer machine in heavy Polish accent: "Hello my name is XX, I am Britain First member…". I was sitting next to him, and it was crowded, so I suspect some people heard. I wonder what they thought. It felt awkward.

We were 30 min earlier, at the station in front a white van stood and I recognized Paul Golding straight away, striped suit, haircut ala Picky Blinders. He recognized XX, shook his hand and we also shook hands. He was busy on the phone, as some people also approached the van. I recognized BB a former BNP activists also linked with Generation Identity. We chatted, I introduced myself, told him what I do (in essence, academic researching Polish community political engagement in right wing movements). He asked: "do you have to hide your views" which on the spot I understood as asking if I need to be impartial during my research, but he might have assumed that I am right-wing and need to hide my views working at the University. I got that from Golding too, later on.

I had few minutes with BB to talk also what I want. He was open, said that he is thinking how to approach Polish migrants, but he doesn't know any, apart from XX. But he is planning to, which again prompted my request to spend a day or two on his campaign. He is targeting mainly white working class neighbourhoods in SE, as he said that it is no point in campaigning in "non white areas". His comments were full of the allusion to white Britain being replaced by "them".

At this stage Paul came around and we also had a brief chat. I repeated again my role. But I sense, they don't particularly listen, they constantly assume, I am there with XX, so must be like him. This made me think about how they construct Polishness and why this may

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be attractive to some Poles, like XX. I elaborate on this later on. We also talked about their trip to Warsaw (he went to the Marsz Niepodległości in November 2023). "Lovely", "fantastic" "brilliant", "Patriotic". It turned out that they reached out to Polish MEP, member of PiS, Dominik Tarczyński (but I don't know exactly how) without knowing him, hoping just for an introduction and short meet, but Tarczyński took them over in full hospitality mode and they went all day on the march, then dinner. I told them that I was there "marching along, not with, the guys in balaclavas" and he was confused, and not knowing, or pretending to know. I guess maybe they just went where Tarczyński went, and obviously Tarczyński did not want his photos next to White Power and ONR banners. So this is interesting, as I am sure in different context, Golding and BB would feel very comfortable in the company of the nationalist block, guys in balaclavas.

At around 20.10 Golding commanded people to get into the van, and off we went. There were 7 people in the van, with WW a security.

The venue was close by, at YYY. We went in, and the meeting was in a seminar-type room with round table format. I took a beer from the bar, XX ordered the tea (I was basically in a role of his carer, helper). There were 18 people in the room, WW sitting at the door, peeking out from time to time. People were all in their 50 and 60s, three women, one man in 30s very tattooed and with bloodshot eyes and nervousness suggesting some substance in his system.

The meeting started with Golding's talk, which will be online probably, so I will spare. In a nutshell – Britain is a multicultural hell, "they" are taking over everything, English towns resemble Mogadishu, country is run by Etonian elite who do not care about working class people. Islam is alien and dangerous. Britain First is the only force capable of changing it and taking on the liberal, woke, globalist elites. They are working class, decent Christian people under attack.

Then QA came. The main theme is immigration, great replacement and fear of white working class being kicked out of their own country "that once ruled the world". There were some political questions about Gaza ("I don't care, for us, Britain First is that Britain comes first, let them kill each other" – was Golding's reply). One woman in her 50s

introduced herself as from New Zealand (oh, so you're one of us – was his comment) and her story was emotionally charged. She said she has 4 kids, is a victim of domestic abuse from a Ukrainian partner who came because Ukrainians come here claiming to be victims; and is waiting for housing but it is all given to "them". She says that council workers are all "dark" and they all "take care of their own". Everyone was nodding and Golding said that he hears a lot of these stories. He said that New Zeleanders, Canadians and South Africans ("white South Africans" – added Alex Merola, the Italian BF activist, also present).

Golding at some stage had a rant about Churchill what he would say and do if he rose from his grave to walk the streets of Birmingham. "Ask Hitler to bomb it again" – someone threw.

Then questions about international politics came. He said that the tide is rising, Le Pen, Wilmers, AfD ("which is same as us, but in Germany" – he said) are surging and they are confident. He said Trump is certainly going to win. He then he said, that Poland had a great government, lost and "we will see what happens, but I am sure Poles won't take with EU globalists for long and throw them out". He then said, "well we have here two Polish patriots" looking at me and XX. He then said that "we was in Warsaw few months ago, and met this great, leading Polish MEP, a great man, he took care of us for the whole day showing this great patriotic event; Dominik is one of most important Polish politicians…" That was funny actually, because Tarczyński is far from having lots of relevance, and is a relatively minor player in Polish politics, although far-right.

He then said that Poles are different from the English who are suppressed and being abused by the system, Islamists, taken for a Mickey, but Poles are naturally defending their own, they won't take it, they fight. Something I picked with him later.

There was then the recruitment part where he said he needs activists to sign into their WhatsApp group, and what they do now is more "exotic" actions, so displaying banners with anti-immigrant slogans on highways or roundabouts. People then beep in support which gives the activists sense that they are supported. One of important themes in Golding's narratives is victimhood – he and the movement has been relentlessly

harassed, discriminated, arrested, attacked etc by the media, establishment, jihadists, police, MI5, SO15, etc etc. But they do have support among "decent normal white British" and the beeping is the proof.

The meeting then closed with a call for donations, with a bucket passed around. I peacked and there were mainly 20s, some 50s notes, so maybe 500/700 quid. Some people were buying book, hats, merchandise etc.

Then came the picture. BB took a banner of BF and asked supporters to gather in the corner, Golding took the photo. This is the picture you see on Golding's Twitter, I was standing in opposite corner with another two people – WW the security guy and one another guy. I just stood looking, but there was no funny looks at me, or questions asked. I didn't feel awkward, there was no pressure there.

I then approached Alex and introduced myself, gave him my card. He is campaigning in the Wellingborough by-elections. I asked about his Italian roots, he said he is 100% Italian. I asked about his Warsaw trip and whether he saw the Italian fascists there, Casa Pound ("no, I know of them, but don't know them") was the reply. I said I would like to talk, as I am interested why and how minorities, are interested in BF. He said to reach out through Twitter.

Then I managed to approach Golding again, thanked him for the invitation, gave him my card. He looked at the card and said "oh you must keep your head low there" assuming that I am supporter. I said that I am trying to be impartial, and, repeating again for the third time that I do this research on Polish BF activism and also his own take on Poland, Polish connections. He repeated the stuff about Poles being special and because they were attacked and had to defend themselves over centuries, they won't take EU globalists, woke, liberals too long and they will rise. It was then that I realized that thinking in ethnic/nationalists terms, he simply assumes that just because I am Polish I must be a nationalist and patriot etc. This surely resonates with some Polish activists he met. He simply equals Polish = nationalist warrior, and some Poles must fall for it. Better the stereotype of warrior than cleaner or builder – I thought. I then talked a bit about what I am looking for: interview him, but also get to some Polish activists (XX later said that he

won't know) and also his Polish connections and why he makes them. He was positive. I also said we are looking into EDL and that there was a Polish division a decade back, he said yes and that "I can hook you up with Tommy". This may be true, may be just bragging. He said to watch his and Tommy's conversation on Silenced platform, which I said I watched. We discussed a little, then he showed his book saying that everything is there. I said I don't have cash to buy, to which he just gave it to me. I asked for an autograph, and asking my name again he wrote it down, signing the book.

XX took a picture with him, then asked if I want one, to which I said "nie dziękuję" – no thanks. We then slowly moved out. On the way I chatted a bit with the security guy, BB. I thought he also should know my status, told him what I do, he wasn't particularly interested.

Then, it all got wrapped up, we went to the mini bus, and drove back to the station. Again, saying goodbyes, I told Paul what I do, that am interested in researching Polish communities political engagements and that we have plans to follow BB campaign and his Polish connections are really interesting. He said he will email me. So in total, it looks like I told him four times what I do and why I am here.

On our way back to London Bridge, I talked with XX about various things, occasionally probing his online connections, other Polish BF sympathisers.

We touched upon many things, he also told that someone warned him that I may be working for the police. He then promised to look into his phone for connections with other BF sympathisers.

I asked him why BF and Golding invite him and are so welcoming to Poles, and he says that it is good for their PR to show that they are also open to Poles. But he also seemed a little sceptical about the English narrative of the empire (more in the interview) as he likes to say how Brits betrayed Poland etc. And he will not give his blood because Brits are traitors. So in a way he is aware of this English superiority discourse. He also keeps repeating how BF was different when Jadea was there.

Beyond descriptive part, below are few subjective thoughts of the experience and its impact on me:

I am very glad I did it. But there were costs. I was constantly aware of a the thin boundary I am walking, as some present at the meeting may have assumed I am a sympathizer, by default of being Polish and someone who takes care of this old, bold wrestler who speaks with thick Polish accent (so respect for elderly, care etc). But I was also made aware that regardless of how I present myself and am overt and transparent about my profession, aims, they have an interest and investment in assuming that I am one of them. So I was directly exposed to the power of nationalist labels, identification, imposed categories from above (by discourse, history, ideology etc) about my Polishness. Everyone assumed that Polish = nationalist, patriot, sympathiser of the far-right in their own definition. And because of my positionality as researcher I was powerless to contest this. I was powerless to tell them: hang on, Poland is much more than what you think, Polishness is a social historical construct which you shape according to your own ideology. I was powerless also to stand and to say fuck you, I am leaving you racist morons, which in other circumstances I could do. So I deliberately made myself powerless. And I don't like being powerless.

And here XX comes out interestingly, because he roughly knew my role, he knew who I am, nevertheless was ok with vouching for me and taking me along. This was maybe due to practical issues – I did helped him out on train, helping with his crouches etc. But he also wanted to show to his English BF mates that he has brought this Pole, who may be or not, "one of them". This phrase "one of us" was repeated many times, in different context. It is important as it is where/how the boundary is made. And I was being pulled on their side of the boundary, although I really did not want to. But I put myself there, as researcher I chose this situation to be pulled in.

At the same time the paradox is that the only reason I am there is because I am Polish.

I felt bit depressed the day after. Apart from the above stuff, the sense of sadness I felt was about this pile of lies I heard. Lies, lies, lies, misinformation upon misinformation, stereotypes, ideological propaganda, racist rants fed with straight face. You hear it from

Farage, Griffin, Robinson etc. but to see it live is different. Also I am used to hearing all sorts of bizarre views. These views are not bizarre, they are hostile and angry. And based on lies and emotions.

Also, Golding isn't charismatic, he is bit repulsive and comes across as a manipulative man, with this street-savvy smile which means he can throw a punch. A combination of hypocrisy and clumsy kindness with Peaky-Blinders-kind of working class threat of violence. Maybe it is my prejudice. But the level of violence in my view is always on higher level than in Poland. Political violence is something that these people are ok with. The frequent reference to Northern Ireland, the loyalists tradition, the war, the empire, and BF Belfast connection is something that gives a sense of paramilitary menace. BF has a security detail called Britain First Defence (BFD). One guy who was running it at the meeting was kind of small, thin, not what you have expected. But Golding is someone very experienced in violence – MMA fan, boxer, also involved in hundreds of fights (according to himself). Maybe that's reason behind my safety paranoia around the meeting. These guys like a fight, and combined with the Northern Irish ethos of killing, it is threatening. A lot of lad-kind-of exchanges between Tommy Robinson and Golding in their interview revolve around violence – fist fights, prison fights, fights with Muslims on streets, fights with English Gypsies etc. These are violent men who like the adrenaline rush out of a physical confrontation.

So – why I was there? I think for the first time, the answer isn't that simple.

Analysis of ethnographic note taking into account researcher's reflexivity:

As seen, the note contains a mixture of facts, situations, descriptions and opinions, impressions, my own emotions. This is normal and this is in my view how it should be written as in real world we simultaneously see, feel, think, analyse and process our emotions in the light of the very diverse range of stimuli. Apart from the facts, my own reflections focus on the fact that I am seen by some activists as one of them. Despite my overt approach, not hiding my purpose of participation and researcher's role, it was clear that participants *wanted* me to be someone else – one of them, one of the supporters.

And this was also because I was Polish and in their minds, this automatically made me a nationalist, far-right activist. This was difficult emotionally and intellectually as I am far from sharing the views of these activists. I was in fact caught in a tension between me as anthropologist and me as a person with particular political and philosophical views – ones that disagree with the political ideology that was represented at the meeting. At the same time they wanted me to be one of them maybe to avoid confronting me what I am doing there. Far right activists are notoriously hostile towards any academic research which they see as biased, left wing, artificial and untrustworthy. I represent also some academic, university elites that most of these people are not part of – most of BF activists are working class, with little education.

In fact later on, this was made evident. Days and weeks later, despite my repeated attempts to reach out to Golding, he refused to meet me and be interviewed. When I tried again through XX, he texted him saying "not to bring these university people again".

The value of reflexivity lies therefore in constant reflecting on my role, people whom I meet, how they react to my presence. This was a very charged, and potentially unsafe environment for me, but my presence was also slightly disruptive. Although I did not secure an interview with Golding, the way they saw me – as Polish man – was very indicative on how they see Poles in general.

In summary, self-reflexivity is turning subjectivity into one's own advantage. Instead of trying to minimize the role of the researcher, and its bias, self-reflexivity aims at investigating the sources of these biases and their dimensions in order to mitigate any potential distortions of political and emotional nature. Self-reflexivity is not to put researcher at the centre of inquiry but rather to see socially constructed phenomena in their intersubjective totality – we as social animals are made of social relations and reflections of others. Realisation of our own positionality in that sense helps the research process. As Atkinson and Hammersley, the authors of one of most influential books on ethnographic methods point out: *The fact that as researchers we are likely to have an effect on people we study does not mean that the validity of our findings is restricted to the data elicitations situations on which we relied. We can minimize reactivity/and or monitor it. But we can also exploit it: how people respond to the presence of the*

researcher may be as informative as how they react to other situations (Atkinson, Hammersley 1983: 18).

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4. **What is auto-ethnography?**

Reflexivity is a process, not a zero-sum game. In research practice it can take the form of delicate reference to one own positionality – as a man, woman, non-binary – or it can deeply engage with own emotions. In anthropology, and broader in qualitative research, this has given rise to auto-ethnography. There is a rich literature on auto-ethnography, and I present below several definitions:

According to Adams et al. (2015)

Autoethnography is a qualitative research method that: 1) uses a researcher's personal experience to describe and critique cultural beliefs, practices, and experiences; 2) acknowledges and values a researcher's relationships with others; 3) uses deep and careful self-reflection—typically referred to as "reflexivity"—to name and interrogate the intersections between self and society, the particular and the general, the personal and the political; 4) Shows people in the process of figuring out what to do, how to live, and the meaning of their struggles; 5) balances intellectual and methodological rigor, emotion, and creativity; and 6) strives for social justice and to make life better.

Poulos (2021) explains its links and roots in self-reflexivity in following manner:

Grounded in active self-reflexivity, which "refers to the careful consideration of the ways in which researchers' past experiences, points of view, and roles impact these same researchers' interactions with, and interpretations of, the research scene" (Tracy, 2020, p. 2), autoethnography is a method that attempts to recenter the researcher's experience as vital in and to the research process. Autoethnography, simply put, is an observational, participatory, and reflexive research method that uses writing about the self in contact with others to illuminate the many layers of human social, emotional, theoretical, political, and cultural praxis (i.e., action, performance, accomplishment). In other words, autoethnography is an observational data-driven phenomenological method of narrative research and writing that aims to offer tales of human social and cultural life that are compelling, striking, and evocative (showing or bringing forth strong images, memories, or feelings)

Auto-ethnography emerged as a direct consequence of recognizing reflexivity not just a necessary understanding of own positionality, but also as a concrete method and tool of research. Rooted in self-reflexivity, auto-ethnography also should be seen as a processual method with limits, boundaries, self-inspection left to the individual researcher and the context of research. There is always the danger of self-reflectivity turning into self-absorbing endeavour where the researcher writes more about him/herself than about the object of study. But the scope , purpose, range, context of auto-ethnography should be always clearly explained, especially in methodology section.

As an example, I quote below my own methodological note from an article about Polish Roma Jehovah Witnesses (Garapich 2024):

In addition to interviews, informal conversations and participant observation, my ethnography also consisted of a non-discursive reflective immersion into the social situations I witnessed and participated in, a kind of autoethnography of faith, where both my emotions and my experience and beliefs around Christianity also played a role. Raised in the Catholic faith, I am a non-believer. I don't hide this from my interlocutors, but I also don't hide the fact that conversations with Witnesses about religion, interpretation of Scripture, and the history of Christianity have a specific charm for me,

they are informative (a Catholic upbringing usually means ignorance of Scripture, especially the Old Testament) and I just enjoy them - however they can also be tedious, full of repetition and sometimes sterile. To me, autoethnography of religion involves a deeper self-reflection on the role of faith in human life, and this primarily applies to me as a researcher who, through participation in rituals or conversations, acquires a deeper understanding of religious life of my interlocutors. My atheist credo is rooted in the belief that religiosity stems from specific spiritual and intellectual needs shaped in the course of unique individual development. Some people have them, others don't - as it happens, I don't have them, which in itself provides an outlet for self-exploratory reflexive questions that at the same time speak to the broader cultural and social processes that have shaped me.

The above research[1] involved long term multi-sited ethnography (ethnography common in migration studies where the ethnographer follows migration chains, transnational connections) involved plenty of other research questions, but Jehovah Witnesses Kingdom Halls were an important site of fieldwork. But the quote from my article above is a mild, a small fraction of what was going on in that particular space. My intention to include it was to basically say that as an atheist I am able to take other peoples' religious beliefs seriously and recognize their validity through my own belief system. I also explain why I take genuine interest in their faith, and this stems from my own non-believer status, who despite atheism is fascinated by power of religion and its spiritual, political, social, economic grip on humanity. In a way, I am driven by a question on why people have something which I do not, which I am not attracted to. In a way this rises important questions whether someone who believes in Catholic orthodoxy would be able to approach this site with similar methodological mindset. There is a range of writings about this, some of which I include in bibliography.

A separate issue which a deeper auto-ethnography should involve in this case would be to ask the question, why Jehovah Witnesses talk to me at all, why I have been accepted

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to frequent their space. I don't dwell on this in the paper for the abovementioned reasons. But a deeper auto-ethnography should recognize for example that as a non-believer, I am actually fairly important for Witnesses, since my possible conversion would bring another proof of divine intervention. In addition, there is a practical and opportunistic reason. Witnesses see their evangelical proselyting as 'work' in neoliberal sense – as a task with targets, resources invested, time spent and evaluations. So interactions with me, are their duty, which they then report back to their superiors. Auto-ethnographic reflection should then involve a question about unspoken, transactional nature of our relationship – me the ethnographer working for a university, taking data, they - Witnesses - working for the congregation, taking my time and attention.

The issue is important since it puts a complicated relationship between researchers and subjects into ethical dimension. If, as a non-believer, I accept to be the subject of evangelisation even if I strongly doubt their efforts will be successful, am I not deceiving the Witnesses? I have spent long hours listening to their arguments and attempts to convert me, but despite my interest in religion, their efforts were in vain, but I never told this, I never pull back from conversations. I simply waited for their talks to end, to ask about their own lives, personal views, biographies. Was this a form of deception? I follow this issue in the subsequent section on ethics of research.

5. Intimate ethnography – special case of auto-ethnography

Auto-ethnography in that sense is a very processual approach, one that is never really fully accomplished as it develops along the development of research relationship and researcher's engagement with the field – which may carry on for years.

A special case of auto-ethnography developed fairly recently, and involves researching close family members, or significant others that the researcher is somewhat emotionally connected with. Alisse Waterston and Barbara Rylko-Bauer coined the term to capture this method and it has generated significant interest due to its unique approach, but also strong role of emotional labour involved. Waterston approach stems from a deeper

critique of social sciences, which fail – in her view – to grasp increasingly complex reality. As she argues:

Anthropology starts with the whole; other disciplines generally begin with the slice, focusing on a piece of that, making it more likely to lose sight of the larger processes within which it fits. This does not mean that all anthropologists succeed in meeting the discipline's goals, nor does it suggest that scholars in other disciplines are incapable of holistic thinking. It does mean that anthropology and anthropologists are more likely to value and keep their sights on the prize, which is knowledge recognized as interconnected and interwoven... Thus, anthropology is the most dialectical of the disciplines even as, paradoxically, it is itself a distinct discipline. There are other contradictions, too. The "dialectic of confrontation" (Ghani 1987, 346), which characterizes anthropologists' encounters in the field as participant-observers, results in something fixed in its representation, whatever the ethnographic form, regardless of how "sensitive, contextually nuanced, richly detailed and faithful to what it depicts" (Ingold 2017, 21) it may be.

Waterston's writing focused on her father, and in the book "My father's wars. Migration, memory and the violence of the century" (2015) she manages to intertwine his biography with wider issues on war, violence, capitalism, identity and family. The key to grasp her approach is the dialectic between anthropology and self, history and the individual, and processes of violence production with own normalisation of suffering. This powerful book which is both a piece of non-fiction narrative and academic writing argues that dialectics are about seeing connections and relations between spaces that are seen or constructed as separate. As she says:

In the context of the world as it exists, a world that is ever-changing, the effort to "grasp reality" requires a way of thinking that acknowledges movement and interactions as well as the social, political, and economic structures of a system that can be reproduced or undone, in part or completely. (Waterston 2019).

Intimate ethnography, (...), is a particular rendering of grasped reality. As one of the two anthropologists who coined the term intimate ethnography (Waterston and Rylko-Bauer 2006), I centered an "intimate other" as the subject of my research, which is also a study of historically constituted violence. My project takes up Linda Green's (1998) call for scholars to explore "the relationships between violence, embodied subjectivity and self-historical identity, sensate experience, social memory, power, and history"; to do so "without hesitation or detachment"; and to look squarely at a particular "lived life" that has been affected by violence in its various forms.

Below I present my own venture in that genre. In 2019 I published a book entitled *All Casimir's Children* (Polish: *Dzieci* Kazimierza). It isn't strictly academic, it's a narrative non-fiction, saga, looking into sexual violence, masculinity, class hierarchies, illegitimacy and family secrets set in the context of Polish-Ukrainian relations over the last 150 years. The book is about my paternal family. I do not employ any jargon, there are minimal references nor theoretical frameworks. The book contains a lot of intimate, subjective, emotional parts. At the same time, I cannot hide that I am a scholar and my anthropological imagination is used frequently to understand how the past impacts the present on an intimate level in transgenerational manner. Although set in a particular historical and cultural environment, the book has universality of emotions at its core and issues that are cross cultural – class, sexual violence, parental love, sibling relationships, death, and kinship.

Methodologically the book engages 'intimate ethnography' as conceptualized by Alisse Waterson and Barbara Rylko-Bauer. Centring on the 'intimate other' and stretching "methodological boundaries in taking the deeply personal and emotional as our anthropological subject" (Waterston and Rylko-Bauer 2006, p. 398), the method has numerous advantages as a result of crossing and negotiating the emotional and the intimate in a family setting of telling a story. Waterston's and Rylko Bauer's works focus on the lives of their father and mother respectively. The dialectical nature of intimate ethnography for them is a consequence of a decision to start talking to an intimate other as a daughter, but also an anthropologist, as a scholar, and as an intimately and emotionally engaged person. The academic relationship turning into personal isn't new

of course, but in case of family and close Other, the relationship is cyclical, constant and mutually reinforcing intellectually, dialectical in the sense that offering continuous new angles of interpretations and frames of references shifting from the particular to universal, from the small and everyday to broad historical and political, and back. There is an obvious tension generated by this intellectual practice. Clifford Geertz famously wrote that in ethnographic writing the key is "how to sound like a pilgrim and a cartographer at the same time" (Geertz 1988, p. 10), in essence how combine the personal with the objective, how to find oneself in the world, and the world in oneself.

I argue that the strength of intimate ethnography rests on this holistic ambition, its potential opportunity to be able to sound like both pilgrim and cartographer providing also an ethical perspective on possibilities and potentialities. As Waterston states, "[b]y rendering a more complete story of reality than is available in more narrowly focused studies, intimate ethnography also illustrates how everyone and everything are connected, making it possible for us to reimagine and remake the world" (Waterston 2019, p. 8).

Inevitably, the method arises our of emotional relations with close ones. In my case, unlike Waterston and Rylko-Bauer, there was a whole plethora of 'intimate others', and the dialectic much more complicated. The result is that, my own emotions and searches for meanings take precedence, and that involves understanding certain events and issues affecting my childhood, and its consequences. Intimate ethnography in this version becomes a research and writing method of self, in order to understand more holistically the social and historical material I and my close ones are made of.

The protagonist in the title of my book is Kazimierz Garapich, my paternal great-grandfather (1878-1940). He was a relatively wealthy nobleman living in village of Cebrów (ger. Tsebriv, ukr. Цебров), Galicia, part of Austro-Hungarian empire before WW1, Poland between 1918-1939, Soviet Union until 1990 and Ukraine since. He was notoriously promiscuous, a sexual predator, known for fathering a lot of children out of wedlock. He had seven with his wife, Maria Łubieńska, and more than 12 illegitimate children with several local village women – Maryna Szeweluk, Anna Suchecka, Stefania Suchowera.

I grew up with the story of Kazimierz infidelity and sexual activity. In my family the story was told with a mixture of male pride, embarrassment, curiosity, and jokes that conceal uneasiness, but also plenty of silencing, omissions and lies. The identity of the illegitimate children was unknown. However, the story evoked conflicting emotions and feelings – of tension between physical proximity and class distance, but also between the need to remember the past, although in an edited, selected form. Furthermore, my family broadly speaking belongs to Polish post-nobility, which lost financial status during socialism but retained social and cultural capital. This precarious situation where the hard power of wealth was replaced by soft power of symbols, narratives and ideas, forced them to be careful what kind of memory, events, and emotions are passed on next generations. Written memoirs served this purpose and these were my main written sources. Interestingly as I explore further, their function was to act also as a smoke screen a memory-work device whose main purpose was to cloud and distort the past, to hide something.

Since 2013 I began to look. I travelled to Ukraine for the first time to meet people who were related to me but who didn't figure in official family stories. Since then I found, engaged with, and met most of the living relatives of illegitimate children of my great grandfather (these days living in Ukraine, Poland and US). Majority wanted to meet but I was also met with reservation and rejection. I travelled several times to Ukraine and Poland meeting new family members, including Casimir's last child, Irena Suchowera (1932-2019). The legitimate side of my family looked at my endeavours with interest, suspicion, but also condemnation (I often heard: "they are bastards, not family"). In August 2015 I organized a ritual of remembrance in Cebrów, with the unveiling of Casimir's symbolic grave (killed by NKVD in 1941 his remains were never found), attended by over 200 people – from Poland and Ukraine.

The book tells this story. It is about my discoveries, dilemmas and encounters with people who by social convention were not classified as family, despite sharing ancestors, DNA, and striking physical resemblance. Since I uncover facts that were hidden in family memoires or deliberately forgotten, the book also contains discussions over the limits of uncovering family secrets. Where should one stop, what are the boundaries of

uncovering things your ancestors decided should remain hidden or deleted from public accounts? I also ask and try to answer, why look at all? Why did that pursuit draw me to the point of obsession?

As "the workings of family secrets can be analysed in terms of how they both bond and exclude" (Smart 2011, p. 540), my approach using intimate ethnography was to look for emotionally laden spaces of silences, half-truths, innuendos and implicit acknowledgements of emotional wounds. As I explore further in this chapter, the result was a rather unexpected self-driven therapeutical quest for finding an answer to own thinking and my own triggers that kept me interested in the subject, beyond mere 'facts'. Uncovering family secrets has been looked at from various perspectives in social sciences and history, in particular in the context of rising popularity of family history and amateur genealogy (Evans 2011). What's important in the context of the book I wrote, is what Smart notes about various shades, and texture of secrets but also social praxis of keeping or retelling them, as "secrets can be kept alive by innuendo, palpable silences, evasions and rumour" (Smart 543). Secrets then can be more or less 'open', that is available to family members in vague contours, and changing in nature over generations. It is also very possible that the reason for something to becoming a secret may differ from what sustain their secrecy.

In summary, intimate ethnography offers a unique approach precisely because it always tell a unique story. The possibility of connecting individual unique story with a more generalized, collective and social experience is what intimate ethnography offers.

Additional readings:

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6. Ethics – key to methods and planning

Cultural relativism, self-reflexivity and the growing popularity of auto-ethnography has shifted anthropologist attention not to the anthropologist self, but rather to what happens between him/her and the field, the interviewee, the respondent. What goes on in that complex, natural/not-so-natural relationship is what makes anthropological understanding not just intersubjectively comprehensive but also ethically sensible. At the end of the day, this is a relationship between humans and these are deeply engaged in ethical framework of dialogue, connection, understanding but also with a danger of threat of abuse, power struggle, trauma, hierarchy and suffering. This has brought ethical aspects of anthropological research to the forefront.

What are ethics in research? In general, everything that relates to emotional, legal, physical, moral, political repercussions of fieldwork and needs to be taken into account in order for the scientific procedures to follow certain standards. Ethics in medical research where humans are subjects for example must take into account consent of research participants, otherwise they are illegal experiments which cannot be repeated.

Using my example of ethics of researching the far-right, I explore below these points below. Although research into the far-right generates unique ethical challenges I think its benefits outweigh its risks. Notwithstanding the possibility of tensions between the researcher and the participants (ideological, social), the project isn't using any form of deception and adopts an overt approach and seek informed consent from the participants. All personal data are fully anonymized at the stage of transcription and participants guaranteed confidentiality within legal limits. I am often open about my own views while demonstrating respectful indifference to the opinions of the respondents. This is consistent with Frankerberg's (1993) dialogical method as well as with Pilkington (2019) strategy in studying English Defence League members (a British, street based social movement) where she advocates that "through open and sustained research engagement, [...], it is possible to develop the quality of relations necessary to conduct meaningful ethnographic research without deceiving respondents (that you share their views)" (2019: 28). On the other hand, I agree with Pilkington that "to prioritize our own

ethical comfort constitutes not the enactment of an active political stance but, on the contrary, a form of political faintheartedness" (2019: 36). A consequence of that dilemma concerns the possibility that the research unintentionally enhances the reputation of far-right groups and their ideas (Toscano 2019b: 5-7). Yet, as Waldner and Dobratz write "to completely eliminate this possibility of legitimization, it would mean that researchers like us no longer engage in such research" (2019: 54).

In social sciences ethics relate to: a) impact of research process; b) impact of data on research participants; c) researchers' safety. So in terms of ethical considerations using the research into far right as an example:

a) Research process in this case involves potential political repercussions of my study – for example, that some findings may indicate that radicalisation happens within spaces that are seen as mainstream, and receive little attention. Or, some high profile activists may object to the data. Here my responsibility lies within integrity of data and my institution should cover my back. My research and analysis procedures should be shown to be robust and transparent.

b) Ethnographic research fundamental principle is not to cause harm to participants – same as in medical research. In this case it is about ensuring respondents' confidentiality. Research among far right activists, or extreme right activists involves a lot of hate speech – racism, xenophobia, misogyny, homophobia, islamophobia etc. This varies in intensity, but the key to confidentiality is that these views are generally condemned in public, people refrain from articulating them publicly. Some may actually endorse violence or harmful behaviour to others. In the space of the interview this is accepted and actually what this research is about. The ethnographer isn't there to judge, condemn, contest these views (see the note from fieldwork above which shows how uncomfortable this may be). But in order to get a full view of the interviewees' world view, opinions, biography, ideas, cultural outlooks – he needs to be honest and not

constrained in any way. Confidentiality guarantees this; in particular when it comes to more extreme activists. In case of this research for example, some respondents have been charged and convicted of hate crimes. Others have links with extreme organisations that are known to plan terror attacks on British politicians. Others have connections to organized crime. The only time when I am legally obliged to lift the confidentiality clause is when I gain some information that consists of physical threat to others – so for example about an imminent plot, attack, or action that will lead to criminal act. This needs to be specific also, so for example when someone says that "I wish all gay people are shipped to Mars" that is a homophobic opinion but not a specific threat. But when someone says that "I am planning of blowing up this gay bar in Soho" then I am legally obliged to inform the authorities.

c) The nature of data inevitably may lead to distress or discomfort of the researchers – some examples are noted in the ethnographic note. The project has a supervision structure, an Advisory Board, and regular meetings within the team to talk about things and emotions that arise. But the paramount issue is physical safety – many respondents as noted have a reputation for violence, and there is a strict rule of meeting only in public spaces, with communication between team members.

A part from this, the study follows the British Sociological Association (BSA) ethics guidelines which emphasize ethical considerations such as the need for confidentiality and anonymity, the need for informed consent, the need to allow the participant to freely withdraw from the project, and the need to ensure that any potential stress is mitigated against. In addition, the guidelines also emphasize the importance for researcher's wellbeing when exposed to controversial content, such as hate speech, racist/xenophobic/homophobic discourses which in this case will apply.

In addition, the study follows all the rules and recommendations as presented in the "Oversight of security-sensitive research material in UK universities: guidance" published in 2012[2].

In essence the ethics aims are to ensure safety of the researcher and avoiding harm to the subjects that are under study. At the same time, working and thinking about ethics and potential risks and harms and how to mitigate them, allows to better plan the ethnographic logistics, something that now everyone think about when embarking on some research.

In most of modern universities, social research contain some form of ethical supervision and Ethics Committees are set to ensure procedures are followed. Sometimes this stems from universities' fear of legal repercussions, libel threat, reputational damage. For example, consider the case of the famous book about Chicago gangsters written by sociologist, doing his PhD, entitled *The Gang Leader for a Day* by University of Chicago doctoral student and then researcher Sudhir Venkatesh (2008). It made a huge impact on academic world, because the book was a bestseller but also Venkatesh's data and publication has led to some criminal convictions. He also admitted to conduct some illegal activities himself, and deceiving the university Ethics board about the conduct of his research. But he also managed to write an incredibly readable book that is both scientific and engaging. This story is a reminder that ethics of research can be sometimes difficult to follow and also ultimately it is about researcher's decision to follow certain path. What is most important to remember is that ethnographers have a responsibility towards their respondents and non-harming principle is very important as it is also a sense responsibility towards future researchers that will come after us.

[2] Research ethics guidance – ESRC – UKRI

Additional readings:

- Sudhir Venkatesh (2008) *The Gang Leader for a Day*; Penguin books
- Ashe, S. D., J. Busher, G. Macklin and A. Winter (eds) (2021) *Researching the Far Right: Theory, Method and Practice*. Oxon and New York: Routledge.
- Barth, F. (1969) "Ethnic groups and boundaries: introduction". In *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, ed. F. Barth. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 9-37.
- Blee, K. M. (2007) "Ethnographies of the Far Right". *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 36(2), 119–128
- Pilkington, H. (2019) "Field observer: Simples. Finding a place from which to do close-up research on the 'far right'". In: E. Toscano (ed.) *Researching Far-Right Movements: Ethics, Methodologies and Qualitative Inquiries*. Oxon and New York: Routledge, 23-40.

Anthropology:

ethnographic
principles, practice, and ethics

Prof. Michał P. Garapich

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My fields…

- Migrants from Poland in the UK
- Homeless migrant men in London
- Urban squatters and land invasions in Cusco
- Roma (in Poland and Britain)
- Family history, auto-ethnography, intimate ethnography
- Ethnography of the far-right (Polish immigrants in the UK)
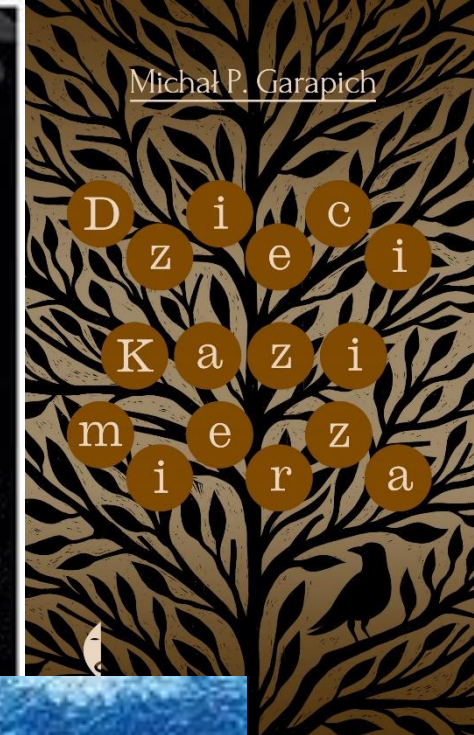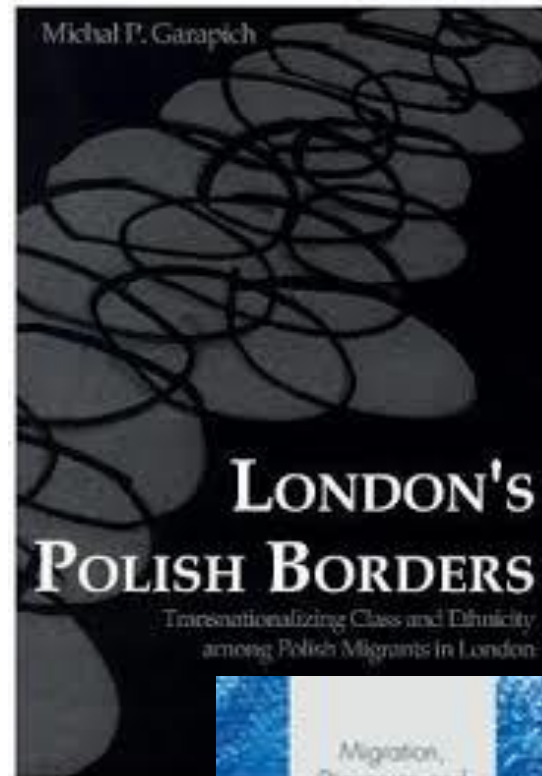
- Anthropological fieldwork allows me to research and write on:

  - class,
  - political participation,
  - migration
  - ethnicity,
  - nationalism,
  - diaspora,
  - gender,
  - masculinities,
  - alcohol
  - race/whiteness
  - homelessness
  - rituals, deathscapes
  - resistance
 - social remittances
  - Far-right/extreme right

- Between the *site of research* and the researched themes, debates on big questions of social sciences
- Big issues through a microscopic social lens on small fields...

Anthropologists doing ethnography

Ethnography – the most basic form of social research (…) it bears a close resemblance to the routine ways in which people make sense of the world in everyday life (Hammersley, Atkison 1983: 2)

In its most characteristic form, it involves the ethnographer participating covertly or overtly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions – in fact collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of the research (Hammersley, Atkison 1983: 1)

Baptist theory of knowledge, or knowledge by total immersion (E. Gellner: *Cause and Meaning in Social Sciences*)
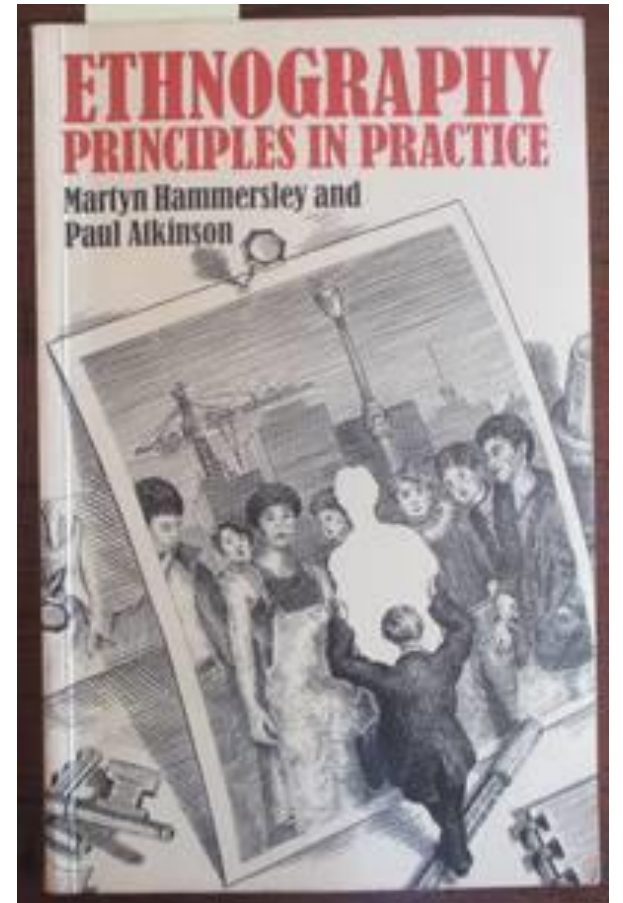
- 'Ethnography is not a particular method of data collection but **a style of research** that is distinguished by its objectives, which are to understand the social meanings and activities of people in a given 'field' or setting, and an approach, which involves close association with, and often participation in, this setting' (Brewer 2000: 59).
- A method
- Style of research
- Genre of writing

Bit of history…

- Early anthropologists of the 19th century – so-called 'armchair anthropologists'
- "Discovery" of anthropological/ethnographic fieldwork method – early 20th century
- Bronisław Malinowski, Franz Boas, Alfred Radliff Brown and many others…
- Prolonged stays in a bounded social space of "exotic" environment.
- Chicago School – ethnographies of urban America
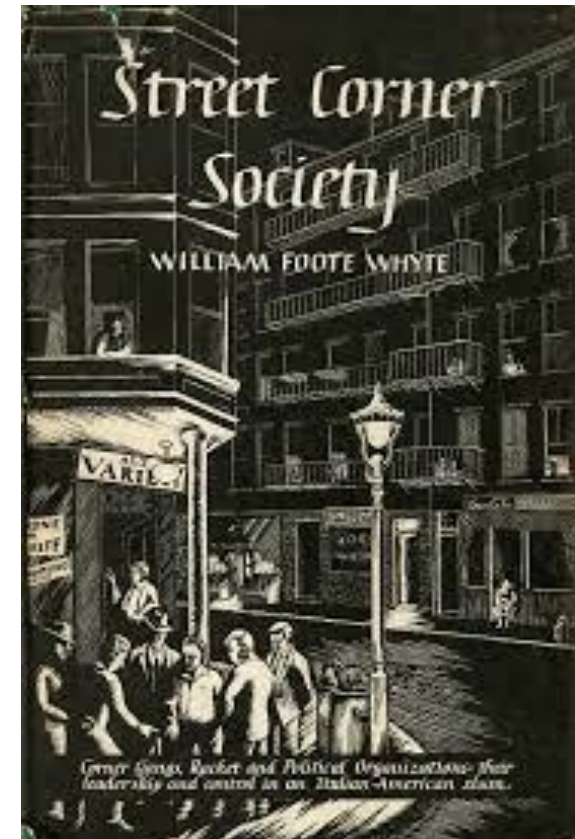
Bit of espistemology…

- Social vs natural sciences – since 19th century a belief, tendency and ambition to create social sciences that provide similar objective assessment as natural sciences – with same procedures, formal approaches and the removal of the scientist from the object of interest.
- **Positivism** – promotion of quantitative forms of analysis and statistical models of reasoning. The main epistemological foundations:

  - Physical science with its logic of the experiment is the model of social research
  - There are universal laws of social life
  - The language of description is neutral – and the focus are things that are observable, measurable and tested with possibility of repetition
  - Methods and research idea need to test certain theory – to prove or to falsify
  - Sharp distinction between science and common sense

- Qualitative research (anthropologist main method) for positivists does not match these positivist criteria, it isn't science, it is too subjective and impossible to repeat.

- But – **naturalism** in opposition claims that social sciences are distinct, and need different methodological approach.

- Naturalism proposes that as far as possible the social world need to be studied in its 'natural' state, without artificial interference – such as surveys, experiments, formal interviews etc.

- The primary aim, therefore, is to take the social world as it is, with respect and appreciation and to understand people through their own eyes, perception and concepts they use.

- Culture as a holistic system – Malinowski's functionalism. You need to understand it through internal terms and meanings used by members of group.

- Emic vs etic approaches – internal ideas, meanings, terms, actions vs. external explanations, scientific discourse, analytical terms that makes sense of emic.

- Emic – unique for particular culture

- Etic – cross-cultural comparisons, universalism.

- In that sense, naturalism draws on various philosophical traditions arguing that the social world is different from natural world and we need different methods than natural sciences.

- This is because people do things, but this *doing and things have meanings.*

- Max Weber and his *Verstehen*

- Rejection of positivism due to the fact that people are not machines that respond uniformly to same stimuli in same way.

- People *interpret* stimuli in different ways, depending on who they are, where, and in what context.

- So what we need are tools to interpret human behaviour, not theories that prove the existence of certain particular laws.

Any hope of discovering 'laws' of human behaviour is misplaced (...) since human behaviour is continuously constructed and reconstructed, on the basis of people's interpretations of the situations they are in (Hammersley, Atkison 1983: 8).

- Luckily, as human beings, social animals, we are equipped with tools that allows us to interpret, to understand, to see and make sense of why people do what they do.

- This is what anthropologists aim to do – our capacity to learn about other people's lives, cultures, societies as humans is used to produce a body of knowledge.

- This shifts focus from search for *laws* and *evidence for particular theory,* to *descriptive, inductive* approaches and accounts of concrete experiences of life within a particular group and the beliefs and social rules that are used to justify actions.

- But – do we have access to meanings constructed by people?

- How do we know their meanings?

- Post-structuralism – claims (Derrida, Foucault, Wittgenstein) that meanings and social word is far from stable and they are not property of people, they aren't agents that make them to their will.

- Aren't ethnographers constructing their own, another layer of meanings in their writings?

- James Clifford – ethnographies are a literary genre, a text, a discourse that doesn't reflect reality in literal sense. Language used by ethnographers is also a cultural construct, it isn't a transparent medium of reflection of reality.

- So – ethnographies are a construct of a construct.

- Politics of anthropology and colonial legacy – Western ideas of science, classification, and typologies were tools of colonial oppression and administration.

- No politically neutral social science

- But also darker sides of ethnography and anthropology – in service of genocidal regimes; see example of research on Roma, case of Eva Justin)

Reflexivity

- Both positivism and naturalism at their core believe that data can be separated from those who collect it.
- Both have a problem with finding the epistemological place for us, researchers and their positions.
- Both believed in sharp distinction between the observed and the observer
- The result is an illusion of politically neutral science

- Who we are and what we produce have research consequences.
- *Reflexive character of social research* – no 'sharp' distinction between social science and its object
- Our own positionality *should* be part of the research process

Reflexivity

- *The ethnographer then becomes a research instrument (...) And in this way the image of the researcher is brought into parallel with that of the people studied, as actively making sense of the world* (Atkinson, Hammersley 1983: 19)

Example?

- My research experience with Polish Roma.
- I am not Roma but a Gadzio
- Relationships between Roma and Gadzie are complex, heavy in historical legacy of power, domination, survival and hierarchy.
- What I am doing with that research? Where do I publish? Why do I need the data?
- Who I am? Police? Journalist?

- Having Roma co-researchers help…
- But also limitations, they can be accused on passing Roma gossip…
- But I can also hear things that Roma would not say to other Roma (eg. comments on the elderly, patriarchal structure etc).

Ethnographies of the far-right

- Reluctance to engage (University people are „enemies", „lefties"
- Safety issues (especially with extreme right individuals)
- Some ethical issues around judgment of certain views (racism, homophobia, anti-Semitism)
- „Repulsive others"
- I have access as white, Polish man

- Yet, some do engage
- To legitimize their views (*I am right wing, not a fascist)*
- To repent (I will elaborate later)
- To show they are „normal", not radical, or extreme

- *The fact that as researchers we are likely to have an effect on people we study does not mean that the validity of our findings is restricted to the data elicitations situations on which we relied. We can minimize reactivity/and or monitor it. But we can also exploit it: how people respond to the presence of the researcher may be as informative as how they react to other situations* (Atkinson, Hammersley 1983: 18).

- Ability to locate yourself in the process of research
- Critical awareness of our own biases, stereotypes, and cultural attitudes we have.
- Learning about others, through yourself.
- A cyclical, dialectic process

Clifford Geertz and *Thick description*

- All of these debates and dilemmas, are in this text

- Some questions:

  What's Geertz's definition of culture?
  Find your own version of his twitch vs wink metaphor
  What he means by the „web of meanings"?
  What he means by this story of „turtles all the way down"?
  What you make of his take on limitations of psychological explanations of culture?

Decolonizing ethnography

- What do we mean by decolonizing?
- Knowledge is power
- Ethnographic/anthropological knowledge is power over *others*
- What happens when *they* read *us?*

Brettell, C. (1993). *When They Read What We Write: the Politics of Ethnography.*

Historical context

- Shifting geopolitics and political independence in Western controlled parts of the world

- Educational progress

- Removing the anthropology–colonial link (expertise, funding, access)

- Post WW2 context of civil right movements, international law, globalisation, mass migration

- De-centralisation of knowledge – from universities to indigenous knowledge

- Decolonizing anthropology entails radical and critical perspectives that focus on the empowerment of the cultures being studied (Harrison, 1991a, p. 5).

- Hymes (1969) argued that if the discipline was to progress from a position of dominance, "it must lose itself to find itself, must become as fully as possible a possession of the people of the world" (p. 54).

- Innovative work in anthropology such as *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter* (Asad, 1973) and *Reinventing Anthropology* (Hymes, 1969) focused on "the legacy of anthropology's origins in racist, capitalist Western societies actively engaged in colonial and imperialist domination of the Third World" (Gordon, 1991, p. 150).

- Reflecting on his contribution to the new cultural anthropology in *Writing Culture*, James Clifford (2012) pointed to the contemporary decentring of the West and shifting power relations (p. 419).

- The historic origins of anthropology are embedded in the discipline's contribution to building empire, even though many anthropologists believed that they were radically supporting indigenous culture (Clifford, 2012, p. 419).

- Vine Deloria, Jr., a revolutionary Native American scholar and activist book *Custer Died for Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto.*
- The book is essentially a critique of knowledge production by scholars of Native Americans, putting anthropologists as the oppressors.
- What it means for ethnography?
- Self-reflexivity and reciprocal approach – giving voice to people without one.
- Anti-establishement, „speaking truth to power".
- Not just „non-Western" world, see Michał Buchowski's article: [Project MUSE - The Specter of Orientalism in Europe: From Exotic Other to Stigmatized Brother (jhu.edu)](jhu.edu)

# What it means in practice of anthropological research?

- Stronger attention to ethics of research – consent, non-harm principle, vulnerable populations, exploitation, abuse of power/knowledge.

- Dialogical ethnography with a focus on the representation of other people's views, ideas, and actions.

- Diversification of methods – experimentation with visual, art, poetry, film, activism aimed at social change.

- De-centralisation of knowledge production – for example a practice of some universities to hold vivas (PhD defense) among people/communities that were researched.

New ethnographic methods and approaches

- Auto-ethnography
- Art-based ethnography
- Intimate ethnography
- E-ethnography
- Multi-sited ethnography
- Visual ethnography
- Reciprocal ethnography
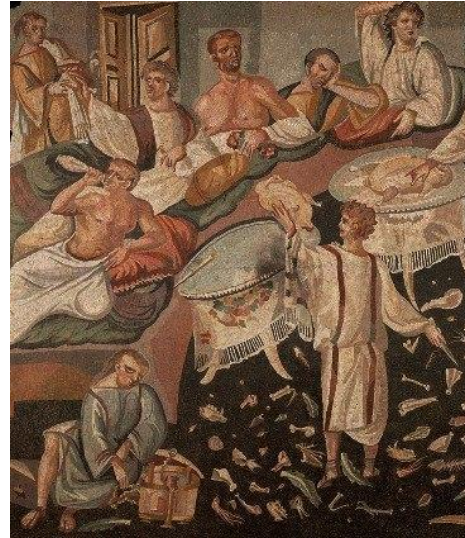
- Paloma Gay y Blasco and Liria Hernandez

- Anthropologist and Gitana – friends, colleagues, co-writers

- See text *Agata's story*

- Two voices, two intertwined stories – one ethnography

- Auto-ethnographic principle
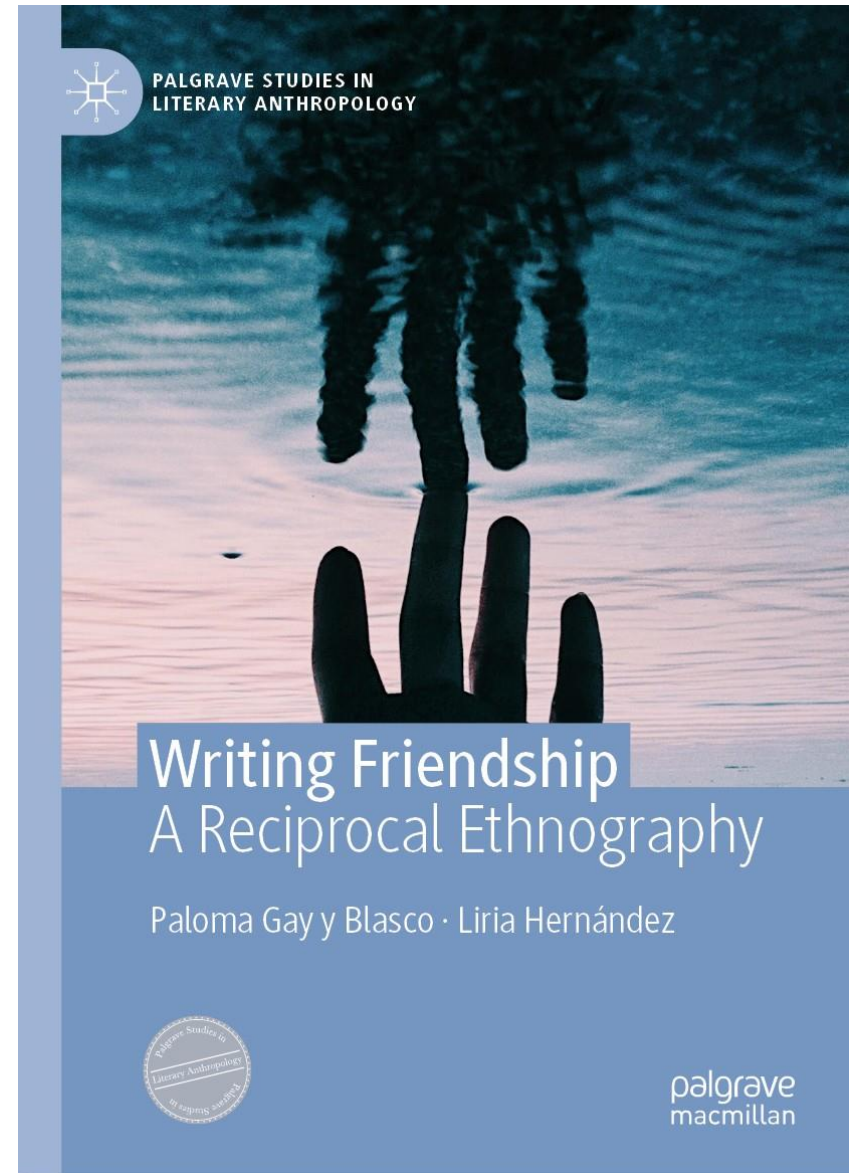
De-colonizing ethnography – starting from self

- [(3) Autoethnography in Qualitative inquiry - Professor Carolyn Ellis and Professor Arthur Buchner – YouTube](#)
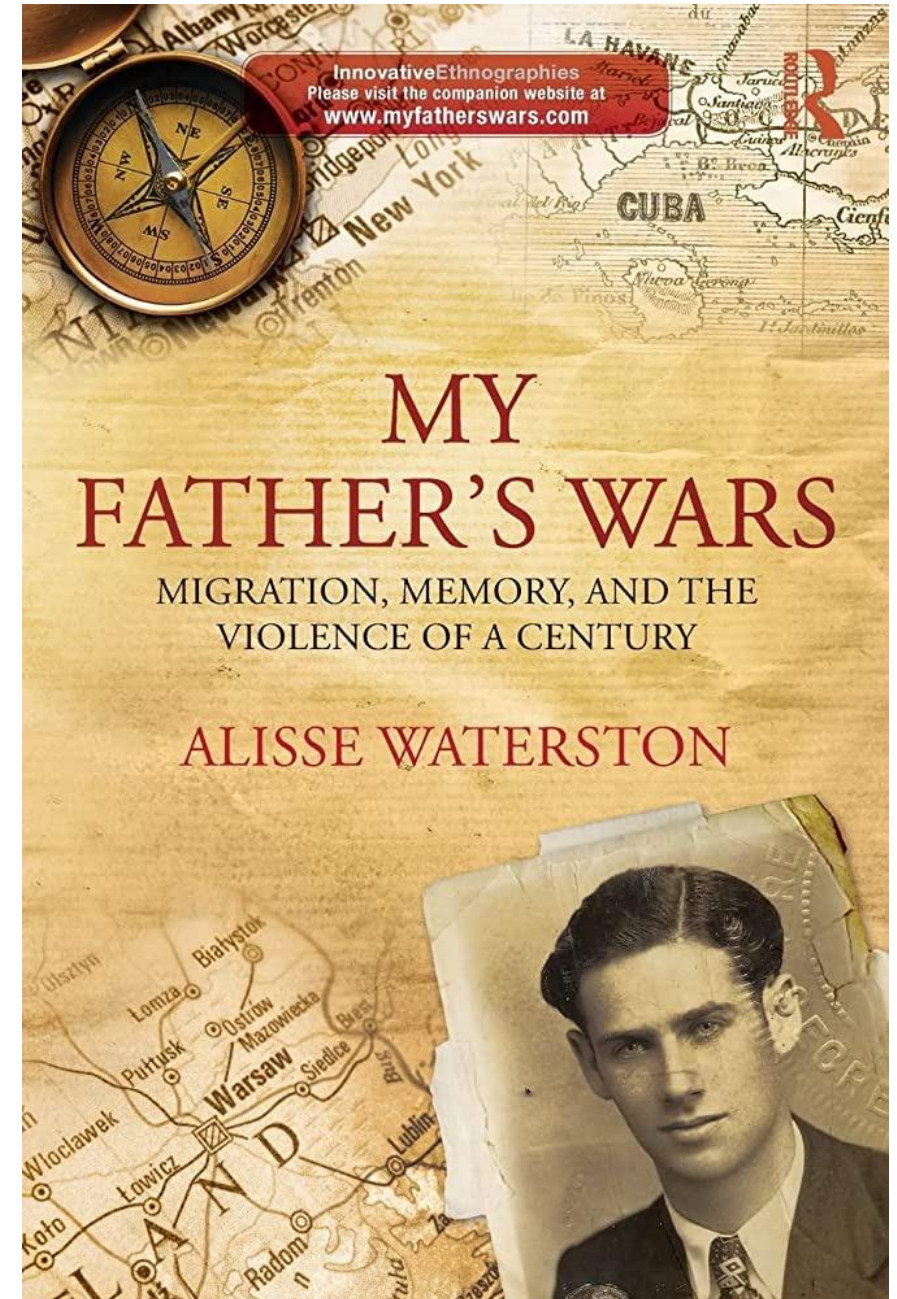
Intimate ethnography – Alisse Waterston

- Dialectic approach – anthropologist – intimate other/s – the world

In the context of the world as it exists, a world that is ever-changing, the effort to "grasp reality" requires a way of thinking that acknowledges movement and interactions as well as the social, political, and economic structures of a system that can be reproduced or undone, in part or completely. (Waterston 2019).

Intimate ethnography, (…), is a particular rendering of grasped reality. As one of the two anthropologists who coined the term intimate ethnography (Waterston and Rylko-Bauer 2006), I centered an "intimate other" as the subject of my research, which is also a study of historically constituted violence. My project takes up Linda Green's (1998) call for scholars to explore "the relationships between violence, embodied subjectivity and self-historical identity, sensate experience, social memory, power, and history"; to do so "without hesitation or detachment"; and to look squarely at a particular "lived life" that has been affected by violence in its various forms.

Anthropology starts with the whole; other disciplines generally begin with the slice, focusing on a piece of that, making it more likely to lose sight of the larger processes within which it fits. This does not mean that all anthropologists succeed in meeting the discipline's goals, nor does it suggest that scholars in other disciplines are incapable of holistic thinking. It does mean that anthropology and anthropologists are more likely to value and keep their sights on the prize, which is knowledge recognized as interconnected and interwoven.

Thus, anthropology is the most dialectical of the disciplines even as, paradoxically, it is itself a distinct discipline. There are other contradictions, too. The "dialectic of confrontation" (Ghani 1987, 346), which characterizes anthropologists' encounters in the field as participant-observers, results in something fixed in its representation, whatever the ethnographic form, regardless of how "sensitive, contextually nuanced, richly detailed and faithful to what it depicts" (Ingold 2017, 21) it may be.

MY
FATHER'S WARS

MIGRATION, MEMORY, AND THE
VIOLENCE OF A CENTURY

ALISSE WATERSTON

- *Focused on individuals' biographies, our projects detoured convention by situating a family member at the center of these life histories, moving outward from there. We recognized this intimate space as a legitimate starting point for a critical inquiry into the relations between history and biography that could be captured in ethnography (Waterston 2019)*

Intimate ethnography

- Dzieci Kazimierza mixed, hybrid, „literary debut"
- Anthropology without theory
- Mixed sources: unpublished memoirs, oral history, ethnography, archives
- Family as a socially constructed process of making/unmaking relations.
- Family – made through storytelling, also editing, silencing them; „doing things with words" (Langellier & Peterson 2004).

Michał P. Garapich

D z i e c i

K a z i m i e r z a

Participant observation – how, why and where is the boundary?

Prof. Michał P. Garapich

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- The distinction between science and common-sense, between the activities of the researcher and those of the researched, lies at the heart of both positivism and naturalism.

- This to their joint obsession with eliminating the effects of the researcher on the data.

- We know it isn't possible.

- The way out?

- Reflexivity - we are part of the world we study
- So – how people respond to the presence of the researcher may be as informative as how they react to other situations…
- Instead of eliminating – awareness of how the researcher impacts on data
- So – observing not just the 'other' but oneself

- No 'observation' without 'participation'

- Participant observation – a spectrum with complex, various degrees of both

- Ethical dimension – who are we? Why are were there? What do we say to people? How we justify that we want to know things? And what do we do with the data?

- *I want to understand the world from your point of view. I want to know what you know in the way you know it. I want to understand the meaning of your experience, to walk in your shoes, to feel things as you feel them, to explain things as you explain them. Will you become my teacher and help me understand?*

James P. Spradley

Participant - observant

- Complete participant – full and covert participation in human action.

- Complete observant but do not take part; overt role, everyone knows who you are.

- Complete but covert observer – don't take part in action, just oberve without revealing yourself.

- Participant as oberver – role revealed.

Adavantages and disadvantages

- **Disadvantages:** researcher is the instrument, part of the world, difficulty in being objective. In particular, it may be difficult to maintain rigorous research practices as sometimes one cannot take notes, record things etc.
- Good participant observation takes plenty of time.
- Participant observation has also a high level of intimacy and is an invasion of privacy which may be disruptive both to the research process and also to people under observation – what is the boundary?
- Example: *Gang leaer for a day* – Sudhir Venkatesh
- Ethical issues related to various levels of deception.
- Observer bias: the observer's own views and personal beliefs may impinge upon observations – impossible to avoid.
- Challenging emotionally

- **Advantages:** It can provide important data in revealing facets of human behaviour in natural setting.

- Your emotions can also be part of the data

- It does not rely on the words of the actors themselves, and is therefore not dependent on people's ability to verbalize, and provides a source other than their own testimony. Is a form of triangulation.

- Access to „hidden transcripts" of human societies (J. Scott)

- Is intersubjectively tested – among research participants, scholars, reviewers, readers of articles etc.

- Logically then – the context of our participant observation determines *what* we learn about ourselves and others
- All etnography has some level of auto-ethnography
- Why did you take up this field?
- Why this method?
- Who I am?
- How my gender, class, race, etc impact on data?

My own experience – research on homeless men in London

- No top-down design
- 'Observing homeless' impossible without participation and 'shadowing'
- Daily routine
- Mundane talk
- Economy of homelessness (begging, scrap collection, petty crime, gambling)
- Performance
- Group interaction
- Institutions vs homeless interaction
- Investigation of the 'homeless scene'
- Negotiating entry – gatekeepers, Day Centre staff, NHS, police etc – power!

- My role – researcher (often questioned), translator, provider of spare change, drinking companion, 'normal' guy, help in administrative issues, target of anger

- Why hang around with me?

- What boundaries are there to cross? Which are invisible to me as 'not-homeless' (*homed*)

Observing ritual

- Basic theory of ritual comes from Arnold van Gennep's famous model of rites of passage.

- *Each larger society contains within it several distinctly separate groupings. … In addition, all these groups break down into still smaller societies in subgroups.*

- Society seen *as a kind of house divided into rooms and corridors.* A passage occurs when an individual leaves one group to enter another; in the metaphor, he changes rooms.

Stages of ritual

- Separation (pre-liminal)
  - Individual/group leaves former role/stage

- Liminal stage
  - Individual/group is on threshold, with old self abandoned, but still without new one

- Incorporation (post-liminal)
  - Individual/group is re-incorporated into a new role

  Fundamental function – a socially accepted scenario that guides people through transtions, live changing events, also through stages of life cycle (biological and social).

Emile Durkheim: funeral rituals

- Unite the bereaved with their families
- Give status to the dead
- Force the individual to turn to their social group for support
- Forces people to act sorrowfully – no-one can remain indifferent to death

Van Gennep's stages in case of funeral rituals

Rites	Dead Person	The Bereaved
Separation (pre-liminal)	From living members of society	From living members of society
Transition (liminal)	From world of the living to world of the dead	From world of the dead towards world of the living
Reincorporation (post-liminal)	Into world of the dead	Into world of the living

Liminal Stage and *Communitas*

- Victor Turner drew on Van Gennep's ideas about the liminal stage in developing the idea of 'communitas'

- *Communitas* is a spontaneous condition that develops in the liminal stage

- People mix as equals, social boundaries disappear, and there is a temporary breakdown in social hierarchies.

- *Communitas* – a temporary suspension of social rules, norms, and roles and source of innovation and danger.

- Carnival-like situations – rituals of role reversals, rebellious potential

Observing rituals

- Participant observation of public rituals usually force the observer into some conformity and acceptance of the scenario – that's how you learn something new or see something new in familiar.

- Various stages/degrees of participation possible

- Overt/covert observation dilemma

- Everyday life rituals – coffee, jogging, leisure/work time transition, alcohol consumption, dog walking…

- No golden rule – depends what your research focus in on.

Interviews

- Participant observation during daily interactions involves one crucial element:

- Talking, story telling, commenting, gossiping...

- For Jerome Bruner, humans are, as a species, *homo narrans*, with an inborn tendency to tell and understand stories (1990)

- Hence the key element of ethnography - interviews

Why is narrative such a popular within social research?

The narrative turn (Squire 2008) can be associated with many other social-scientific moves in the late 20th and early 21st centuries: turns to qualitative methods, to language, to the biographical, to the unconscious, to participant-centred research, to ecological research, to the social (in psychology), to the visual, to power, to culture, to reflexivity

Interviews as stories, as narratives, as ways people make sense of the world

Few important rules about stories within interviews

- Interviews' task is to elicit stories
- Stories are an important part of social life
- Stories are THE Social life
- Stories are told in interviews spontaneously
- Stories do something – they have a purpose
- Stories are always subjectively true
- Stories are always in relation to other stories

Three broad roles of narratives in research and focus of analysis (Squire 2008):

- Structures of language - concentrating particularly on work on the narrative syntax/structure of event narratives (Labov), something akin to structuralist approach by Levi-Strauss, the universal grammar of myths – the ultimate human stories.

- Content - approaches focused on narrative semantics, or content – with a specific focus on the large number of semantic/content-based narrative approaches that assume a link between narrative and experience

- Meaning – story telling as meaning making practice, "web of meanings" (Geertz), finding sense and coherence, logic in the natural, social and personal world; Meaning is contextual and constructed. Story telling is dialogical, so the audience is as important as the teller

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Dialogue and context

- Paul Ricoeur describes narratives as jointly 'told' between writer and reader, speaker and hearer.

- In telling and understanding stories, we are thus working on the relation between 'life as a story in its nascent state' (Ricoeur, 1991: 29) and its symbolic translation into recounted narrative.

Stories function in narrative research as forms of politics, broadcasting 'voices' that are excluded from or neglected within dominant political structures and processes – as indeed stories have often done in recent western history, for instance in the writing and reading of 19th century accounts of working-class life, slavery, and women's experiences.

"Hidden transcripts" – James Scott (1992) accounts of verbal history and the vernacular, the folk non-written history of subordinated groups

- All stories are thus, to some extent, morality tales (MacIntyre, 1984). More generally, stories are deeply social, not just because they always involve hearers as well as speakers but because storytelling constitutes and maintains sociality – through practice, ritual, establishing power relations and meaning making.
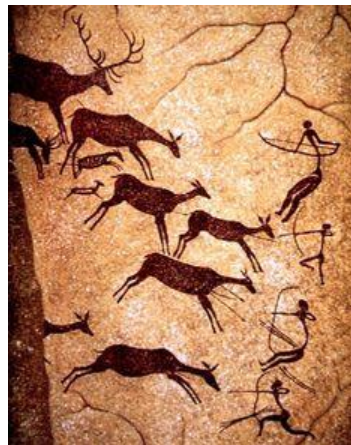
- Not all stories are linear, so some questions or prompts may be repeated several time, making the interview a more circular way of telling the story. For example this may be the case in life story interviews where people make connections between past and present.

- The narrative interview is in fact a way to help respondents in finding sense, meaning, coherence, political aspects or their lives or events.

- Open-endness and unstructured nature of the interview doesn't mean silence and lack of preparation from the part of interviewer – on the contrary, this requires more attention to what is being said and focus.

What is and how to conduct narrative interviews

- Narrative interviews thus aim at turning the respondent into a story teller.
- NI can use semi-structured or unstructured formats depending upon the research question and the goal of the analysis.
- Questions are open-ended to encourage participants to explain themselves fully, but it is not necessary that every question elicit a story.
- Questions that are closed (i.e., require a yes or no answer) or that offer a set of fixed choices (e.g., always, sometimes, never) do not facilitate the development of narratives. However, questions that begin, for example, "Tell me a story about…" may intimidate informants who do not normally think in those terms.

- NI uses a type of everyday communicative interaction – small talk, gossip, story-telling of ones' life, experiences etc.

- Context of that conversation – who is the listener and teller, what is the social definition of someone 'doing research' etc.

- Setting of the conversation – where, how, how long, whether recorded or not.

- 'Natural' – key word.