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The Recent History and Current State of Autoethnography in Germany: A Literature Review

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Abstract: In German-speaking countries, autoethnography is viewed more critically and is less established than in English-speaking countries. The development of autoethnographic research in German-speaking countries has also only been reflected upon selectively. In my essay, I offer a broad overview of the development of autoethnographic practices by researchers at German universities. I have analyzed 97 explicitly autoethnographic texts published between 2007, the year of the earliest text I found, and 2024. I reviewed autoethnographies written in English and German from a range of disciplines, including art, sociology, religion, anthropology, geography, health sciences, and education. As part of my analysis, I identify the main characteristics and purposes of autoethnography in Germany. Through a comparison of the development of autoethnography in Spain and in the United States, I draw attention to the particularities of its use in Germany.

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1. Introduction

"None of us visited a seminar or workshop on autoethnographic writing. This topic is totally new to us, and it is like we were thrown back into the first semester" (KOTHE, VOCHATZER, OESTERLE & RUF, 2023, p.1600). In their autoethnographic quadrologue, the authors reflected on how they had no previous knowledge of the methodology when they began working with it in the winter of 2018. All four authors come from different disciplines, including philosophy, economics, social work, and psychology, and have studied at German universities. The authors position themselves in relation to academic discussions about how "unusual" (p.1598) autoethnography is in German-speaking countries. The marginal role of reflexive and autobiographical methodological practices, including autoethnography, in German qualitative

research has been increasingly discussed over the past two decades, with important contributions by BREUER, MRUCK and ROTH (2002), GUINEY YALLOP, LOPEZ DE VALLEJO and WRIGHT (2008), MRUCK and BREUER (2003), and WINTER (2010). While discussions are intensifying, reviews of autoethnographic literature in the German context remain largely absent. This absence is the starting point for this literature review, which aims to provide an overview of the purposes and practices of autoethnography in Germany. [1]

The term "auto-ethnography" began to appear in ethnographic studies carried out in the mid and late 1970s (HAYANO, 1979; HEIDER, 1975). Autoethnography emerged in the United States as a reaction to the traditional role of the ethnographer as a distant observer who claimed to provide objective descriptions of non-western cultures (ELLIS, ADAMS & BOCHNER, 2010a, 2010b). In the 1950s and 1960s, decolonial and feminist scholars and activists contributed to greater social critique of the inherent eurocentrism of ethnography and anthropology in general (CULHANE, 2017). Autoethnography differs from traditional ethnography in that it positions the researcher as both subject and object of study (CHANG, 2008). By this, the role of culture in shaping the subjectivity of the researcher becomes the focus of research. At the core of all autoethnographies is the practice of reflexivity which means that researchers reflect on themselves as researchers, situate themselves as subjects in the research process, and consider how their perspectives and positionalities (e.g., gender, race, ability, age) influence the outcome of their research (MUNCEY, 2010). This self-observation is crucial because it allows for transparency and deepens understanding of how knowledge production is shaped by power relations and historical forces. Rather than claiming scientific neutrality, autoethnographers have emphasized the social construction of knowledge, using their personal experiences and individual memories as their main sources of knowledge (WALL, 2006). [2]

As an autoethnographer with an Anglo-American educational background who has lived in Germany for many years, my experience is that autoethnography is far less established in German academia than in English-speaking universities. In this literature review, I aim to identify when and how the term "autoethnography" began to appear in published studies by researchers affiliated with German academia, and then to briefly sketch its development, how the methodology has evolved and been used, and where it stands now. Despite the international reputation of Germany as the third largest producer of academic knowledge in the world (DUSDAL et al., 2020), I have not located a literature review that specifically focuses on the use of autoethnography in this particular context. Through a comparison of the development of autoethnography in Spain and in the United States, the particularities of its use in Germany are identified and discussed. [3]

The structure of this paper is as follows: I begin by providing the necessary background information that is essential to understanding and situating this literature review (Section 2). I then turn to specify the method used to conduct this literature review (Section 3). From there I move on to present the quantitative

and qualitative results of my analysis (Section 4). I point out that, in contrast to the Anglo-American context, autoethnographic studies of illness are rare in German academia, as are narrated experiences of gayness and queerness (Section 5). In the conclusion, I reflect on the main distinguishing features of autoethnography in Germany (Section 6). [4]

2. Background

In this background section, I provide the basic information needed to understand the analysis of autoethnography in Germany that follows. The year 2000 is widely recognized in the field of autoethnography as a turning point in the historical development of the methodology. It was the first time that ELLIS and BOCHNER's (2000) now-classic essay on autoethnography had been published. This essay is well known because ELLIS and BOCHNER proposed autoethnography as an umbrella term to cover some forty similar narrative methods. The authors reported that while there are other qualitative methods that emphasize the reflexivity and subjectivity of the researcher, "autoethnography has become the term of choice in describing studies and procedures that connect the personal to the cultural, frequently appearing in titles of books, theses, sections of books, articles, special issues of journals, and book series" (p.740). [5]

Over the last two decades, there has been a proliferation of books and articles discussing and demonstrating autoethnography in the Anglo-American research landscape. Early influential English-language publications in the field of autoethnography include: "Composing Ethnography: Alternative Forms of Qualitative Writing" (ELLIS & BOCHNER, 1996), "Auto/Ethnography: Rewriting the Self and the Social" (REED-DANAHAY, 1997), "The Ethnographic I: A Methodological Novel about Autoethnography" (ELLIS, 2004), "Autoethnography as Method" (CHANG, 2008), and "Creating Autoethnographies" (MUNCEY, 2010). The first "Handbook of Autoethnography" (HOLMAN JONES, ADAMS & ELLIS, 2013) included more than forty essays that provided both descriptions and examples of autoethnography by scholars from more than a dozen disciplines. Extensive histories of autoethnography have been written (e.g., CHANG, 2008; ELLIS & BOCHNER, 2000), and scholars have reported on the numerous English-language journals and international conferences that foreground autoethnographic research (ADAMS & HERRMANN, 2020). [6]

Compared to the Anglo-American research landscape, autoethnography remains relatively underrepresented in Germany. An English description of autoethnography was translated into German for the first time in 2010. This German translation (ELLIS et al., 2010b) was published in the first edition of a textbook on qualitative research in psychology (MEY & MRUCK, 2010). In 2013, PLODER and STADLBAUER provided one of the first German-language descriptions of autoethnography as a methodology and its potential benefits. In addition to PLODER and STADLBAUER, I found only four other early texts describing autoethnography in German (BÖNISCH-BREDNICH, 2012; GEIMER, 2011; MOSER, 2006, 2008). [7]

One of these early texts was the frequently cited essay by GEIMER (2011), in which he described autoethnography as a "productive irritant" (p.315)[1] to the tradition of German qualitative research. GEIMER also discussed early critics of autoethnography such as the German-born American sociologist GANS (1999), who dismissed autoethnography as having "nothing to do with research" (p.543). GANS was skeptical of ethnography in general and autoethnography in particular. He deplored the way in which participant observation, which he described as his "preferred method" (p.540), was being renamed ethnography, a change in terminology which he argued would make it more difficult to fund projects based on participant observation. The focus on subjectivity in autoethnography would have the effect of "reducing the likelihood that sociologists and their work will be trusted by their readers" (p.543). GANS criticized autoethnography for being a highly individualized mode of research that typically does not end with an overarching theory or conclusion that can then be applied to large groups of people. [8]

Autoethnography continues to spark debate because of concerns about its validity as a research method that explores the emotions and memories of the researcher as sources of data, often not observable from the outside and inaccessible to others (CAMPBELL, 2017). Because of the instability or uncertainty of memory, the reliability and accuracy of autoethnographic material is often questioned (GIORGIO, 2013). The use of storytelling techniques (e.g., characterization, plot, narrative tension and dialogue) is also part of the controversy surrounding autoethnography which values an emotionally engaging, personal writing style. Especially in traditional German academia, where the use of the first-person voice in scholarly papers is still received with ambivalence, personal writing challenges the institutional norms around research (KOTHE et al., 2023). Further controversy surrounds autoethnography because of the way it can incorporate creative forms of expression, including paintings, musical scores, dramatic performances, to mention only a few possibilities (BARTLEET, 2022). [9]

In 2016, PLODER and STADLBAUER reported that many of their German-speaking academic colleagues had not yet accepted autoethnography as a legitimate research method. They discussed how their academic papers, presentations, and teaching on autoethnography had been met with skepticism from many colleagues and how, in contrast to this resistance, their students often expressed curiosity about it. The skepticism toward autoethnography in German-speaking countries was described by PLODER and STADLBAUER as rooted in "the conviction that art and science are substantially different fields of knowledge and the boundaries between them should be protected—for epistemological as well as political reasons" (p.759). As they pointed out, despite its origins within anthropology, autoethnography has branched out into many fields of research and no longer belongs to a single discipline. Indeed, autoethnography has come to occupy a vast space between science and art, which is perceived by many German academics as a "threat to disciplinary identity" (p.756). [10]

1 All translations from non-English texts are mine.

That same year, REINMANN and SCHMOHL (2016) provided a theoretical description of autoethnography without actively using it. The authors advocated for its use as a method in educational research, reflecting that in comparison to the Anglo-American research landscape, the term "autoethnography" is "hardly to be found in German-language method books" (p.2). Indeed, what REINMANN and SCHMOHL proposed had already been underway in English-speaking universities since the early 2000s. Early oft-cited English-language publications on the role of autoethnography in educational research include: "Silence in the Classroom/Whispers in the Halls: Autoethnography as Pedagogy in White Pre-Service Teacher Education" (PENNINGTON, 2007), "The Use of Autoethnography in Educational Research: Locating Who We Are in What We Do" (STARR, 2010), "Teacher Development in a Global Profession: An Autoethnography" (CANAGARAJAH, 2012), and "Shifting from Reflective Practices to Reflexivity: An Autoethnography of an L2 Teacher Educator" (PARK, 2014). There is also a small but growing body of literature on the outcomes of teaching autoethnography to students at the high school, undergraduate, and graduate levels in the United States (BOCHNER & ELLIS, 2016; ELLIS, 2004; HUGHES & PENNINGTON, 2017; TOMBRO, 2016). Beyond the Anglo-American context, autoethnographic educational research has been carried out in Africa, Bangladesh, and Venezuela (ANTELIZ, MULLIGAN & DANAHER, 2023). [11]

In an individually published essay, PLODER (2021) argued that MEY and MRUCK had been trying to establish autoethnography in German qualitative research for some time. ADAMS, ELLIS, BOCHNER, PLODER and STADLBAUER (2018) also called attention to how, despite not using the term "autoethnography," MRUCK's (1999, Chapter V) dissertation had autoethnographic qualities. PLODER (2021) historicized autoethnography in German-speaking countries as part of a larger struggle for qualitative methods to be recognized as valuable research tools. This struggle for a greater diversity and plurality of methods that are considered to be experimental has been taken up by the Institut für Qualitative Forschung in Berlin (MEY & MRUCK, 2007). As PLODER (2021) noted, autoethnographic texts have been published in *FQS* since 2003 (ELLIS, 2003), and ever since 2009, workshops and lectures have been organized during the Annual Berliner Methodentreffen Qualitative Forschung to explore autoethnography among other (ethnographic) approaches that are interpretive, reflexive, socially critical, and interventionist. And yet, despite the growing interest in autoethnography, researchers in Germany continue to report that the methodology remains unestablished in academia (BAST, 2024a; BERGER & DREßLER, 2017; KOTHE et al., 2023; SCHMOHL, 2019; VOCHATZER & ENGELMANN, 2019). [12]

3. Method

In the summer of 2024, I searched for and collected published studies that met the following criteria: The study had to contain the word "autoethnography" in its content, and the author had to be affiliated with a German university at the time of publication. Excluded were texts that could be read as containing autoethnographic elements in them, but were not explicitly labeled as such. My search terms were "autoethnography" and "Germany" in both English and German. While the term "autoethnography" had to appear in the body of the text, the term "Germany" was often listed in the author affiliation section. I used two spellings of the word "autoethnography" in German: *Autoethnografie* and *Autoethnographie*. I also took into account the different ways of spelling autoethnography in both languages, for instance in English: Auto-ethnography, (auto)ethnography and auto/ethnography. To carry out this review, I searched academic databases, digital libraries and open access repositories. These included SAGE Research Methods, ResearchGate, JSTOR, SSOAR, Taylor and Francis, ProQuest, EBSCOhost, as well as the three library university resources I had access to: Goldsmiths, University of London; Bauhaus University Weimar, and University of Cologne. [13]

I therefore relied on the authors' self-identification of their research as autoethnographic. For example, although SAERBERG's (2006) book was described as "a kind of autoethnography" (VOM LEHN, 2008, §9), the author himself did not use the term "autoethnography" in the book. Only later did the author use the term in SAERBERG (2010), an article that I included in my collection of papers. This inclusion criterion was based, in part, on the recognition that "there is value in the standardization of terminology with respect to this method, as it would allow for unified advances in using, appreciating, and understanding this method" (WALL, 2006, p.4). The suggestion by ELLIS and BOCHNER (2000) to use autoethnography as an umbrella term for different orientations that share common elements was crucial for the advancement of the methodology (DOLORIERT & SAMBROOK, 2012). Since the term "autoethnography" is not being widely used in German academia, it is worth investigating which authors have used it to describe their work and have contributed to making the methodology a bit better known. [14]

The literature search was finalized in August 2024. It resulted in a total of 110 scholarly sources. However, in the process of reworking this literature review, the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) was brought to my attention. Through the DOAJ, I retained five more documents after applying the search criteria, bringing the total to 115. Of these, 18 publications were descriptive in nature without practicing autoethnography. I then decided to limit my review of the literature to those studies in which autoethnography had been carried out in practice. This left me with 97 examples of autoethnography. Of these, 59 were articles, of which 38 were written in English and 21 in German. 18 were book chapters, of which six were written in English and 12 in German. 14 were books, of which two were written in English, 11 in German, and one in both languages. In addition, there was one volume written partly in English and partly in German.

There were two conference papers, both of which were in German, and three blogs, of which two were written in German and one in both languages. Some of the journal articles were part of the following special issues: "Kollaborative Autoethnographien digitaler Praktiken" [Collaborative Autoethnographies of Digital Practices], edited by the Deutsche Nachwuchsgesellschaft für Politik- und Sozialwissenschaft e.V. (DNGPS) (2022), and "'Positioning' Analysis with Autoethnography—Epistemic Explorations of Self-Reflexivity," edited by GRESCHKE (2024a [2023]). [15]

I extracted the following information from each publication: Author(s), year of publication, disciplinary origin, main topic explored, type of autoethnography used and for what purpose, other research methods used to conduct the study, the methodological approach used to analyze the autoethnographic data, the structure of the text and the presentation of the results. I also wrote down my reflections as I read the publications. My approach was partly inspired by an existing study of autoethnography in Spain by MONTAGUD (2022). Using parameters similar to those used by MONTAGUD, I was able to distinguish elements of autoethnography in Germany from Spanish autoethnography. MONTAGUD found 150 autoethnographic texts published by researchers linked to Spanish universities between 1999 and 2020. Through reviewing the literature, MONTAGUD identified three distinct periods in the historical development of Spanish autoethnography, beginning with its emergence in the field of anthropology to its dissemination and expansion from anthropology into the field of education, and its diversification into artistic disciplines and other fields. Reading MONTAGUD, I was curious to see if I could find comparable periods or turning points of autoethnography in Germany. Looking through all 97 collected publications, I decided to organize them into two stages and to focus my discussion on publications that best illustrate the characteristics of each stage. [16]

4. Two Stages in the Development of Autoethnography in Germany

In what follows, I present a history of autoethnography in Germany, reconstructed as two stages. Following DOUGLAS and CARLESS (2013), I acknowledge the existence of different histories of autoethnography and the importance of recognizing multiple historical accounts that are constantly being rewritten. This is an important point as I myself have encountered multiple histories of autoethnography, told from different perspectives. Take, for example, the way DOLORIERT and SAMBROOK (2012) referred to HAYANO (1979) and REED-DANAHAY (1997) as "first generation autoethnographers" (DOLORIERT & SAMBROOK, 2012, p.84), when ELLIS et al. (2008) had already referred to themselves as "first generation autoethnographers" (p.310). [17]

The following two stages were reconstructed through my analysis of the 97 collected publications:

1. Emerging from the field of education and beyond (2007-2019);
2. Spreading across disciplines with a growing number of collaborative autoethnographies (2020-ongoing). [18]

While the first explicitly autoethnographic text in Spain was published in 1999 (MONTAGUD, 2022), examples of autoethnography named as such emerged later in Germany, starting in 2007. ARNOLD, SMITH and TRAYNER (2007) was the earliest explicitly autoethnographic text I found, and it was also the only one published that year. For the years 2008, 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2015, I did not find a single text in which autoethnography was named and practiced. For the other years between 2009 and 2019, a total of 18 publications fit the inclusion criteria of this literature review. It was not until the global outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic that the number of autoethnographies by researchers in Germany increased significantly, as will be discussed. [19]

Autoethnography in Germany had a relatively slow start, considering that, following MONTAGUD (2022), the number of autoethnographic texts written by researchers in Spain since 1999 had grown to 15 in 2007. Based on his sample, MONTAGUD proposed that the emergence of autoethnography in Spain took place over eight years from 1999 to 2007. Based on my sample, it took 12 years in Germany, starting in 2007 and ending in 2019, for the methodology to become more frequently used. During these 12 years, a total of 19 explicitly autoethnographic publications were produced by researchers in Germany. Compared to these 19 publications, which span 12 years, there were 78 publications from 2020 to August 2024. From the 78 publications, 10 dealt with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (AUTOR:INNENGRUPPE AEDiL, 2021; BERNHARDT, 2022; DOSA, MEYER, RAU & KRAUSE, 2022; GEESE, 2023; INNEMANN, WARGA & BÖHME, 2022; PIERBURG, 2021; STEINHARDT, 2022a, 2022b [2021]; TUITJER, TUITJER & MÜLLER, 2020; ZEUNER, LANGGUTH & LÖWER, 2022). As some scholars have already pointed out, the production of autoethnography accelerated during and after the COVID-19 pandemic in German-speaking countries. For example, PLODER (2021), following REICHERTZ and MEY's (2020) online talk "Qualitative Research in Times of Corona," which resulted from the cancellation of that year's Berliner Methodentreffen, reflected on how the exceptional circumstances of the pandemic motivated some researchers to use autoethnography. Many people were isolated and had to reflect on what was happening in the world. It was a crisis situation where social distancing also made it difficult to use other methods, such as interviews. At the time of the pandemic, there was an international shift in the field of qualitative research toward autoethnography (IYER, 2021). [20]

Not only did the pace of autoethnographic production in Germany increase during and after the pandemic. In reviewing the 19 publications from 2007 to 2019, I also recognized that 13 of them were produced by researchers who had worked in

areas of education. In contrast, the 78 publications from 2020 to August 2024 were produced by researchers from a much broader range of disciplines. In addition, I observed an increase in various forms of collaborative autoethnography from 2007 and especially after 2020. Although not explicitly labeled as such, ARNOLD et al. (2007, 2010) can be considered "collaborative autoethnography," as described by CHANG, NGUNJIRI and HERNANDEZ (2013). Collaborative autoethnography typically involves the stories and perspectives of different people rather than a single individual, as will be discussed. While researchers in Spain rarely used collaborative autoethnography from 1999 to 2020 (MONTAGUD, 2022), it has been increasingly used by researchers in Germany in diverse ways since its historical beginnings. [21]

4.1 Emerging from the field of education and beyond (2007-2019)

For the period from 2007 to 2019, I found 19 publications, of which one was a co-edited volume by BERGER and DREßLER (2017). They brought together 12 contributions from researchers in the field of foreign language didactics, as will be discussed. Of the remaining 18 publications, 12 were produced by researchers connected to areas of education (educational research, inclusive education, physical education, and political education). In contrast, autoethnography in Spain was initially used mainly by anthropologists (MONTAGUD, 2022). After emerging from the field of anthropology, Spanish autoethnography eventually spread to other disciplinary fields, mainly education (ibid.). Although the term "auto-ethnography" was coined by American anthropologists in the mid-1970s, the disciplines of communication and sociology played a crucial role in its widespread use in the Anglo-American research landscape (ADAMS, ELLIS & HOLMAN JONES, 2017). One of the particularities of autoethnography in Germany, as opposed to autoethnography in Spain and the United States, is that the majority of the researchers who were among the first to explicitly label their work as autoethnographic were not from the field of anthropology. The emergence of autoethnography in Germany was made possible in part by the publications that will be discussed below. Who were some of the first researchers to explicitly use the term "autoethnography" and for what purposes did they practice the methodology in Germany? [22]

ARNOLD et al. (2007) was not the work of a single individual, but of a small international group of researchers in Germany, the United States, and Portugal. They shared an interest in WENGER's (1998) concept of communities of practice, a social theory that promotes collective learning among people with a common interest who then develop a shared practice. After working with the lesser known form of autoethnography, namely collaborative autoethnography, ARNOLD (2009) ventured alone into individual autoethnography to provide insights into the historical development of e-learning at German universities. Her autoethnography told four stories about four stages of her academic career: As a student, as an educational researcher, as a didactic consultant, and as a university teacher. This way of exploring autoethnography as a tool for reconstructing one's professional development can also be found in BERGER and DREßLER's (2017) co-edited volume "Autoethnographien zur

Professionalisierung des wissenschaftlichen Nachwuchses" [Autoethnographies for the Professionalization of Early-Career Academics]. The 12 chapters were organized into three parts, in which the authors identified and addressed the challenges they faced as doctoral students in the field of foreign language didactics. The concept for the volume came about after the editors participated in a one-day seminar on autoethnography that was taught by a visiting professor from Australia (NUNAN & CHOI, 2017). In the introduction of the volume, the editors reported that this seminar, which was organized by the International Graduate Center for the Study of Culture at the Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen, had changed their understanding of research and how it can be done. Chapter 3, "'Kopfkino': Tracing a Doctoral Student's Mental Cinema," particularly caught my attention because NEIGERT (2017) presented her autoethnographic text in the form of a film script, demonstrating how creative elements can be combined with critical incident analysis. [23]

In their contributions to disability studies and inclusive education, SAERBERG (2010, 2014) and SCHULZ (2018) used autoethnography to explore the sensory perceptions of blind people, highlighting that, contrary to ableist assumptions, blind people have much to offer sighted people. Perhaps the first autoethnographic text ever written by a blind researcher in the German context on the topic of blindness, SAERBERG (2010) advocated for the "education of the senses" in places such as "schools, exhibitions, and museums" to give people "a deeper appreciation for the non-visual senses" (p.379). Also coming from the field of education, BISHOP KENDZIA (2014, 2018) later entered the field of European ethnology and used autoethnography, among other anthropological methods, to analyze the Jewish Museum Berlin as a site of political education. In the methodological chapter of her book, BISHOP KENDZIA (2018) reflected on how her "main academic influences within museum studies came from the field of education" (p.10). Working in the area of political education, WUTTIG (2016a, 2016b, 2017) combined an autoethnographic dance practice with poststructuralist theories of gendered bodies and trauma to create her own research method which she called "reflexive Leibbeobachtung" [reflexive bodily observation] (WUTTIG, 2016a, p.366). GIESE and SAUERBIER (2018) drew attention to ableism in the field of physical education, using as an example SAUERBIER's autoethnographic memory story of studying to be a physical education teacher as a person with a disability. The story told by SAUERBIER was based on his own experiences of discrimination with some teachers who held ableist views against him. The authors stated that the aim of the storytelling, analyzed through the lens of ableism, was to advocate for greater inclusion and diversity in German educational institutions. [24]

Much of this early work focused on how bodies move differently in space. While SAERBERG (2010, 2014) walked the streets to analyze how public space is constructed in an ableist way, BISHOP KENDZIA (2014, 2018) moved through the spaces of the museum to study how different behaviors are expected of visitors depending on how their bodies are categorized. In WUTTIG (2016a, 2016b, 2017) and GIESE and SAUERBIER (2018), the focus was on the movements of dancing bodies that do not conform with the normative

expectations of society. This scholarly attention to non-normative bodies can also be found in some of the early autoethnographic texts by researchers in Spain, as analyzed by MONTAGUD (2022). What really struck me, however, was that autoethnographic research in Germany, but not in Spain, played a central role within and beyond educational institutions in efforts to promote inclusion. Another difference was an appreciation for the arts, especially for the educational possibilities of art spaces to enhance self- and social awareness. For example, MEY (2018) described the thoughts and feelings he had while participating in a performative dining experience called "The Silence Meal," hosted by the Finnish artist Nina BACKMAN. An inner dialogue emerged from the artistic experience, which required the author to dine with other participants without speaking, sharpening the senses and perceptions of bodily and emotional processes. A similar focus on bodily sensations can be found in the article by KNOPKE (2018). The author argued for and demonstrated the importance of the lived, embodied experiences of the researcher in death studies. [25]

In this early period, autoethnographic research in Spain and Germany also shared a focus on the role of language and culture in communication. While Spanish autoethnography began with an article by HERNANDEZ GARCIA (1999) about the Basque language and culture (MONTAGUD, 2022), some of the contributions in BERGER and DREßLER's (2017) volume used autoethnography to specifically analyze the processes of teaching and learning the English language, with a focus on the cultural differences between the North American and German academic systems. While MONTAGUD (2022) reported finding one text in English during a comparable first period in which language acted as a barrier to the wider dissemination of Spanish autoethnography, almost half of the texts I found were written in English. [26]

4.2 Spreading across disciplines with a growing number of collaborative autoethnographies (2020-ongoing)

For the period from 2020 to August 2024, I found 78 autoethnographic texts by researchers from a variety of fields. The academic diffusion of autoethnography is one of the main features that characterize the second (ongoing) stage. It was at this point that autoethnography began to spread to fields such as human geography (KÜTTEL, 2021, 2022, 2024; KUHN, 2023; TREIER, 2020; TUITJER et al., 2020; ZELENSKAIA, 2024), psychology (BREHM, 2021; HUTMACHER, 2024), health sciences (KLINGLER, 2024 [2023]; LAWSON McLEAN & LAWSON McLEAN, 2023; REINSCH, NIEWÖHNER & SCHWARZ, 2023; VON KÖPPEN, KÜMPERS & HAHN, 2022), theology (DOMSEL, 2021, 2023, 2024; DOMSEL, KIROUDI & ROEBBEN, 2024), transportation engineering (LEYENDECKER & COX, 2022), political science (GRAF, LOGES & SCHWINDENHAMMER, 2023), ethnobiology (MUTLU SIRAKOVA, 2023), Southeast Asian studies (ANTWEILER, 2020), dance studies (CHWIALKOWSKA, 2022; WUTTIG, 2022), and artistic research (SCHMID, 2020; ZIEGNER, 2022, 2024). [27]

In and around the field of sociology, researchers used autoethnography to explore diverse topics, including: Everyday practices that technologize the body

through the use of self-tracking and wearable devices (LASER, 2022; OCHS, BÜTTNER & LAMLA, 2021; PLOHR, 2021), the growth of platform-mediated work (HEILAND, 2021; HONDROS, SCHIEMER & VOGELGSANG, 2023), media representations of the so-called Bobo, a neologism that is shorthand for bourgeois and bohemian (ALBRECHT et al., 2020), experiences of death and grief (COENEN, 2022; PIERBURG et al., 2023), body movements in taiji, ballet, and yoga practices (EISENMANN & MITCHELL, 2024), different modes of academic reading (RUSTLAB, 2024), digital identity and the phenomenon of the "selfie" (PITTROFF, 2024). The sociologist GRESCHKE (2024b [2023]) edited a special issue of "Qualitative Inquiry" in which she proposed a new approach she described as "(auto)ethnographic positioning analysis" (p.659) with contributions by BOLL (2024 [2023]), GARBE (2024 [2023]), GRESCHKE (2024c [2023]), SPIEGELBERG (2024 [2023]), TUZI (2024 [2023]), and WARD (2024 [2023]). I also observed new developments in areas of education where autoethnography had not previously been explored, including art didactics (BAST, 2024a), sport management education (ADAM, GRØNKJÆR, STRITTMATTER & WOHLFART, 2022), supervisor education (HENNING, 2023), education for sustainable development (SHEPHARD et al., 2021; SINGER-BRODOWSKI, BROCK, GRUND & DE HAAN, 2020; VON SEGGERN, HOLST & SINGER-BRODOWSKI, 2023), artificial intelligence tools in higher education (SCHWENKE, SÖBKE & KRAFT, 2023), and police conflict management training (STALLER & KOERNER, 2021). [28]

As in Spain during a comparable second stage, the use of autoethnographic methods spread to various academic disciplines in Germany. But the most striking development that occurred in Germany, and not in Spain, was the growth of collaborative autoethnography. In total, 35 of the 78 publications from 2020 to August 2024 fit the well-known description of collaborative autoethnography as outlined by CHANG et al. (2013). In comparison, MONTAGUD (2022) found few examples of collaborative autoethnography in Spain during a comparable second period. In the United States, collaborative autoethnography became visible only after individual autoethnography had become established (CHANG et al., 2013). In Germany, however, the earliest example of autoethnography (ARNOLD et al., 2007) was a collaborative one. This early and growing preference for collaborative forms of autoethnography is another distinctive quality of autoethnography in Germany. [29]

I now turn to discuss how collaborative autoethnography has been used by researchers in Germany. Of the 35 autoethnographic studies conducted in a collaborative manner, 17 were labeled as collaborative autoethnographies. The remaining 18 made no attempt to distinguish between individual autoethnography as solo research resulting in a single-authored publication and collaborative autoethnography as conducted by a group of researchers resulting in a multi-authored publication. [30]

There is scholarly attention among researchers in the United States to the similarities and differences between individual autoethnography and collaborative autoethnography. For example, CHANG et al. (2013) argued and showed that

autoethnography could indeed be done collaboratively. Especially in the American context, where autoethnography had been "popularized as solo work" (p.21), the idea of sharing and analyzing personal stories during the writing process seemed "at odds with that of a study of the self" (p.17). This seeming contradiction of collaborative autoethnography does not appear to be an issue in German academia, where researchers have done it from the beginning, perhaps also because of academic socialization. While research typically involves some degree of collaboration, there are important differences between individual autoethnography and collaborative autoethnography (CHANG et at., 2013). For instance, in collaborative autoethnography, one is more dependent on other researchers with the final publication resulting from a team effort, whereas in individual autoethnography, one relies on one's own perspective and research expertise. [31]

In this period, authors used a variety of collaborative autoethnographic forms. As CHANG et al. pointed out, there are different ways of doing collaborative autoethnography in terms of the size of the research team, the type of collaboration, and the degree of individual contribution to the overall process. This diversity is part of the complexity of collaborative autoethnography. For example, some studies were based on personal stories written in collaboration with all members of the research team. The AEDIL project is a rare example of a large research group with 15 members. From the beginning of the research process, the project members shared their writing with each other, "losing track of who suggested which argument or wrote a specific sentence" (AUTOR:INNENGRUPPE AEDIL, 2021, p.273). To manage the challenges of working in such a large group, the members met regularly, developed a code of conduct, and shared tasks and responsibilities in a systematic and transparent way. This teamwork resulted in the publication of their book "Corona-Semester reflektiert: Einblicke einer kollaborativen Autoethnographie" [Corona Semester Reflected: Insights into a Collaborative Autoethnography]. [32]

In other studies, the autoethnographic material was generated by the main author of the study and then analyzed together with other members of the research team. For example, MÜLLER (2021, 2024) described his research project as a collaborative autoethnography even though it resulted in a single-authored publication. MÜLLER had worked as a police officer for ten years before he began to investigate an organizational unit of the police as an insider and from a collaborative autoethnographic perspective. In his book "Der Umgang mit Differenz in der Polizeiarbeit: Eine auto-ethnografische Untersuchung" [Handling Difference in Police Work: An Auto-Ethnographic Study], MÜLLER (2024) discussed the benefits of analyzing his autoethnographic data with an external team of researchers who were not police officers and who, as outsiders, provided him with a distanced perspective on his personal field notes. Also contributing to the police science literature were STALLER, KOERNER and AUTORIN X (2024). Using RAMBO's (2016) technique of "strange accounting" (p.3), the authors were able to address the issue of police abuse of authority while protecting themselves and others from the potential consequences of such self-exposure. [33]

There were also variations in how much of the personal writing was included in the final publication. With a few exceptions, the majority of researchers presented selected extracts from their personal writing, framed by the argumentation. In the article by FAHRER, HECK, RÖWERT and TRUAN (2022), the full stories were made available to readers as supplementary material, accessible via a link on the last page of the article. Their research process involved looking for common themes in the stories and then focusing on these in the analysis. The use of thematic coding, a common form of analysis within qualitative research, was the general tendency among the collaborative autoethnographic studies. An exception was the autoethnographic quadrologue by KOTHE et al. (2023), which I mentioned in the introduction. Written in a creative way, the presentation style can be described as dialogic and with narrative tension. Together, the four authors argued that their individual experiences could not be reduced to overarching categories, revealing both the strengths and limitations of a collaborative autoethnography. [34]

Other researchers used collaborative autoethnographic methods in their seminars and published the results. For example, MIHAN and GRAF (2021) described how MIHAN incorporated collaborative (community) autoethnography into a critical race theory seminar for future English language teachers. Following the values of community autoethnography which aims to build a sense of community among co-researchers (TOYOSAKI, PENSONEAU-CONWAY, WENDT & LEATHERS, 2009), MIHAN developed it in a particular way as an anti-racist tool in teacher training and later published the results of the seminar together with GRAF (2021), who had been a student participant. The authors described how the seminar participants who were preparing to become teachers, worked in small groups of three to five people. Each group received writing prompts from MIHAN, for instance: "Discuss what it means to be part of your particular racial group(s)" (p.240). Responses were written individually and then read and commented on by the group. The authors also discussed how difficult it was for some students to talk about personal experiences of racism with the group and also to be confronted with those of others. The findings show that the groups made up of students from different racial perspectives gained a deeper understanding of what racism is. [35]

Another example is STEINHARDT's (2022b [2021]) essay on how she used collaborative autoethnography in an online seminar to help sociology students cope with social distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic. STEINHARDT described how, when the education system moved from offline to online, she and her students kept a daily journal in which they reflected on their everyday use of digital technologies. They shared their journal entries with each other on Mahara, an open-source web-based system that can be integrated into a wider virtual learning framework. During the global shutdown, when entire countries across the world were under some form of lockdown, STEINHARDT met regularly online with her students to discuss their autoethnographic stories. They went from barely knowing each other to publishing their collaborative autoethnographies in a special issue (DNGPS, 2022). [36]

There was also an example of a collaborative autoethnographic project that brought together students living in different parts of the world in a virtual exchange for the purpose of intercultural learning (SCHRAGE-FRÜH & WEHRMANN, 2023). As mentioned above, MONTAGUD (2022) found few examples of collaborative autoethnography in Spain while my findings indicate a preference for collaborative autoethnography in Germany, with some researcher-educators using it in teacher training (HEIDT, 2023; MIHAN, 2022; MIHAN & GRAF, 2021; MIHAN & VOERKEL, 2022; TRUAN & DRESSEL, 2021). While MONTAGUD (2022) did not find any examples of "racial autoethnography" (TAYLOR, LEHAN MACKIN & OLDENBURG, 2008) in Spain, a few researchers in Germany have used individual autoethnography as a critical race methodology. For example, in the field of literary studies, CANPALAT (2022) described her personal experiences of racial discrimination in German academia. CANPALAT recounted various situations, including an academic job interview and a consultation with a professor, in which she was othered and treated differently because of her Turkish background. Furthermore, MEKONEN's (2021) autoethnography of "*becoming* Black in Berlin" (p.9) also dealt with racial issues. The author described how he faced a generalization when he moved from Ethiopia to Berlin, where for the first time in his life he was socially categorized as Black rather than Ethiopian. This situation of suddenly being discriminated against because of the cultural context in which he found himself was described by MEKONEN as an emotional epiphany. MEKONEN also created an award-winning film, "Emails to My Little Sister," based on his autoethnographic research. The film was screened at the 29th International Festival of Ethnological Film in Belgrade.[2] [37]

Another feature that characterized this second period was an increase in more creative forms of autoethnography. An example of an active engagement with visual material is provided by KÜTTEL (2021, 2022, 2024). As a geographer, KÜTTEL (2022, p.67) developed a creative method she called the "autoethnographic photo-essay." While researching artistic urban spaces in the American city of Detroit, KÜTTEL took over 1,700 photographs, and when she later looked through them, she found that some were more revealing of her everyday life in the field and of personal value to her. She proposed the "autoethnographic photo-essay" as a method that uses photographs taken by the researcher in the field to reflect retrospectively on the field experience and to gain knowledge about "the intimate and personal nature of fieldwork" (KÜTTEL, 2024, n.p.) that could not otherwise be gained from dated field notes. Furthermore, in his conference presentation, BAST (2024b) discussed how he combined autoethnographic memory methods with artistic practices, described as visual autoethnography. As part of his critical research into classism in the context of art education, BAST began drawing on transparent paper, a material commonly used by architects, and developed tracing as a research method. This visual autoethnographic method of tracing developed by BAST involves placing a sheet of transparent paper over an image printed in the book he had to read as an art student. The creative process of tracing the image served to activate his memory

2 For MEKONEN's comments on his film "Emails to My Little Sister," see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OY9ItmYlSQY [Accessed: February 11, 2025].

of encountering the image as an art student some twenty years ago. Like so many other art students, BAST was assigned to read books that feature reproductions of the canons of western art. It was only many years later, through tracing these canonical images and then analyzing the written down memories triggered by the tracing, that he problematized the canon in an autoethnographic essay (BAST, 2024a). As a final example, RUNGE (2022, 2023) explored visual autoethnography as a method of digital photography. The author combined personal writing with digital photography to critically reflect on her participation in workshops for photojournalists in places such as Palermo and Istanbul. [38]

5. Relatively Underexplored Forms and Topics of Autoethnography in Germany

In the United States, evocative autoethnography has a longer tradition than collaborative autoethnography (CHANG et al., 2013). Evocative autoethnography, as described by ELLIS (2004), is expressive and emotionally engaging as researchers aim to create compelling stories of lived experience that invite others to imagine being in their situation. While evocative autoethnography is one of the most common forms used in English-language publications, I found that it has been underexplored by researchers in Germany. Of the 97 publications I collected and analyzed for this literature review, three were explicitly labeled as evocative autoethnography (KLINGLER, 2024 [2023]; PIERBURG, 2021; PIERBURG et al., 2023). In addition to these three, one was described by its authors as a combination of evocative, analytic, individual, and collaborative autoethnography (AUTOR:INNENGRUPPE AEDiL, 2021). The majority of the texts I analyzed had the "analytic" form proposed by ANDERSON (2006). These texts had explicit arguments and were written according to the standards of academic writing. They were clearly structured, unambiguous, and left no room for me as a reader to make my own interpretations and come to a different conclusion. I found one example where the presentation style of the final publication was analytical (DOMSEL, 2023), but the research material emerged largely from a creative process involving performative media including poetry, music, and fictional letter writing (DOMSEL, 2021). [39]

In Spain, analytic autoethnography was also more common than the evocative form (MONTAGUD, 2022). However, the evocative autoethnographies analyzed by MONTAGUD "were closely linked to the perspective and interests of feminism" (§37). The use of evocative autoethnography as a feminist method reflects the methodology's historical roots in the women's liberation movement of the 1960s and 1970s, which drew attention to how "the personal is political" through emotive writing and storytelling (ETTORRE, 2017, p.7). But this was not the case in Germany where the feminist studies I found were not evocative but analytic. For example, KUBES (2014, 2016, 2018) developed a method she called *living fieldwork*. She described her method as "autoethnographic multisensory research" (2016, p.288) and explored it in her feminist study of the working conditions of female hostesses at automotive shows in Frankfurt and Geneva. Despite addressing the feminist issue of everyday sexism in the male-dominated German automotive industry, KUBES explicitly distanced herself from evocative

autoethnography when she wrote that her intention was "not to create a poetic and aesthetically pleasing account of personal experience in a final text" (p.293). [40]

Of the 97 collected publications, 27 indicated the specific type of autoethnography used, a specification that indicates the author's knowledge that there are indeed different types of autoethnography. Autoethnography was the main method explored in 68 texts. The remaining 29 followed a mixed methods design with autoethnography as a component of a larger study. In 24 of these 29, autoethnography was practiced in addition to qualitative interviews. At the same time, almost all of the studies considered here combined ethnographic and autoethnographic tools. As in Spain where "there are still some who confuse autoethnography with other qualitative methods" (MONTAGUD, 2022, §36), I found that many studies were closer to reflexive ethnography than to autoethnography itself. [41]

Few of the 97 examples of autoethnography sought to challenge heteronormative expectations which is an explicit goal of "queering autoethnography" (HOLMAN JONES & HARRIS, 2019, p.4). In 2005, HOLMAN JONES, who has been particularly influential in bringing autoethnography into Australian academia, called for more political engagement. Since then, queer autoethnography has emerged as one of several critical autoethnographies (ADAMS & HOLMAN JONES, 2016). Although not explicitly labeled as a queer autoethnography, LEIPOLD's (2024) essay was one of the few examples I found that drew attention to the harmful consequences of internalized homophobia and queer shame. One of the main purposes of queer autoethnography described by ADAMS and HOLMAN JONES (2016) is "to ignite cultural critique, expose queer stories, and do queer research" (p.911). Another example of a researcher problematizing heteronormativity is BOLL's (2019) study of the mediatized sexual practices of webcamming among gay men. As a sociologist of the body, BOLL exposed his own naked body to the gaze of anonymous strangers for a period of about a year to understand how male bodies are staged online and transformed into images of hypermasculinity. In a further example, TREIER (2020) discussed how they made themselves vulnerable in order to do research on toxic masculinity in the context of dating apps. As a non-binary person researching anti-feminist practices in misogynistic online communities, TREIER described being socially rejected in the so-called manosphere. TREIER suggested that men who have been radicalized into far-right misogynistic beliefs might benefit from the personal, therapeutic, self-critical writing process of autoethnography. [42]

I found even fewer studies that engaged the topic of illness. Evocative narratives of illness can be traced back to second-wave feminist consciousness raising practices and ideals of treating the patient as a person (ETTORRE, 2017; GREENHALGH, 2001). An early example of autoethnography as a method for coping with the illness of a partner is provided by ELLIS (1995). RICHARDS (2008) offered an overview of illness narratives in the field of autoethnography. She proposed the term "illness autoethnography" (p.1717) and identified three main categories using her own story of kidney failure and transplantation as a starting point. As RICHARDS argued, illness autoethnographies are usually told

from the perspective of the patient, and the storytelling serves to critique the tendency within medical science to objectify and depersonalize the individual. But illness autoethnographies, as I came to realize during my review of the literature, are rare in German academia. Although there were 10 pandemic-focused autoethnographies, none of them described personal experiences of illness, hospitalization, or recovery. Their focus was more on structural changes and social relations under pandemic conditions. And while I found autoethnographic accounts of disability (GEESE, 2023; GIESE & SAUERBIER, 2018; SAERBERG, 2010, 2014; SCHULZ, 2018, 2021, 2024), the only example of an illness autoethnography was KLINGLER's (2024 [2023]) essay "Five Coffin Nails to Informed Consent: An Autoethnography of Suffering Complications in Breastfeeding." One of the few evocative autoethnographies I found, this essay won the 2023 Young Talent Award of the Academy for Ethics in Medicine at the University of Göttingen. [43]

In "Five Coffin Nails to Informed Consent," KLINGLER explored her patient experience in a German hospital where she sought treatment for breastfeeding complications about a month after the birth of her first child. Writing about the hospitalization from memory months later, the author reflected on how the situation which she found herself in was too difficult for taking field notes. Without any field notes to draw on, she requested her patient file from the hospital, which she looked through to trigger memories of her time there. To help her remember, she also looked at private photographs she had taken in the room of the hospital. She listened to the songs she had heard in the room and to the voice messages she had sent to people from there. The research findings reveal the limits of informed consent in contexts where patients are emotionally overwhelmed by the experience of illness. [44]

The essay is structured around five medical situations experienced by the author as a patient during the course of her hospitalization. KLINGLER referred to each medical situation as a coffin nail. The first coffin nail was when the gynecologist gave her, the patient, pills to swallow on the spot in his office without telling her about the severe psychological side effects. After two days of uncontrollable crying, the patient went to see another doctor who told her that she had to have an operation the same day. The patient's emotional state affected her ability to understand the consent form and she somehow missed important information about the operation. This was the second coffin nail described by KLINGLER, followed by a third coffin nail when the surgeon did not properly inform the patient of the risks of the operation. The fourth coffin nail was when the patient wanted to stop breastfeeding but the nurses were unable to offer her any alternatives, leaving her with no freedom of choice. The fifth coffin nail was when the patient then felt social pressure to continue breastfeeding her child as a "good mother" (p.344). [45]

Although a social science researcher in the area of public health, when it came to dealing with the issue of informed consent as a patient, KLINGLER found herself acting more compliant than resistant to medical authority. By sharing her story of illness, the author challenged stereotypical images of the academic as someone

who is always in control, as well as romanticized images of motherhood. Had KLINGLER used a different method, she would not have been able to analyze how her subjectivity as a new mother intersected with her academic identity to the extent that she did. And yet, despite having the qualities of an illness autoethnography, the author did not contextualize her personal story within the larger autoethnographic literature on illness. [46]

In addition to KLINGLER, I also found an article by REINSCH et al. (2023) in which they offered an analysis of the first author's experience as a physician in a cystic fibrosis ward in Eastern Germany. This autoethnographic study makes a unique contribution by focusing on the fears, hopes, and expectations of a physician who experienced moments of crisis in his clinical work and chose to analyze the demanding situation through his everyday observations, documented as personal field notes. That same year, two neurosurgical residents (LAWSON McLEAN & LAWSON McLEAN, 2023) combined methods of autoethnography and a literature review to reflect on their personal and professional experiences of medical training. They argued that video game concepts can serve as "potent metaphors for understanding the challenges and strategies associated with neurosurgical residency" (n.p.). However, only recently has autoethnography begun to gain recognition in the health sciences, including nursing, occupational therapy, family medicine, and clinical pharmacy (CHANG, 2016; RAMALHO-DE-OLIVEIRA, 2020). [47]

6. Conclusion

In this paper, I traced how autoethnography emerged and developed in a particular period within a German context. I collected and analyzed 97 sources, published between 2007 and 2024, to identify and understand the purposes and practices of autoethnography across disciplines in German academia. The previous relevant scholarship has captured a broader scope of the situation of autoethnography in German-speaking countries. However, my analysis was carried out through a comparison with existing studies of autoethnography in the contexts of Spain and the United States. In doing so, I was able to identify the particularities of autoethnography in Germany, where the methodology remains unestablished and under critique. [48]

In 2022, MONTAGUD concluded that Spanish autoethnography "has not yet reached its full maturity and has not yet obtained the recognition it deserves" (§42). I have a similar perspective on the current situation of autoethnography in Germany. MONTAGUD based his conclusion in part on the relatively small number of evocative autoethnographies in Spain compared to the United States. As in Spain, most researchers in Germany have opted for the analytic form which keeps the personal to a minimum and is therefore generally considered to be more scientific. However, in contrast to the anthropological roots of autoethnography in Spain and the United States, I found that in German academia, researchers with professional interests in education were the first to use the term "autoethnography" to describe their work. From its beginnings, social justice education has been at the core of autoethnographic research in

Germany. Some researchers report using autoethnography themselves to reflect on their roles and responsibilities in higher education. Others have demonstrated that autoethnography can expand students' sense of community and enable their professional development. The increasing use of autoethnography as a pedagogical tool in teaching practices and learning processes is significant given the crucial role that the education system can play in creating a more sustainable and inclusive society. [49]

Inspired by MONTAGUD, I proposed two stages in the development of autoethnography in Germany: Its emergence from educational fields and beyond, followed by its expansion into other fields and its diversification. A key finding is the preference for collaborative autoethnography, as opposed to the individual-centered approach that is comparatively more common in Spain and the United States. I discussed how, in the United States, autoethnographic researchers (CHANG et al., 2013) reflected on what it means to explore autoethnography as group work rather than solo research while in Germany, there has been a preference for collaborative autoethnography without similar reflection. The earliest example of autoethnography in Germany had the lesser-used form of a collaborative autoethnography although it was not explicitly labeled as such. Since then, the tendency has been to carry out autoethnographic research within a community of researchers rather than working alone. This way of collaborating with others to present different perspectives on a research topic may be a way of avoiding common accusations made against autoethnography such as being self-indulgent and unscientific. Collaborative autoethnography is generally considered to be more objective and valid than individual autoethnography (ibid.). Practicing autoethnography collectively may also help some researchers overcome the anxiety of using the methodology individually (KEEFER, 2010). [50]

This paper expands on existing research that offers various explanations for the significant increase in autoethnographies by researchers in Germany during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, I also add a further dimension to this existing research by discussing how autoethnography then began to spread to a wider range of fields and even into the classroom, reaching students. With the acceleration of autoethnography, more diverse forms of the methodology have emerged from researchers in different disciplines. And yet, while I found some lesser-known forms of autoethnography, other forms have been rarely explored compared to the Anglo-American context. These forms are illness autoethnographies and queer autoethnographies. One of the main purposes of autoethnography in the Anglo-American context is to address issues such as health norms and gender expectations that are usually ignored in academia. The experiences of illness and the politics of sexuality have traditionally been explored in prominent works by foundational figures of autoethnography. Silence on these topics can perpetuate discrimination (CHANG, 2008). [51]

As an autoethnographer myself, I found that some researchers were using autoethnography in ways that were very different from how I had experienced and understood the methodology. A key distinction is that a relatively large number of researchers have worked with collaborative forms of autoethnography. While I

already feel compelled to consider how collaborative autoethnography might benefit my own work, I still see the emphasis on the individual as a strength of the methodology, following the idea that by showing the complexity of an individual it becomes possible to break down social structures that serve to categorize people. Another difference is that most of the researchers did not write from memory, but used previously dated field notes. I found little engagement with the concept of memory, the constructed nature of experience, and the conventions of narrating experience. My own autoethnographic fiction (GONZALEZ SUERO, 2025) was based on memories of past experiences for which I had no field notes and had to use my imagination to some extent, along with relevant artifacts. As such, I reject the modern binary that produces a limited understanding of the imagination as synonymous with fantasy and as opposed to reason. Through my autoethnographic writing, I seek to activate other people's imaginations in ways that engage them in understanding my unique perspective and why it matters. [52]

In the course of this literature review, I also felt that there could be some more reflection on how the self is recreated in the telling and retelling of the story. What I missed was some kind of acknowledgment of how narration of past experiences, even those supported by dated field notes, involves a degree of fictionalization, i.e., more reflection on the act of writing as a form of representation rather than as a neutral medium for describing a reality. Even "[e]thnographic writings can properly be called fictions," as CLIFFORD (1986, p.6) argued, not in the sense of being untrue but rather in the sense of being fashioned. This is one aspect I felt could be more fully articulated, particularly because of its relevance for moving beyond the binary of science and art. [53]

Going into this project, I seem to have had an expectation of what "good" autoethnography is. It took me some time to accept those texts that did not explore the craft of storytelling as autoethnographies even though they were explicitly labeled as such. But after a few weeks of reading and analyzing them, I came to appreciate them for what they are. They are different from what I was used to. I have discovered types of autoethnography that I did not know existed. In this sense, my review of the literature has given me a new perspective through which to view my own autoethnographic work. [54]

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