

Andrea Ploder

Strong reflexivity and vulnerable researchers. On the epistemological requirement of academic kindness



Andrea Ploder is a sociologist at the University of Innsbruck. Her research focuses on qualitative methodologies, history of sociology, sociological theory, sociology of science, and science and technology studies.

1. Introduction¹

In the last decades, academic institutions have undergone severe changes. While efforts towards diversity and targeted support programs have increased the chances for members of (some) underrepresented groups to pursue an academic career, the working conditions for individual researchers have not improved – on the contrary. Many academic researchers suffer from the accelerated pace, precarious working conditions, job insecurity, and increased competition that come with new managerialism (see e.g., Conesa Carpintero & González Ramos, 2018). Often enough, the daily struggle in academia is so consuming that researchers forget why they wanted to pursue this path in the first place. Under these conditions, fostering an atmosphere of kindness among academic peers is a significant ethical and political goal in and of itself. But this is not the end of the story.

In this paper, I will argue that academic kindness also has a decisive *epistemological* dimension. Some kinds of knowledge just *cannot* be produced without it. This applies to many areas of social research, but it becomes most obvious when we look at the case of strong reflexivity. Strongly reflexive research can only thrive in kind environments, therefore creating these environments is not only an ethical and political, but also an epistemological necessity.

The main argument of this paper is quite simple:

¹ This paper has evolved side by side with an ongoing conversation with Angela Kühner and Phil C. Langer. While section 2 is based on a paper we wrote together six years ago, all the other sections have benefitted tremendously from our joint discussions of our academic projects and lives. I am beyond grateful for the emotional and intellectual space we share. Special thanks go to everyone who provided valuable feedback on earlier versions of this text: Dani Jauk, Susanne Kink-Hampersberger, Phil C. Langer, Stefan Laube, Anita Thaler, Nicole Weydmann, as well as the participants of the panel on academic kindness at the STS conference in May 2022. All remaining shortcomings are – of course – my own. Most importantly, I want to thank Dani Jauk for the invitation to contribute to this panel. Apart from being a brilliant researcher, she is also one of the kindest, most enthusiastic, and inspiring academic colleagues I know.

Strong reflexivity requires vulnerable researchers. And vulnerability requires spaces of support and kindness.

I will support this argument in the following steps: After an introduction of the concept of strong reflexivity (2) I will explore the relationship between strong reflexivity and researcher vulnerability (3). Then, I will discuss the relationship between strong reflexivity, vulnerability, and academic kindness (4). Along the way, I will try to sharpen the notions of vulnerability and kindness for the topic at hand. While not exhaustively exploring these two complex concepts, I will point out how I use them in this paper. At the end, I will highlight a few consequences of my argument for the debate about research ethics (5).

2. What is strong reflexivity?

Reflexivity is one of the fundamental principles of qualitative research. In its most basic form, it calls for a reflection on the researchers own involvement in data production and analysis. Ever since the writing culture debate in anthropology in the 1980s and 90s (Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Behar & Gordon, 1995), the methodological impact of reflexivity has grown and spread to more and more disciplines. Today, the term is used in a variety of meanings in different areas of qualitative research. Most researchers agree on its relevance, but their understandings of the term are quite diverse. Some use it as a means of controlling subjectivity on (post-)positivist grounds, implying an understanding of subjectivity as ‘bias’. Others understand reflexivity as a strategy of using subjectivity to examine social and psychosocial phenomena.²

In 2016, Angela Kühner, Phil Langer, and I examined the epistemological role of reflexivity in qualitative research (Kühner, Ploder & Langer, 2016). Our main argument was that the role of the researcher’s subjectivity in the process of knowledge production is tagged by two contrasting positions:

Epistemically weak reflexivity conceives the positionality of the researcher as a disruptive factor, problematic but inescapable. It aims at controlling the influence of researchers on the research process by making it explicit. These approaches can be highly reflexive, but in an epistemically weak sense.

Strongly reflexive researchers acknowledge and appreciate their own positionality. They use their entanglements with the field as a decisive source of data and interpretation.

Epistemically strong reflexivity conceives the positionality of the researcher as a valuable epistemic resource. Strongly reflexive researchers embrace their entanglements with the field and use their own sympathies, prejudices, fears, as well as emotional, mental, and physical experiences as a source of data. They know that whenever they

² In ethnomethodology, reflexivity has an entirely different meaning. For an inventory of different meanings of the term and a concise account of ethnomethodological reflexivity see Lynch, 2000.

produce knowledge about the world around them, they also produce knowledge about themselves – and vice versa.

Several approaches in qualitative research use the power of strong reflexivity. They have different methodological foundations but converge in the idea that the researcher's biography and lived experience are highly relevant sources of data. Examples are autoethnography (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Anderson, 2006), ethnopschoanalysis (Kühner, 2016), and reflexive grounded theory (Breuer et al., 2019), to name just a few. Many ethnographic studies are strongly reflexive as well (see e.g., Laube 2021), depending on the researcher's level of participation and on the way they analyze their experiences in the field.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the interest in strongly reflexive research has expanded and gained a new momentum among social researchers of all generations (see Ploder, 2021).³

As part of this boom, more and more scholars combine strongly reflexive approaches with each other. One example is Alina Brehm, who successfully combines autoethnography and ethnopschoanalysis (see e.g., Brehm, 2021). Moreover, it becomes increasingly obvious that other established qualitative research approaches can be practiced in a strongly reflexive way. That includes all variants of ethnography (see above) but also biography research (e.g., Ruokonen-Engler & Siouti, 2016), and hermeneutic approaches (like depth-hermeneutics, see Bereswill et al., 2010).

Strong reflexivity is situated.

Strong reflexivity is closely related to feminist epistemologies. It encourages a focus on our unique individual standpoint as knowledge makers, and calls for radical subjectivity as the stronger form of objectivity. This establishes a very close relationship to epistemological concepts like strong objectivity, standpoint epistemology (Harding, 1993) and situated knowledge (Haraway, 1988).

Strong reflexivity is queer.

Because of their provoking and irritating role in academic discourse, strongly reflexive approaches have also been characterized as queer (Holman Jones & Adams, 2016). Like queer theory and practice, strongly reflexive research blurs categories and genres, embraces art as a valuable theoretical and practical tool, resists orthodox methodologies, is inventive, creative, messy, and personal. These features, combined with the central role of the researchers own experience, make it a valuable choice for queer social research (see Browne & Nash, 2016; for an example, see Preciado, 2013 [2008]).

³ As academic practice, strong reflexivity has a much longer tradition. An early example are the autoethnographic diaries by Michel Leiris (1934).

Why does strong reflexivity matter? Strongly reflexive research is appealing for a number of reasons. Some epistemological and political reasons have been discussed elsewhere and do not need to be repeated here (see e.g., Kühner, Ploder & Langer, 2016). But one reason must be mentioned, as it might convince scholars across all epistemological and political camps:

Strong reflexivity is empirically powerful.

Strong reflexivity allows us to study life worlds and dimensions of social life that are very hard to access otherwise. That includes phenomena centered around physical experiences and emotions (see Stadlbauer & Ploder, 2016) that are hard to observe or address in interviews. Their most important dimensions are deeply rooted in the individual experience of the people involved and strong reflexivity enables researchers to approach these phenomena from a first-person perspective. Other phenomena can be approached from a third-person perspective, but are emotionally very challenging for researchers, highly anxiety provoking, and therefore understudied. In these cases, strong reflexivity allows researchers to work through their emotional involvement, use it as a source of knowledge production, and share it with their audience. Examples are Carolyn Ellis' evocative autoethnography about the chronic illness of her partner (Ellis, 2018 [1995]) or a recent study about child soldiers in Iraq (Langer & Ahmad, 2019).

3. Strong reflexivity and vulnerability

The empirical power of strongly reflexive research comes at a cost. It requires a lot of commitment and is strongly connected to researcher vulnerability. Why is this so?

Strong reflexivity requires vulnerable researchers.

First of all, strong reflexivity requires vulnerable researchers. It depends on researchers who are prepared to work with their own emotional or physical experiences, even if these experiences are anxiety provoking and they would rather look away from them. This includes the whole spectrum of sensations between happiness and sadness, excitement and anxiety, empowerment and exhaustion, enthusiasm and boredom, fascination and disgust. Experiences like these are the foundation of strongly reflexive research and they depend on researchers who are willing to embrace unsettling experiences as a source of data and share them with an anonymous audience. While working through and with our emotions is key for all strongly reflexive approaches (for autoethnography see e.g., Adams et al., 2015)⁴, it has been most extensively discussed in ethnopsyoanalysis.⁵ One of the key arguments in ethnopsyoanalysis is that social research always provokes anxiety in the researcher. No matter which topic we are

4 One of the central qualities of autoethnography is "[t]o embrace vulnerability as a way to understand emotions and improve social life" (Adams et al, 2015, p. 36; see also Brehm, 2021, p. 39).

5 The writings of Georges Devereux, a key figure in ethnopsyoanalysis, are also an important reference for many autoethnographers. An example is one of the classics in autoethnographic literature, Ruth Behar's book *The Vulnerable Observer. Anthropology that Breaks Your Heart* (1997). In the introduction, she relates the concept of vulnerability to Devereux (Behar, 1997, p. 5ff.).

dealing with, it always confronts us with ourselves and thereby raises emotional responses. Intense emotions in the research process often raise anxiety and most traditional research methodologies are designed to create distance to them. Ethnopsychologists argue that analyzing these emotions and the anxiety they provoke gives access to the most relevant insights about the phenomenon itself (Devereux, 2018 [1967]; Kühner, 2018, p. 103f.).

Strong reflexivity creates vulnerable researchers.

Moreover, strong reflexivity also creates vulnerable researchers. Integrating our own experiences and biographies often enriches our research, but it can also weaken our positions in academic discourse. The details we expose about our private selves can be used against us, in the discussion of our work and in the pursuit of our academic careers (see e.g., Rambo, 2016). This is an inherent paradox of strongly reflexive research: The higher we value subjectivity as a resource for knowledge production (i.e. the more strongly reflexive our research gets), the more closely we tie the quality of research to the researcher's subjective accounts. The stronger the subjective account of the researcher gets, the more difficult it becomes to argue for the validity of her position – especially within standardized criteria for good academic research. Giving up the authoritative position of the sovereign researcher and acknowledging her positionality disavows the claim of interpretative authority regarding the subject matter of the research that goes beyond the pure self-reflection of the researcher (see e.g., Ploder & Stadlbauer, 2016, p. 756). As a result, strongly reflexive research increases the vulnerability of researchers in more than one way.⁶

In strongly reflexive research, vulnerability becomes visible in all its ambivalence. It makes researchers strong and weak at the same time. It makes research personal and political, stimulating and threatening, community-building and isolating.

What is vulnerability?

The concept of vulnerability is complex and has been discussed critically throughout the last years. It is not easy to say what constitutes vulnerability, who is the subject of vulnerability, and who chooses when an entity is vulnerable (see e.g., Mackenzie et al., 2014a).⁷ While this paper is not the place to discuss the concept broadly, it is important to address a few of its pitfalls and show how this paper relates to them. As Brown (2011) points out, ascribing vulnerability to certain groups or individuals can have paternalistic, oppressive, controlling, exclusive, and stigmatizing effects, even where it is meant to be ethically protecting and politically empowering. For a number of reasons, Brown criticizes the wide use of the concept and suggests to handle it “with

⁶ In strongly reflexive research, the requirement and the creation of vulnerability are actually two sides of the same coin. Being open to attacks is a central aspect of being vulnerable and by embracing our vulnerability as an epistemic tool, we often increase it. In her research on Shoah-Survivors, Alina Brehm makes clear how closely related the two dimensions of vulnerability are. She writes: “I need to make my thinking and feeling visible (...) in order to (...) stay vulnerable and attackable.” (Brehm, 2021, p. 37, translation by the author).

⁷ These and other questions were subject of an interdisciplinary conference Vulnerability. Theories and Concepts in Philosophy and the Social Sciences in October 2022 at the University of Graz.

care”. Problems arise whenever we use vulnerability in an essentialist sense, as an inherent quality of individuals with a certain ascribed or experienced race, gender, age, income, physical or mental health, etc. that – supposedly – makes them more vulnerable to a certain kind of harm than other individuals. This approach to vulnerability is politically powerful but it also gives rise to stigmatization, control, exclusion, and paternalism. Similar problems arise when we understand vulnerability as a weakness, resulting from a deficit, and as a feature that cannot be influenced by vulnerable individuals themselves.

In this contribution, I am interested in vulnerability as a universal, “fundamental feature” (Brown, 2011, p. 317) – a potential shared by all human individuals and many other (more than human) entities.⁸ This concept of *universal vulnerability* is shared by a broad variety of authors whose concerns with and ideas about vulnerability are otherwise quite diverse (like Judith Butler, Martha Nussbaum, and Alasdair MacIntyre; for an overview see Mackenzie et al., 2014b, p. 4f.). Their core argument connects vulnerability to embodiment, sociality, and dependence on others. In the volume *Vulnerability. New Essays in Ethics and Feminist Philosophy*, Catriona Mackenzie, Wendy Rogers, and Susan Dodds (2014b, p. 4) sum the position of universal vulnerability up as follows: “To be vulnerable is to be fragile, to be susceptible to wounding and to suffering; [... A]s embodied, social beings, we are both vulnerable to the actions of others and dependent on the care and support of other people – to varying degrees at various points in our lives.” Within vulnerability studies, this approach seeks to avoid some of the abovementioned problems and create a foundation for shared ethical responsibility towards all fellow (human) beings. It also allows us to see that “we are all vulnerable [...] but the degree of our lived vulnerability varies through the life course [...] according to wider relational processes of differentiated politically constituted subjectification and sociality” (Brown et al., 2017, p. 504). Depending on the degree and character of concrete lived vulnerability of an individual at a given point in time, the responsibility of others changes.

The case of strongly reflexive research suggests that the degree of our lived vulnerability can also vary according to our own choices. Strongly reflexive researches *choose* to tap into their vulnerability and use its epistemic power. In doing that, they use their own vulnerability as a strength. At the same time, they put themselves at risk: Embracing the epistemic dimension of vulnerability can provoke emotional and physical pain and it can jeopardize academic careers (see Rambo, 2016). The specific character of vulnerability in strongly reflexive research certainly needs to be examined in more detail. The *universal vulnerability approach* does not solve all the theoretical and political problems mentioned above and it certainly raises a few other philosophical questions. But it is a helpful starting point to think about vulnerability in the context of strongly reflexive research.

⁸ Much of the debate about vulnerability is centered around human actors, but it is easy to see why vulnerability is not an exclusive human quality.

4. Strong reflexivity, vulnerability, and academic kindness

Strongly reflexive research is empirically powerful but it increases the vulnerability of researchers. Where does that leave us? How can we use the power of lived experience and vulnerability as an epistemic resource?

Creating knowledge under conditions of increased vulnerability requires extensive support from academic peers. It requires a safe environment that is based on academic kindness. Among several other dimensions of kindness (some of them elaborated elsewhere in this issue) this includes at least three layers of support among peers:

The first layer is a reliable and stable group of research partners. One or two friendly peers (with a lot of other responsibilities) are not enough to support a strongly reflexive research project from the beginning to the end. It takes a group that is big enough to support the researcher throughout the project and small enough to build trust.

Strongly reflexive research requires kind research partners.

Similar to interpretation groups in other qualitative research traditions, strongly reflexive researchers need groups of peers who listen and work through their narrative with them.⁹ They need spaces to share their anxieties, desires, and hopes, and peers who are willing to think and feel with them. They need to hear and see how their experience resonates with others, what their feelings provoke in them, what is a strong interpretation or narrative, and what has the potential to become one. Vulnerable researchers need research partners who will listen without judgement, who will not shy away from their tears, their revived trauma, and their feelings of hatred, fear, and love towards research participants.¹⁰

Vulnerability *alone* does not generate good strongly reflexive knowledge. It is possible to share a lot of details about our private lives without making the research based upon it strong in an epistemological sense. In short: Not every confessional tale makes good research. In order to use the epistemic power of their vulnerability and turn it into strong research, researchers can benefit a lot from reliable research partners and a kind research environment.

Strongly reflexive research requires kind reviewing cultures.

The second layer concerns the publishability of strongly reflexive research. Sharing our work in publication outlets is necessary for the academic survival of researchers, and editors as well as reviewers have a decisive role in this process. A kind reviewing

⁹ Within the field of qualitative research, the importance of research collectives for knowledge production is widely acknowledged. The concept of the “data session”, “group interpretation” and “interpretation groups” has been elaborated in both methodological textbooks and – more recently – from a sociology of science perspective (Reichert, 2013; Meier zu Verl/Tuma, 2021; Berli, 2021). Yet, so far, the epistemic relevance of a kind atmosphere is only rarely addressed in the methodological literature. Many existing research collectives promote and live a kind environment, but without making the “kindness factor” explicit in the methodological literature. In textbooks about strongly reflexive research approaches, this aspect is reflected more explicitly (for ethnopschoanalysis see Bonz et al., 2017; for reflexive grounded theory see Breuer et al., 2019, p. 324ff.).

¹⁰ On the methodological relevance of affective and “intimate entanglements” in the research relationship, see Latimer & López Gómez, 2019.

culture is important for all researchers¹¹, and it is particularly vital for researchers who work under conditions of increased vulnerability. In order to appreciate the strengths of strongly reflexive research and help to increase its quality, reviewers need to share their reactions (their thoughts, emotions, enthusiasm, doubts, etc.) in a way that allow the author and their work to grow.

Being a kind reviewer does not imply the absence of critique, on the contrary. It calls for a constructive way to share criticism, a way that acknowledges both the strengths and the limitations of the work and helps researchers to develop its full potential. One powerful strategy for the development of a kind review culture as an editor is sharing the name of the reviewers with the authors. Several journals are doing that already, some have started to share the names of reviewers in the published paper. This encourages reviewers to make an effort towards constructive critique and a respectful voice. It also increases the value of reviewing as a form of academic service and allows reviewers to take credit for their efforts.

Strongly reflexive research requires kind readers.

The third layer concerns readers. Some strongly reflexive approaches – like evocative autoethnography – explicitly address the relevance of a good writer-reader-relationship. Like all performative researchers, evocative autoethnographers are convinced that the research process does not end with the researcher but extends into the experience of readers. To support this process, writers need to make an effort to produce engaging texts, and readers need to be open to a reading experience that touches and transforms them (see e.g., Richardson & Adams St. Pierre, 2005). In order to connect to the performative levels of strongly reflexive research, readers need to tap into their own vulnerabilities and become part of an ongoing research process. This implies a kind attitude towards the researchers whose work they are engaging with.

Kind environments like these enable researchers to embrace their vulnerability and thereby create the epistemological conditions for strongly reflexive research. With a network of kind peers, researchers can use their biographies and their physical and emotional experiences, anxieties, and resistance as a source of data. It enables them to perform ‘strong analysis’ and tell ‘strong stories’ that will touch their audience and spark moments of performative knowledge-making.

What is academic kindness?

Similar to vulnerability, the concept of kindness is complex and the term has been used in a variety of meanings. In this paper, I cannot dig deep into the philosophical debate on kindness.¹² Further research will most certainly highlight a number of connections

¹¹ This argument has been made frequently throughout the last years (see e.g., Vazire, 2022).

¹² The debate about kindness can be traced back to ancient philosophy, often raised in the context of ethics. In contemporary philosophy, the term is most present in ethics of care. The editors of this Queer-Feminist-STS Forum, who pointed out several dimensions of kindness in their introduction. See also the strongly reflexive contribution by Birgit Hofstätter (2017) on the art of kindness towards chosen kin in the second issue of Queer-Feminist STS-Forum.

between academic kindness and epistemological questions and enable a more precise definition of kindness in this context.

For now, I propose to look at academic kindness in close connection to researcher vulnerability. Vulnerability as a universal condition (see above) is a powerful starting point to think about kindness in academia. It suggests that academic peers need to tap into their own vulnerability as research partners, as reviewers, and as readers, in order to enable research under conditions of increased researcher vulnerability. From an epistemological point of view, this dimension of academic kindness fosters the creation of spaces for knowledge production that are characterized by shared vulnerability. These spaces are an important part of the epistemic foundation for strongly reflexive research.

5. A note about research ethics

The epistemological dimensions of vulnerability and kindness are not identical with ethical and political demands for academic kindness, but they intersect in important ways. Therefore, I want to include a brief note about research ethics, mostly to encourage further research on this topic:

One of the most basic requirements of research ethics is to avoid harm to our research participants (see e.g., Wiles, 2013, p. 55ff.; von Unger et al., 2014). This includes researchers, which becomes particularly obvious in strongly reflexive research. Strongly reflexive research is often painful and emotionally demanding, and it requires looking at parts of our lives we would rather look away from. It is very tempting to stop the project when problems arise, and in order to complete a strongly reflexive research project, we need to commit to it again and again. In this process, we need peers who show us that we can pursue this path and are willing to walk it with us. And if it is no longer safe for us to pursue the project, we need them to tell us that we are allowed to stop. Without a network of kind peers, strongly reflexive researchers cannot protect the emotional integrity of all their research participants – including themselves.

Debates about research ethics are often linked to the question of vulnerability.¹³ In order to live up to our ethical responsibility as researchers, we need to make an effort to find out about the specific vulnerabilities of our research participants and protect them as well as we can (von Unger, 2021). At the same time, questions of ethics and vulnerability are closely linked to methodological considerations, including epistemology (see e.g., Kühner & Langer, 2010). As von Unger (2017) put it in a talk at the *Berliner Methodentreffen qualitative Forschung* – ethical and methodological questions are “two sides of the same coin”: Methodological decisions can solve or cause ethical problems, and every ethical challenge tells us something important about the field we do research in.

¹³ See, e.g., von Unger, 2021 and the introduction and contributions to the special issue of *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* by Roth & von Unger, 2018.

The case of strong reflexivity shows that our ethical responsibility as researchers includes ethical responsibility towards ourselves (see e.g., Tamas, 2009; Wiles, 2013).¹⁴ Making ourselves visible in our data and analysis increases our vulnerability and thereby our exposure to potential harm. How can we deal with that from an ethical point of view? The most widespread strategies for protecting research participants from harm are a respectful and sensitive attitude during data production, and the anonymization of data before publication. While some strongly reflexive researchers do anonymize their texts (e.g., Anonymous, 2021), this is not a sustainable strategy for those whose careers require a certain degree of visibility within their academic community. But if we cannot protect vulnerable researchers with anonymity, we have to foster an academic culture that encourages respect and sensitivity among researchers and decisively sanctions personal attacks. In this light, a kind research environment is not only an epistemological, but also an ethical condition for good strongly reflexive research.

These considerations become even more important in light of the political debate about emotional capitalism (Illouz, 2007). As some critics have rightfully pointed out, approaches like autoethnography support the exploitation of our individual biographies for career purposes: Even if that is not their primary goal, autoethnographers use their individual biographies, experiences, and traumas as an investment in the academic market (Tamas, 2009). In a time when the exploitation of biographical narrative and private feelings as a commodity is encouraged in a number of everyday contexts (Illouz, 2007), this creates significant political tension and raises additional ethical questions.¹⁵

6. Conclusions

In recent years, scholars from different disciplines have pointed out the importance of kind research environments and called for a radical shift in academic culture. Some of the most important contributions came from scholars in feminist, queer, and postcolonial studies (see e.g., Kulpa & Silva, 2016).¹⁶ Promoting a broader implementation of academic kindness is also one of the goals of this issue, the *Queer-Feminist Science and Technology Studies Forum #7*.

In this paper, I wanted to highlight the epistemological dimensions of academic kindness. I argued that the production of strongly reflexive knowledge is closely connected to researcher vulnerability and requires kind research partners, reviewers, and read-

¹⁴ For a broader discussion of research ethics and autoethnography, mostly focusing on ethical responsibilities towards other research participants (not the author herself), see e.g., Ellis, 2007; Edwards, 2021.

¹⁵ For a more extensive discussion of this problem see Ploder & Stadlbauer, 2016, p. 758.

¹⁶ Looking at academic cultures from a queer and postcolonial perspective sheds light on scholars and research areas operating at the margins of hegemonic academia and highlights the dynamics of exclusion in academic life. Operating at the margins of an institution gives a lot of opportunities to experience the absence of kindness and, through that, a strong sense for the relevance of kind relationships for academic work.

ers. In pursuing this argument, I developed a more specific understanding of researcher vulnerability and academic kindness in relation to strongly reflexive social research.

The example of strong reflexivity shows that vulnerability and academic kindness are vital for contemporary qualitative research. It shows that qualitative research – if conducted in a strongly reflexive way – requires and creates vulnerable researchers and implies specific ethical responsibilities that need to be examined in more detail. And it shows that we can understand academic kindness as a research environment characterized by shared vulnerability.

References

- Adams, Tony E., Holman Jones, Stacy & Ellis, Carolyn (2015). *Autoethnography. Understanding Qualitative Research*. Oxford University Press.
- Anderson, Leon (2006). Analytic autoethnography. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 35(4), 373–395.
- Anonymous Author (2021). Highlighting Numbers: Students Stalking Faculty and the Lasting Impacts of a Flawed System. *Journal of Autoethnography*, 2(2), 143-160.
- Behar, Ruth (1997). *The Vulnerable Observer. Anthropology that Breaks Your Heart*. Beacon Press.
- Behar, Ruth & Gordon, Deborah A. (1995). *Women Writing Culture*. University of California Press.
- Bereswill, Mechthild, Morgenroth, Christine & Redman, Peter (2010). Alfred Lorenzer and the depth-hermeneutics method. *Psychoanalysis, Culture & Society*, 15(3), 221–250.
- Berli, Oliver (2021). "Maybe this is Speculative Now" Negotiating and Valuing Interpretations in Qualitative Research. *Human Studies*, 44, 765-790.
- Bonz, Jochen, Hamm, Marion, Eisch-Angus, Katharina & Sülzle, Almut (Eds.). (2017). *Ethnografie und Deutung. Gruppensupervision als Methode reflexiven Forschens*. Springer VS.
- Brehm, Alina (2021). *Repräsentanzen der Shoah. Über ein Café für Überlebende und die Gegenwart der Vergangenheit*. Psychosozial Verlag.
- Breuer, Franz, Muckel, Petra & Dieris, Barbara (2019). *Reflexive Grounded Theory. Eine Einführung für die Forschungspraxis*. Springer VS.
- Brown, Kate (2011). 'Vulnerability': Handle with Care. *Ethics and Social Welfare*, 5(3), 313-321.
- Brown, Kate, Ecclestone, Kathryn & Emmel, Nick (2017). The Many Faces of Vulnerability. *Ethics and Social Policy and Society*, 16(3), 497-510.
- Browne, Kath & Nash, Catherine J. (2016). *Queer Methods and Methodologies. Intersecting Queer Theories and Social Science Research*. Routledge.
- Clifford, James & Marcus, George E. (Eds.). (1986). *Writing culture. The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. University of California Press.
- Conesa Carpintero, Ester & González Ramos, Ana M. (2018). Accelerated Researchers: Psychosocial Risks in Gendered Institutions in Academia. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 19(9), Art. 1077.
- Devereux, Georges (2018 [1967]). *Angst und Methode in den Verhaltenswissenschaften*. Psychosozial Verlag.

- Edwards, Jayne (2021). Ethical Autoethnography: Is it possible? *The International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 20 (3), 1-6.
- Ellis, C. (2007). Telling secrets, revealing lives: Relational ethics in research with intimate others. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 13(1), 3–29.
- Ellis, Carolyn (2018 [1995]). *Final Negotiations. A Story of Loves, Loss, and Chronic Illness*. Temple University Press.
- Ellis, Carolyn & Adams, Tony E. (2014). The Purpose, Practices, and Principles of Autoethnographic Research. In P. Leavy (Ed). *The Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research* (pp. 254-276). Oxford University Press.
- Ellis, Carolyn & Bochner, Art P. (2000). Autoethnography, personal narrative, reflexivity. In N. K. Denzin & I. S. Lincoln (Eds). *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 733–768). Sage.
- Haraway, Donna (1988). Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective. *Feminist Studies*, 14(3), 575-599.
- Harding, Sandra (1993). Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology: What Is ‘Strong Objectivity’? In L. Alcoff & E. Potter (Eds). *Feminist Epistemologies* (pp. 49-82). Routledge.
- Hofstätter, Birgit (2017). Making kin, or: The art of kindness and why there is nothing romantic about it. *Queer-Feminist Science & Technology Studies Forum*, 2, 8-14.
- Holman Jones, Stacy & Adams, Tony E. (2016). Autoethnography is a Queer Method. In K. Browne & C. J. Nash (Eds.). *Queer Methods and Methodologies. Intersecting Queer Theories and Social Science Research* (pp. 195-214). Routledge.
- Illouz, Eva (2007). *Cold intimacies: The making of emotional capitalism*. Polity Press.
- Kühner, Angela (2016). Social Research as a Painful (but Rewarding) Self-Examination: Re-Reading Georges Devereux’s Psychoanalytical Notion of Radical Subjectivity. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 22(9), 725-734.
- Kühner, Angela (2018). Jenseits der Kontrollfiktion. In A. Brehm, Alina & J. Kuhlmann (Eds). *Reflexivität und Erkenntnis. Facetten kritisch-reflexiver Wissensproduktion* (pp. 99-118). Psychosozial Verlag.
- Kühner, Angela & Langer, Phil C. (2010). Dealing with Dilemmas of Difference-Ethical and Psychological Considerations of “Othering” and “Peer Dialogues” in the Research Encounter. *Migration Letters*, 7(1), 69-78.
- Kühner, Angela, Ploder, Andrea & Langer, Phil C. (2016). Introduction to the Special Issue. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 22(9), 699-704.
- Kulpa, Robert & Silva, Joseli Maria (2016). Decolonizing Queer Epistemologies. In G. Brown & K. Browne (Eds): *The Ashgate Research Companion to Geographies of Sex and Sexualities* (pp. 139-42). Ashgate.
- Langer, Phil C. & Ahmad, Aisha-Nusrad (2019). *Psychosocial Needs of Former ISIS Child Soldiers in Northern Iraq*. Research Report. IPU.
- Latimer, Joanna & López Gómez, Daniel (2019). Intimate Entanglements: Affects, more-than-human intimacies and the politics of relations in science and technology. *The Sociological Review*, 67(2), 247-496.

- Laube, Stefan (2021). Material Practices of Ethnographic Presence. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 50 (1), 57-76.
- Leiris, Michel (1934). *L'Afrique Fantôme*. Gallimard.
- Lynch, Michael (2000). Against Reflexivity as an Academic Virtue and Source of Privileged Knowledge. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 17(3), 26–54.
- Mackenzie, Catriona, Rogers, Wendy & Dodds, Susan (2014b). Introduction: What Is Vulnerability and Why Does It Matter for Moral Theory? In C. Mackenzie, W. Rogers & S. Dodds (Eds.). *Vulnerability. New Essays in Ethics and Feminist Philosophy* (pp. 1-29). Oxford University Press.
- Mackenzie, Catriona, Rogers, Wendy & Dodds, Susan (Eds.) (2014a). *Vulnerability. New Essays in Ethics and Feminist Philosophy*. Oxford University Press.
- Meier zu Verl, Christian & Tuma, René (2021). Video analysis and ethnographic knowledge: An empirical study of video analysis practices. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 50(1), 120-144.
- Ploder, Andrea (2021). Evokative Autoethnografie. In M. Dietrich, I. Leser, K. Mruck, P. S. Ruppel, A. Schwentesius, R. Vock (Eds.). *Begegnen, Bewegen und Synergien stiften. Transdisziplinäre Beiträge zu Kulturen, Performanzen und Methoden* (pp. 155-172). Springer VS.
- Ploder, Andrea & Stadlbauer, Johanna (2016). Strong Reflexivity and its Critics: Responses to Autoethnography in the German-Speaking Cultural and Social Sciences. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 22(9), 753-765.
- Preciado, Paul B. (2013 [2008]). *Testo Junkie. Sex, Drugs, and Biopolitics in the Pharmacopornographic Era*. The Feminist Press.
- Rambo, Carol (2016). Strange accounts: Applying for the department chair position and writing threats and secrets “in play”. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 45 (1), 3-33.
- Reichertz, Jo (2013). *Gemeinsam interpretieren. Die Gruppeninterpretation als kommunikativer Prozess*. Springer VS.
- Richardson, Laurel & Elizabeth Adams St. Pierre, Elizabeth. (2005). Writing: A method of inquiry. In N. K. Denzin & Yvonna S. Lincoln (Eds.). *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (p. 959–978). Sage.
- Roth, Wolff-Michael (2009). Auto/Ethnography and the Question of Ethics. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 1 (38), Art. 38.
- Roth, Wolff-Michael & von Unger, Hella (2018). Current Perspectives on Research Ethics in Qualitative Research [19 paragraphs]. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 19(3), Art. 33.
- Ruokonen-Engler, Minna-Kristiina & Siouti, Irini (2016). Biographical Entanglements, Self-Reflexivity, and Transnational Knowledge Production. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 22(9), 745–752.
- Stadlbauer, Johanna & Ploder, Andrea (2016). „I start with my personal life“ – Zum Potenzial der Autoethnographie für die volkskundliche Forschung zu und mit Gefühlen. In K. Berger & I. Schneider (Eds.). *Emotional turn?! Kulturwissenschaftlich-volkskundliche Zugänge zu Gefühlen/Gefühlswelten* (pp. 271-280). Tagungsband zur 27. Österreichische Volkskundetagung.
- Tamas, Sophie (2009). Writing and Righting Trauma. Troubling the Autoethnographic Voice [24 paragraphs]. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung*, 10(1), Art. XY.
- Vazire, Simine (2022). Let's Peer Review Peer Review. In L. Jussim, J. A. Krosnick & S. T. Stevens (Eds.), *Research Integrity: Best Practices for the Social and Behavioral Sciences* (pp. 357-369). Oxford University Press.

von Unger, Hella (2017). Forschungsbeziehungen in qualitativer Forschung. Vortrag am Berliner Methodentreffen qualitative Forschung: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w3onvtTbEw&t=4s>

von Unger, Hella (2021). Ethical Reflexivity as Research Practice. *Historical Social Research*, 46(2), 186–204.

von Unger, Hella, Narimani, Petra & M'Bayo, Rosaline (2014). Forschungsethik in der qualitativen Forschung: Reflexivität, Perspektiven, Positionen. Springer VS.

Wiles, Rose (2013). *What are Qualitative Research Ethics?* Bloomsbury.