



The Ethnographic I: A Methodological Novel about Autoethnography (Ethnographic Alternatives)

By Carolyn Ellis University of South Florida

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The Ethnographic I: A Methodological Novel about Autoethnography (Ethnographic Alternatives) By Carolyn Ellis University of South Florida

A methodological textbook on autoethnography should be easily distinguishable from the standard methods text. Carolyn Ellis, the leading proponent of these methods, does not disappoint. She weaves both methodological advice and her own personal stories into an intriguing narrative about a fictional graduate course she instructs. In it, you learn about her students and their projects and understand the wide array of topics and strategies that fall under the label autoethnography. Through Ellis's interactions with her students, you are given useful strategies for conducting a study, including the need for introspection, the struggles of the budding ethnographic writer, the practical problems in explaining results of this method to outsiders, and the moral and ethical issues that get raised in this intimate form of research. Anyone who has taken or taught a course on ethnography will recognize these issues and appreciate Ellis's humanistic, personal, and literary approach toward incorporating them into her work. A methods text or a novel? The Ethnographic 'I' answers yes to both.

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Editorial Review

Review

The Ethnographic I is such a rich stew?part textbook, part autoethnography, part novel, part transcript, part confession, and part manifesto?that the reader just has to sit back and enjoy the flavors. This wonderful feast, served by a master teacher, satiates with every spoonful. (Ronald J. Pelias, Southern Illinois University)

This is a masterful book that tells a compelling tale about a master class in ethnography taught by a master teacher and scholar on the subject. Carolyn Ellis, in a stroke of genius, adopts the form of a novel to write an imaginative, emotionally rich, and methodologically layered account of teaching the one course that everyone in our field wishes they could take from the one person they wish they could take it with. And now, with this wonderful book, we can. It is not just the story form and truly original voice that separates this text from any competition. It is the undeniable fact that chapter-by-chapter readers gain the knowledge and skills that will help them become personal ethnographers as well as invites them into ongoing scholarly conversations that frequently question as much as advocate them. By the time I finished *The Ethnographic I*, the wisdom of using fiction to show us what goes on in her course?and in the complex and often conflicted lives of students and teachers constructing it?was abundantly clear. What better way to teach methods than by working them into and through the lives of those who use them? For all of these good reasons, this book is a genuine page turner and will undoubtedly have profound influences on how we teach (H. L. Goodall, Univ of North Carolina, Greensboro)

WOW! Carolyn Ellis's book has accomplished an extraordinarily difficult feat?a textbook that superbly covers contemporary issues for qualitative researchers and tells a story. She has, indeed, written a methodological novel. It is engaging and educational?a treasure I will be sharing with my graduate methods seminar because I want them to have the experience of Carolyn's teaching, her autoethnography, and her invitation to join the larger community of qualitative researchers. Wow! (Laurel Richardson, Ohio State University)

The Ethnographic I serves as a useful text to engage the issues that autoethnography raises both as genre and alternative discourses for authoring self and others. (*Qualitative Social Research*)

Ellis's work reflects the increasingly significant role of personal narrative in post-modern ethnography, a significance that encompasses such subjective texts as memoirs, anecdotes, and confessions. . . Ellis's work. . . offers a reference point for what no doubt will be many future "genre bending" contributions. (*Biography*)

This is a masterful book that tells a compelling tale about a master class in ethnography taught by a master teacher and scholar on the subject. Carolyn Ellis, in a stroke of genius, adopts the form of a novel to write an imaginative, emotionally rich, and methodologically layered account of teaching the one course that everyone in our field wishes they could take from the one person they wish they could take it with. And now, with this wonderful book, we can. It is not just the story form and truly original voice that separates this text from any competition. It is the undeniable fact that chapter-by-chapter readers gain the knowledge and skills that will help them become personal ethnographers as well as invites them into ongoing scholarly conversations that frequently question as much as advocate them. By the time I finished *The Ethnographic I*, the wisdom of using fiction to show us what goes on in her course?and in the complex and often conflicted lives of students and teachers constructing it?was abundantly clear. What better way to teach methods than by working them into and through the lives of those who use them? For all of these good reasons, this book

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About the Author

Carolyn Ellis is professor of communication and sociology in the Department of Communication at the University of South Florida. She is the author of *Final Negotiations: A Story of Love, Loss, and Chronic Illness* (1995) and coeditor (with Arthur Bochner) of *Composing Ethnography: Alternative Forms of Qualitative Writing* (1996), *Ethnographically Speaking: Autoethnography, Literature, and Aesthetics* (2002), and the AltaMira book series *Ethnographic Alternatives*.

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