38

WRITING

A Method of Inquiry

Laurel Richardson and Elizabeth Adams St. Pierre

The world of ethnography has expanded in ways that were unimaginable a decade ago, when this chapter was first written for the first edition of this *Handbook.* Qualitative researchers in a variety of disciplines—medicine, law, education, the social sciences, and the humanities—have since found *writing as a method of inquiry* to be a viable way in which to learn about themselves and their research topic. The literature is vast and varied.

In light of these developments, this chapter's revision is organized into three parts. In Part 1, Laurel Richardson discusses (a) the contexts of social scientific writing both historically and contemporaneously, (b) the creative analytical practice ethnography genre, and (c) the direction her work has taken during the past decade, including "writing stories" and collaborations across the humanities/social sciences divide. In Part 2, Elizabeth St. Pierre provides an analysis of how writing as a method of inquiry coheres with the development of ethical selves engaged in social action and social reform. In Part 3, Richardson provides some writing practices/exercises for the qualitative writer.

Just as the chapter reflects our own processes and preferences, we hope that your writing will do

the same. The more different voices are honored within our qualitative community, the stronger—and more interesting—that community will be.

PART 1: QUALITATIVE WRITING

Laurel Richardson

A decade ago, in the first edition of this *Handbook,* I confessed that for years I had yawned my way through numerous supposedly exemplary qualitative studies. Countless numbers of texts had I abandoned half read, half scanned. I would order a new book with great anticipation—the topic was one I was interested in, the author was someone I wanted to read—only to find the text boring. In "coming out" to colleagues and students about my secret displeasure with much of qualitative writing, I found a community of like-minded discontents. Undergraduates, graduates, and colleagues alike said that they found much of qualitative writing to be—yes—boring.

We had a serious problem; research topics were riveting and research valuable, but qualitative books were underread. Unlike quantitative

959

work that can carry its meaning in its tables and summaries, qualitative work carries its meaning in its entire text. Just as a piece of literature is not equivalent to its "plot summary," qualitative research is not contained in its abstract. Qualitative research has to be read, not scanned; its meaning is in the reading. It seemed foolish at best, and narcissistic and wholly self-absorbed at worst, to spend months or years doing research that ended up not being read and not making a difference to anything but the author's career. Was there some way in which to create texts that were vital and made a difference? I latched onto the idea of *writing as a method of inquiry*.

I had been taught, as perhaps you were as well, not to write until I knew what I wanted to say, that is, until my points were organized and outlined. But I did not like writing that way. I felt constrained and bored. When I thought about those writing instructions, I realized that they cohered with mechanistic scientism and quantitative research. I recognized that those writing instructions were themselves a sociohistorical invention of our 19th-century foreparents. Foisting those instructions on qualitative researchers created serious problems; they undercut writing as a dynamic creative process, they undermined the confidence of beginning qualitative researchers because their experience of research was inconsistent with the writing model, and they contributed to the flotilla of qualitative writing that was simply not interesting to read because writers wrote in the homogenized voice of "science."

Qualitative researchers commonly speak of the importance of the individual researcher's skills and aptitudes. The researcher—rather than the survey, the questionnaire, or the census tape—is the "instrument." The more honed the researcher, the better the possibility of excellent research. Students are taught to be open—to observe, listen, question, and participate. But in the past, they were not being taught to nurture their writing voices. During the past decade, however, rather than suppressing their voices, qualitative writers have been honing their writing skills. Learning to write in new ways does not take away one's traditional writing skills any more than learning a

second language reduces one fluidity in one's first language. Rather, all kinds of qualitative writing have flourished.

Writing in Contexts

Language is a constitutive force, creating a particular view of reality and of the Self. Producing "things" always involves value—what to produce, what to name the productions, and what the relationship between the producers and the named things will be. Writing things is no exception. No textual staging is ever innocent (including this one). Styles of writing are neither fixed nor neutral but rather reflect the historically shifting domination of particular schools or paradigms. Social scientific writing, like all other forms of writing, is a sociohistorical construction and, therefore, is mutable.

Since the 17th century, the world of writing has been divided into two separate kinds: literary and scientific. Literature, from the 17th century onward, was associated with fiction, rhetoric, and subjectivity, whereas science was associated with fact, "plain language," and objectivity (Clifford & Marcus, 1986, p. 5). During the 18th century, the Marquis de Condorcet introduced the term "social science." Condorcet (as cited in Levine, 1985) contended that "knowledge of the truth" would be "easy," and that error would be "almost impossible," if one adopted precise language about moral and social issues (p. 6). By the 19th century, literature and science stood as two separate domains. Literature was aligned with "art" and "culture"; it contained the values of "taste, aesthetics, ethics, humanity, and morality" (Clifford & Marcus, 1986, p. 6) as well as the rights to metaphorical and ambiguous language. Given to science was the belief that its words were objective, precise, unambiguous, noncontextual, and nonmetaphorical.

As the 20th century unfolded, the relationships between social scientific writing and literary writing grew in complexity. The presumed solid demarcations between "fact" and "fiction" and between "true" and "imagined" were blurred. The blurring was most hotly debated around writing for the public, that is, journalism. Dubbed by

Thomas Wolfe as the "new journalism," writers consciously blurred the boundaries between fact and fiction and consciously made themselves the centers of their stories (for an excellent extended discussion of the new journalism, see Denzin, 1997, chap. 5). By the 1970s, "crossovers" between writing forms spawned the naming of oxymoronic genres—"creative nonfiction," "faction," "ethnographic fiction," the "nonfiction novel," and "true fiction." By 1980, the novelist E. L. Doctorow (as cited in Fishkin, 1985) would assert, "There is no longer any such things as fiction or nonfiction, there is only narrative" (p. 7).

Despite the actual blurring of genre, and despite our contemporary understanding that all writing is narrative writing, I would contend that there is still one major difference that separates fiction writing from science writing. The difference is not whether the text really is fiction or nonfiction; rather, the difference is the claim that the author makes for the text. Declaring that one's work is fiction is a different rhetorical move than is declaring that one's work is social science. The two genres bring in different audiences and have different impacts on publics and politics—and on how one's "truth claims" are to be evaluated. These differences should not be overlooked or minimized.

We are fortunate, now, to be working in a postmodernist climate, a time when a multitude of approaches to knowing and telling exist side by side. The core of postmodernism is the doubt that any method or theory, any discourse or genre, or any tradition or novelty has a universal and general claim as the "right" or privileged form of authoritative knowledge. Postmodernism suspects all truth claims of masking and serving particular interests in local, cultural, and political struggles. But conventional methods of knowing and telling are not automatically rejected as false or archaic. Rather, those standard methods are opened to inquiry, new methods are introduced, and then they also are subject to critique.

The postmodernist context of doubt, then, distrusts all methods equally. No method has a privileged status. But a postmodernist position does allow us to know "something" without claiming to know everything. Having a partial, local, and historical knowledge is still knowing. In some ways, "knowing" is easier, however, because postmodernism recognizes the situational limitations of the knower. Qualitative writers are off the hook, so to speak. They do not have to try to play God, writing as disembodied omniscient narrators claiming universal and atemporal general knowledge. They can eschew the questionable metanarrative of scientific objectivity and still have plenty to say as situated speakers, subjectivities engaged in knowing/telling about the world as they perceive it.

A particular kind of postmodernist thinking that I have found to be especially helpful is poststructuralism (for application of the perspective in a research setting, see Davies, 1994). Poststructuralism links language, subjectivity, social organization, and power. The centerpiece is language. Language does not "reflect" social reality but rather produces meaning and creates social reality. Different languages and different discourses within a given language divide up the world and give it meaning in ways that are not reducible to one another. Language is how social organization and power are defined and contested and the place where one's sense of self—one's subjectivity—is constructed. Understanding language as competing discourses—competing ways of giving meaning and of organizing the world—makes language a site of exploration and struggle.

Language is not the result of one's individuality; rather, language constructs one's subjectivity in ways that are historically and locally specific. What something means to individuals is dependent on the discourses available to them. For example, being hit by one's spouse is experienced differently depending on whether it is thought of as being within the discourse of "normal marriage," "husband's rights," or "wife battering." If a woman sees male violence as normal or a husband's right, she is unlikely to see it as wife battering, which is an illegitimate use of power that should not be tolerated. Similarly, when a man is exposed to the discourse of "childhood sexual abuse," he may recategorize and remember his own traumatic childhood experiences. Experience and memory are, thus, open to contradictory

interpretations governed by social interests and prevailing discourses. The individual is both the site and subject of these discursive struggles for identity and for remaking memory. Because the individual is subject to multiple and competing discourses in many realms, one's subjectivity is shifting and contradictory—not stable, fixed, and rigid.

Poststructuralism, thus, points to the continual cocreation of the self and social science; they are known through each other. Knowing the self and knowing about the subject are intertwined, partial, historical local knowledges. Poststructuralism, then, permits—even invites or incites—us to reflect on our method and to explore new ways of knowing.

Specifically, poststructuralism suggests two important ideas to qualitative writers. First, it directs us to understand ourselves reflexively as persons writing from particular positions at specific times. Second, it frees us from trying to write a single text in which everything is said at once to everyone. Nurturing our own voices releases the censorious hold of "science writing" on our consciousness as well as the arrogance it fosters in our psyche; writing is validated as a method of knowing.

CAP Ethnography

In the wake of postmodernist—including poststructuralist, feminist, queer, and critical race theory—critiques of traditional qualitative writing practices, the sacrosanctity of social science writing conventions has been challenged. The ethnographic genre has been blurred, enlarged, and altered with researchers writing in different formats for a variety of audiences. These ethnographies are like each other, however, in that they are produced through creative analytical practices. I call them "CAP [creative analytical processes] ethnographies."[1] This label can include new work, future work, or older work—wherever the author has moved outside conventional social scientific writing. CAP ethnographies are not alternative or experimental; they are, in and of themselves, valid and desirable representations of the social. In the foreseeable future, these ethnographies may indeed be the most desirable representations because they invite people in and open spaces for thinking about the social that elude us now.

The practices that produce CAP ethnography are both creative and analytical. Any dinosaurian beliefs that "creative" and "analytical" are contradictory and incompatible modes are standing in the path of a meteor; they are doomed for extinction. Witness the evolution, proliferation, and diversity of new ethnographic "species"—autoethnography, fiction, poetry, drama, readers' theater, writing stories, aphorisms, layered texts, conversations, epistles, polyvocal texts, comedy, satire, allegory, visual texts, hypertexts, museum displays, choreographed findings, and performance pieces, to name some of the categories that are discussed in the pages of this *Handbook*. These new "species" of qualitative writing adapt to the kind of political/social world we inhabit—a world of uncertainty. With many outlets for presentation and publication, CAP ethnographies herald a paradigm shift (Ellis & Bochner, 1996).

CAP ethnography displays the writing process and the writing product as deeply intertwined; both are privileged. The product cannot be separated from the producer, the mode of production, or the method of knowing. Because both traditional ethnographies and CAP ethnographies are being produced within the broader postmodernist climate of "doubt," readers (and reviewers) want and deserve to know how the researchers claim to know. How do the authors position the selves as knowers and tellers? These issues engage intertwined problems of subjectivity, authority, authorship, reflexivity, and process, on the one hand, and of representational form, on the other.

Postmodernism claims that writing is always partial, local, and situational and that our selves are always present no matter how hard we try to suppress them—but only partially present because in our writing we repress parts of our selves as well. Working from that premise frees us to write material in a variety of ways—to tell and retell. There is no such thing as "getting it right," only "getting it" differently contoured and nuanced. When using creative analytical practices, ethnographers

learn about the topics and about themselves that which was unknowable and unimaginable using conventional analytical procedures, metaphors, and writing formats.

In traditionally staged research, we valorize "triangulation." (For a discussion of triangulation as method, see Denzin, 1978. For an application, see Statham, Richardson, & Cook, 1991.) In triangulation, a researcher deploys different methods—interviews, census data, documents, and the like—to "validate" findings. These methods, however, carry the same domain assumptions, including the assumption that there is a "fixed point" or an "object" that can be triangulated. But in CAP ethnographies, researchers draw from literary, artistic, and scientific genres, often breaking the boundaries of those genres as well. In what I think of as a postmodernist deconstruction of triangulation, CAP text recognizes that there are far more than "three sides" by which to approach the world. We do not triangulate; we crystallize.

I propose that the central imaginary for "validity" for postmodernist texts is not the triangle—a rigid, fixed, two-dimensional object. Rather, the central imaginary is the crystal, which combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach. Crystals grow, change, and are altered, but they are not amorphous. Crystals are prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves, creating different colors, patterns, and arrays casting off in different directions. What we see depends on our angle of repose—not triangulation but rather crystallization. In CAP texts, we have moved from plane geometry to light theory, where light can be both waves and particles.

Travels With Ernest: Crossing the Literary/ Sociological Divide (Richardson & Lockridge, 2004) is a recent example of crystallization practices. *Travels With Ernest* is built on geographical travels (e.g., Russia, Ireland, Beirut, Copenhagen, Russia, Sedona, St. Petersburg Beach) that I shared with my husband Ernest Lockridge, who is a novelist and professor of English. We experienced the same sites but refracted them through different professional eyes, gender, sensibilities,

biographies, spiritual and emotional longings. After we each independently wrote a narrative account—a personal essay—inspired by the travel, we read each other's account and engaged in wide-ranging (taped/transcribed) conversations across disciplinary lines about writing, ethics, authorship, collaboration, witnessing, fact/fiction, audiences, relationships, and the intersection of observation and imagination. The travels, thus, are physical, emotional, and intellectual.

The collaborative process modeled in *Travels With Ernest* honors each voice as separate and distinct, explores the boundaries of observation and imagination, witnessing and retelling, memory and memorializing, and it confirms the value of crystallization. I remain a sociologist; he remains a novelist. Neither of us gives up our core visions. In the process of our collaboration, however, we discovered many things about ourselves—about our relationships to each other, our families, our work, and our writing—that we would not have discovered if we were not collaborating. For example, we discovered that we wanted the last piece in the book to break the book's writing format—to model other possibilities. We constructed from our conversation (and its multiple interruptions) a movie script set in our own Great American Kitchen. We especially like that the collaborative method we displayed in our text is one that is open to everyone; indeed, it is strategic writing through which established hierarchies between the researcher and the researched, between the student and the teacher, can be breached.

Crystallization, without losing structure, deconstructs the traditional idea of "validity"; we feel how there is no single truth, and we see how texts validate themselves. Crystallization provides us with a deepened, complex, and thoroughly partial understanding of the topic. Paradoxically, we know more and doubt what we know. Ingeniously, we know there is always more to know.

Evaluating CAP Ethnographies

Because the epistemological foundations of CAP ethnography differ from those of traditional

social science, the conceptual apparatus by which CAP ethnographies can be evaluated differ. Although we are freer to present our texts in a variety of forms to diverse audiences, we have different constraints arising from self-consciousness about claims to authorship, authority, truth, validity, and reliability. Self-reflexivity brings to consciousness some of the complex political/ ideological agendas hidden in our writing. Truth claims are less easily validated now; desires to speak "for" others are suspect. The greater freedom to experiment with textual form, however, does not guarantee a better product. The opportunities for writing worthy texts—books and articles that are "good reads"—are multiple, exciting, and demanding. But the work is harder and the guarantees are fewer. There is a lot more for us to think about.

One major issue is that of criteria. How does one judge an ethnographic work—new or traditional? Traditional ethnographers of good will have legitimate concerns about how their students' work will be evaluated if they choose to write CAP ethnography. I have no definitive answers to ease their concerns, but I do have some ideas and preferences.

I see the ethnographic project as humanly situated, always filtered through human eyes and human perceptions, and bearing both the limitations and the strengths of human feelings. Scientific superstructure is always resting on the foundation of human activity, belief, and understandings. I emphasize ethnography as constructed through *research practices*. Research practices are concerned with enlarged understanding. Science offers some research practices—literature, creative arts, memory work (Davies et al., 1997), introspection (Ellis, 1991), and dialogical (Ellis, 2004). Researchers have many practices from which to choose and ought not be constrained by habits of somebody else's mind.

I believe in holding CAP ethnography to high and difficult standards; mere novelty does not suffice. Here are four of the criteria I use when reviewing papers or monographs submitted for social scientific publication:

1. *Substantive contribution.* Does this piece contribute to our *understanding* of social life? Does the writer demonstrate a deeply grounded (if embedded) social scientific perspective? Does this piece seem "true"—a credible account of a cultural, social, individual, or communal sense of the "real"? (For some suggestions on accomplishing this, see Part 3 of this chapter.)

2. *Aesthetic merit.* Rather than reducing standards, another standard is added. Does this piece succeed aesthetically? Does the use of creative analytical practices open up the text and invite interpretive responses? Is the text artistically shaped, satisfying, complex, and not boring?

3. *Reflexivity.* How has the author's subjectivity been both a producer and a product of this text? Is there adequate self-awareness and self-exposure for the reader to make judgments about the point of view? Does the author hold himself or herself accountable to the standards of knowing and telling of the people he or she has studied?

4. *Impact.* Does this piece affect me emotionally or intellectually? Does it generate new questions or move me to write? Does it move me to try new research practices or move me to action?

These are four of my criteria. Science is one lens, and creative arts is another. We see more deeply using two lenses. I want to look through both lenses to see a "social science art form"—a radically interpretive form of representation.

I am not alone in this desire. I have found that students from diverse social backgrounds and marginalized cultures are attracted to seeing the social world through two lenses. Many of these students find CAP ethnography beckoning and join the qualitative community. The more this happens, the more everyone will profit. The implications of race and gender would be stressed, not because it would be "politically correct" but rather because race and gender *are axes* through which symbolic and actual worlds have been constructed. Members of non-dominant worlds know that and could insist that this knowledge be honored (cf. Margolis & Romero, 1998). The blurring of the humanities and the social sciences would be welcomed, not because it is "trendy" but rather because the blurring coheres

more truly with the life sense and learning style of so many. This new qualitative community could, through its theory, analytical practices, and diverse membership, reach beyond academia and teach all of us about social injustice and methods for alleviating it. What qualitative researcher interested in social life would not feel enriched by membership in such a culturally diverse and inviting community? Writing becomes more diverse and author centered, less boring, and humbler. These are propitious opportunities. Some even speak of their work as spiritual.

Writing Stories and Personal Narratives

The ethnographic life is not separable from the Self. Who we are and what we can be—what we can study, how we can write about that which we study—are tied to how a knowledge system disciplines itself and its members and to its methods for claiming authority over both the subject matter and its members.

We have inherited some ethnographic rules that are arbitrary, narrow, exclusionary, distorting, and alienating. Our task is to find concrete practices through which we can construct ourselves as ethical subjects engaged in ethical ethnography—inspiring to read and to write.

Some of these practices include working within theoretical schemata (e.g., sociology of knowledge, feminism, critical race theory, constructivism, poststructuralism) that challenge grounds of authority, writing on topics that matter both personally and collectively, experiencing *jouissance,* experimenting with different writing formats and audiences simultaneously, locating oneself in multiple discourses and communities, developing critical literacy, finding ways in which to write/present/teach that are less hierarchal and univocal, revealing institutional secrets, using positions of authority to increase diversity both in academic appointments and in journal publications, engaging in self-reflexivity, giving in to synchronicity, asking for what one wants, not flinching from where the writing takes one emotionally or spiritually, and honoring the embodiedness and spatiality of one's labors.

This last practice—honoring the location of the self—encourages us to construct what I call "writing stories." These are narratives that situate one's own writing in other parts of one's life such as disciplinary constraints, academic debates, departmental politics, social movements, community structures, research interests, familial ties, and personal history. They offer critical reflexivity about the writing self in different contexts as a valuable creative analytical practice. They evoke new questions about the self and the subject; remind us that our work is grounded, contextual, and rhizomatic; and demystify the research/writing process and help others to do the same. They can evoke deeper parts of the self, heal wounds, enhance the sense of self—or even alter one's sense of identity.

In *Fields of Play: Constructing an Academic Life* (Richardson, 1997), I make extensive use of writing stories to contextualize 10 years of my sociological work, creating a text that is more congruent with poststructural understandings of the situated nature of knowledge. Putting my papers and essays in the chronological order in which they were conceptualized, I sorted them into two piles: "keeper" and "reject." When I reread my first keeper—a presidential address to the North Central Sociological Association—memories of being patronized, marginalized, and punished by my department chair and dean reemerged. I stayed with those memories and wrote a writing story about the disjunction between my departmental life and my disciplinary reputation. Writing the story was not emotionally easy; in the writing, I was reliving horrific experiences, but writing the story released the anger and pain. Many academics who read that story recognize it as congruent with their experiences—their untold stories.

I worked chronologically through the keeper pile, rereading and then writing the writing story evoked by the rereading—different facets, different contexts. Some stories required checking my journals and files, but most did not. Some stories were painful and took an interminable length of time to write, but writing them loosened their shadow hold on me. Other stories were joyful and

reminded me of the good fortunes I have in friends, colleagues, and family.

Writing stories sensitize us to the potential consequences of all of our writing by bringing home—inside our homes and workplaces—the ethics of representation. Writing stories are not about people and cultures "out there"—ethnographic subjects (or objects). Rather, they are about ourselves—our workspaces, disciplines, friends, and family. What can we say and with what consequences? Writing stories bring the danger and poignancy or ethnographic representation "up close and personal."

Each writing story offers its writer an opportunity for making a situated and pragmatic ethical decision about whether and where to publish the story. For the most part, I have found no ethical problem in publishing stories that reflect the abuses of power; I consider the damage done by the abusers far greater than any discomfort my stories might cause them. In contrast, I feel constraint in publishing about my immediate family members. I check materials with them. In the case of more distant family members, I change their names and identifying characteristics. I will not publish some of my recent writing because doing so would seriously "disturb the family peace." I set that writing away for the time being, hoping that I will find a way to publish it in the future.

In one section of *Fields of Play* (Richardson, 1997), I tell two interwoven stories of "writing illegitimacy." One story is my poetic representation of an interview with Louisa May, an unwed mother, and the other is the research story—how I wrote that poem along with its dissemination, reception, and consequences for me. There are multiple illegitimacies in the stories—a child out of wedlock, poetic representation as research "findings," a feminine voice in the social sciences, ethnographic research on ethnographers and dramatic representation of that research, emotional presence of the writer, and unbridled work *jouissance*.

I had thought that the research story was complete, not necessarily the only story that could be told but one that reflected fairly, honestly, and sincerely what my research experiences had been. I still believe that. But missing from the research story, I came to realize, were the personal

biographical experiences that led me to author such a story.

The idea of "illegitimacy," I have come to acknowledge, has had a compelling hold on me. In my research journal, I wrote, "My career in the social sciences might be viewed as one long adventure into illegitimacies." I asked myself why I was drawn to constructing "texts of illegitimacy," including the text of my academic life. What is this struggle I have with the academy—being in it and against it at the same time? How is my story like and unlike the stories of others who are struggling to make sense of themselves, to retrieve their suppressed selves, to act ethically?

Refracting "illegitimacy" through allusions, glimpses, and extended views, I came to write a personal essay, "Vespers," the final essay in *Fields of Play* (Richardson, 1997). "Vespers" located my academic life in childhood experiences and memories; it deepened my knowledge of my self and has resonated with others' experiences in academia. In turn, the writing of "Vespers," has refracted again, giving me desire, strength, and enough self-knowledge to narrativize other memories and experiences, to give myself agency, and to construct myself anew for better or for worse.

Writing stories and personal narratives have increasingly become the structures through which I make sense of my world, locating my particular biographical experiences in larger historical and sociological contexts. Using writing as a method of discovery in conjunction with my understanding of feminist rereadings of Deleuzian thought, I have altered my primary writing question from "how to write during the crisis of representation" to "how to document becoming."

Like Zeno's arrow, I will never reach a destination (destiny?). But unlike Zeno, instead of focusing on the endpoint of a journey that never ends, I focus on how the arrowsmiths made the arrow, its place in the quiver, and the quiver's placement—displacement, replacement—in the world. I look at the promises of progressive ideologies and personal experiences as ruins to be excavated, as folds to unfold, as paths through academic miasma. I am convinced that in the story (or stories) of becoming, we have a good chance of deconstructing the underlying academic ideology—that

being a something (e.g., a successful professor, an awesome theorist, a disciplinarian maven, a covergirl feminist) is better than *becoming*. For me, now, discovering the intricate interweavings of class, race, gender, education, religion, and other diversities that shaped me early on into the kind of sociologist I did become is a practical way of refracting the worlds—academic and other—in which I live. None of us knows his or her final destination, but all of us can know about the shape makers of our lives that we can choose to confront, embrace, or ignore.

I am not certain how others will document their becoming, but I have chosen structures that suit my disposition, theoretical orientation, and writing life. I am "growing myself up" by refracting my life through a sociological lens, fully engaging C. Wright Mills's "sociology"—the intersection of the biographical and the historical. I am discovering that my concerns for social justice across race, class, religion, gender, and ethnicity derive from these early childhood experiences. These have solidified my next writing questions. How can I make my writing matter? How can I write to help speed into this world a democratic project of social justice?

I do not have catchy or simple answers. I know that when I move deeply into my writing, both my compassion for others and my actions on their behalf increase. My writing moves me into an independent space where I see more clearly the interrelationships between and among peoples worldwide. Perhaps other writers have similar experiences. Perhaps thinking deeply and writing about one's own life has led, or will lead, them to actions that decrease the inequities between and among people and peoples and that decrease the violence.

■ PART 2: WRITING AS A
METHOD OF NOMADIC INQUIRY

Elizabeth Adams St. Pierre

My writing about writing as a method of inquiry in this doubled text appears after Laurel Richardson's for good reason; it is an effect of

Richardson's work in the sense that it is a trajectory, a "line of flight" (Deleuze & Parnet, 1977/1987, p. 125), that maps what can happen if one takes seriously her charge to think of writing as a *method* of qualitative inquiry. I read a very early draft of this chapter, titled "Writing: A Method of Discovery," in 1992 in a sociology class that Richardson taught on postmodern research and writing. I had been trained years earlier, as an English major, to think of expository writing as a tracing of thought already thought, as a transparent reflection of the known and the real—writing as representation, as repetition. I still use that strategy for certain purposes and certain audiences even though I now chiefly use writing to disrupt the known and the real—writing as *simulation* (Baudrillard, 1981/1988), as "subversive repetition" (Butler, 1990, p. 32).

Thinking Richardson and Deleuze together, I have called my work in academia "nomadic inquiry" (St. Pierre, 1997a, 1997c), and a great part of that inquiry is accomplished in the writing because, for me, writing *is* thinking, writing *is* analysis, writing *is* indeed a seductive and tangled *method* of discovery. Many writers in the humanities have known this all along, but Richardson has brought this understanding to qualitative inquiry in the social sciences. In so doing, she has deconstructed the concept *method*, putting this ordinary category of qualitative inquiry *sous rature*, or under erasure (Spivak, 1974, p. xiv), and thereby opened it up to different meanings.

This concept certainly needs to be troubled. Two decades ago, Barthes (1984/1986) wrote, "Method becomes a Law," but the "will-to-method is ultimately sterile, everything has been put into the method, nothing remains for the writing" (p. 318). Thus, he said, "it is necessary, at a certain moment, to turn against Method, or at least to regard it without any founding privilege" (p. 319). In other words, it is important to interrogate whatever limits we have imposed on the concept method lest we diminish its possibilities in knowledge production.

This is one of postmodernism's lessons—that foundations are contingent (Butler, 1992). In fact, every foundational concept of conventional, interpretive qualitative inquiry, including method,

is contingent, and postmodernists have deconstructed many of them, including data (St. Pierre, 1997b), validity (Lather, 1993; Scheurich, 1993), interviewing (Scheurich, 1995), the field (St. Pierre, 1997c), experience (Scott, 1991), voice (Finke, 1993; Jackson, 2003; Lather, 2000), reflexivity (Pillow, 2003), narrative (Nespor & Barylske, 1991), and even ethnography (Britzman, 1995; Visweswaran, 1994). This is not to say that postmodern qualitative researchers reject these concepts and others that have been defined in a certain way by interpretivism; rather, researchers have examined their effects on people and knowledge production during decades of research and have reinscribed them in different ways that, of course, must also be interrogated. Nor do postmodern qualitative researchers necessarily reject the words themselves; that is, they continue to use, for example, the words *method* and *data*. As Spivak (1974) cautioned, we are obliged to work with the "resources of the old language, the language we already possess and which possesses us. To make a new word is to run the risk of forgetting the problem or believing it solved" (p. xv). So, we use old concepts but ask them to do different work. Interestingly, it is the inability of language to close off meaning into concept that prompts postmodern qualitative researchers to critique the presumed coherency of the structure of conventional, interpretive qualitative inquiry. For some of us, the acknowledgment that that structure is, and always has been, contingent is good news indeed.

Language and Meaning

Richardson gestured toward the work of language earlier in this chapter, but here I describe in more detail the tenuous relation between language and *meaning* in order to ground my later discussion of postrepresentation in a postinterpretive world. We know that much deconstructive work has been done in the human sciences since the "linguistic turn" (Rorty, 1967), the "postmodern turn" (Hassan, 1987), the "crisis of legitimation" (Habermas, 1973/1975), and the "crisis of representation" (Marcus & Fischer, 1986), all of which employ a "consciousness of a language which does not forget itself" (Barthes, 1984/1986, p. 319) or, as Trinh (1989) put it, a consciousness that understands "language as language" (p. 17). Nearly four decades ago, Foucault (1966/1970) wrote that "language is not what it is because it has a meaning" (p. 35), and Derrida (1967/1974) theorized *différance*, which teaches us that meaning cannot be fixed in language but is always deferred. As Spivak (1974) explained, "word and thing or thought never in fact become one" (p. xvi), so language cannot serve as a transparent medium that mirrors, "represents," and contains the world.

The ideas that meaning is not a "portable property" (Spivak, 1974, p. lvii) and that language cannot simply transport meaning from one person to another play havoc with the Husserlian proposition that there is a layer of prelinguistic meaning (pure meaning, pure signified) that language can express. In this respect, postmodern discourses differ from "the interpretive sciences [that] proceed from the assumption that there is a deep truth which is both known and hidden. It is the job of interpretation to bring this truth to discourse" (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982, p. 180). These discourses also play havoc with the belief that noise-free rational communication (Habermas, 1981/1984, 1981/1987)—some kind of transparent dialogue that can lead to consensus—is possible, or even desirable, since consensus often erases difference. Further, Derrida's statement (as cited in Spivak, 1974) that "the thing itself always escapes" (p. lxix) throws into radical doubt (and, some would say, makes irrelevant) the hermeneutic assumption that we can, in fact, answer the ontological question "What is . . . ?"—the question that grounds much interpretive work.

But postmodernists, after the linguistic turn, suspect that interpretation is not the discovery of meaning in the world but rather the "introduction of meaning" (Spivak, 1974, p. xxiii). If this is so, we can no longer treat words as if they are deeply and essentially *meaningful* or the experiences they attempt to represent as "brute fact or simple reality" (Scott, 1991, p. 26). In this case, the interpreter has to assume the burden of

meaning-making, which is no longer a neutral activity of expression that simply matches word to world. Foucault (1967/1998) wrote that "interpretation does not clarify a matter to be interpreted, which offers itself passively; it can only seize, and violently, an already-present interpretation, which it must overthrow, upset, shatter with the blows of a hammer" (p. 275). However, despite the dangers of the hermeneutic rage for meaning, we interpret incessantly, perhaps because of our "human inability to tolerate undescribed chaos" (Spivak, 1974, p. xxiii). In this regard, Foucault (as cited in Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982) suggested that we are "condemned to meaning" (p. 88). But Derrida (1972/1981) had another take on meaning and suggested, "To risk meaning nothing is to start to play, and first to enter into the play of *différance* which prevents any word, any concept, any major enunciation from coming to summarize and to govern . . . differences" (p. 14). Derrida (1967/1974) called this deconstructive work *writing under erasure*, "letting go of each concept at the very moment that I needed to use it" (p. xviii). The implications for qualitative inquiry of imagining writing as a letting go of meaning even meaning proliferates rather than a search for and containment of meaning are both compelling and profound.

Clearly, postmodern qualitative researchers can no longer think of inquiry simply as a task of making meaning—comprehending, understanding, getting to the bottom of the phenomenon under investigation. As I mentioned earlier, this does not mean they reject meaning but rather that they put meaning in its place. They shift the focus from questions such as "What does this or that mean?" to questions such as those posed by Scott (1988): "How do meanings change? How have some meanings emerged as normative and others been eclipsed or disappeared? What do these processes reveal about how power is constituted and operates?" (p. 35). Bové (1990) offered additional questions, and I suggest that we can substitute any object of knowledge (e.g., marriage, subjectivity, race) for the word "discourse" in the following: "How does discourse function? Where

is it to be found? How does it get produced and regulated? What are its social effects? How does it exist?" (p. 54).

And since Richardson and I especially love writing, we have asked ourselves these questions about writing and have posed another that we find provocative: *What else might writing do except mean?* Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) offered some help here when they suggested, "writing has nothing to do with signifying. It has to do with surveying, mapping, even realms that are yet to come" (pp. 4–5). In this sense, writing becomes a "field of play" (Richardson, 1997) in which we might loosen the hold of received meaning that limits our work and our lives and investigate "to what extent the exercise of thinking one's own history can free thought from what it thinks silently and to allow it to think otherwise" (Foucault, as cited in Racevskis, 1987, p. 22). In this way, the linguistic turn and the postmodern critique of interpretivism open up the concept writing and enable us to use it as a *method of inquiry*, a condition of possibility for "producing different knowledge and producing knowledge differently" (St. Pierre, 1997b, p. 175).

Writing Under Erasure: A Politics and Ethics of Difficulty

So what might the work of *writing as inquiry* be in postmodern qualitative research? What might writing under erasure look like, and how, in turn, might such writing rewrite inquiry itself? My own experiences in this regard have emerged from a long-term postmodern qualitative research project that has been both an interview study with 36 older white southern women who live in my hometown and an ethnography of the small rural community in which they live (St. Pierre, 1995). It is important to note that this study was not designed to do interpretive work—to answer the questions "who are these women?" and "what do they mean?" I never presumed I could know or understand the women—uncover their authentic voices and essential natures and then represent them in rich thick description. Rather, my task was twofold: (1) to use postmodernism to

study subjectivity by using Foucault's (1984/1985, 1985/1986) ethical analysis, care of the self, to investigate the "arts of existence" or "practices of the self" the women have used during their long lives in the construction of their subjectivities and (2) to use postmodernism to study conventional qualitative research methodology, which I believe is generally both positivist and interpretive.

Also, since I call myself a writer—thanks to Richardson (it took a sociologist to teach this English teacher writing)—I determined early in the study to use writing as a method of inquiry in at least these two senses: (1) I would think of writing as a *method of data collection* along with, for example, interviewing and observation and (2) I would think of writing as a *method of data analysis* along with, for example, the traditional—and what I think of as structural (and positivist)—activities of analytic induction; constant comparison; coding, sorting, and categorizing data; and so forth. It should be clear at this point that the coherence of the positivist and/or interpretivist concept method has already been breached by investing it with these different and multiple meanings and, henceforth, efforts to maintain its unity may be futile. (Indeed, I hope others will follow my lead and imagine other uses for writing as a method of inquiry.) Further, these two methods are not discrete as I have made them out to be. Making such a distinction is to stay within the confines of the structure of conventional qualitative inquiry in which we often separate data collection from data analysis. Nevertheless, I retain the distinction temporarily for the purpose of elucidation.

In my study, I used writing as a method of data collection by gathering together, by collecting—*in the writing*—all sorts of data I had never read about in interpretive qualitative textbooks, some of which I have called *dream data, sensual data, emotional data, response data* (St. Pierre, 1997b), and *memory data* (St. Pierre, 1995). Such data might include, for example, a pesky dream about an unsatisfying interview, the sharp angle of the southern sun to which my body happily turned, my sorrow when I read the slender obituary of one of my participants, my mother's disturbing

comment that I had gotten something wrong, and very real "memor[ies] of the future" (Deleuze, 1986/1988, p. 107), a mournful time bereft of these women and others of their generation. These data were neither in my interview transcripts nor in my fieldnotes where data are supposed to be, for how can one textualize everything one thinks and senses in the course of a study? But they were always already in my mind and body, and they cropped up unexpectedly and fittingly in my writing—fugitive, fleeting data that were excessive and out-of-category. My point here is that these data might have escaped entirely if I had not *written;* they were collected only *in the writing.*

I used writing as a method of data analysis by using writing to think; that is, I wrote my way into particular spaces I could not have occupied by sorting data with a computer program or by analytic induction. This was rhizomatic work (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987) in which I made accidental and fortuitous connections I could not foresee or control. My point here is that I did not limit data analysis to conventional practices of coding data and then sorting it into categories that I then grouped into themes that became section headings in an outline that organized and governed my writing in advance of writing. *Thought happened in the writing.* As I wrote, I watched word after word appear on the computer screen—ideas, theories, I had not thought before I wrote them. Sometimes I wrote something so marvelous it startled me. *I doubt I could have thought such a thought by thinking alone.*

And it is thinking of writing in this way that breaks down the distinction in conventional qualitative inquiry between data collection and data analysis—one more assault to the structure. Both happen at once. As data are collected in the writing—as the researcher thinks/writes about her Latin teacher's instruction that one should thrive in adversity; about a mink shawl draped elegantly on aging, upright shoulders; about the sweet, salty taste of tiny country ham biscuits; about all the other things in her life that seem unrelated to her research project but are absolutely unleashed within it—she produces the strange and wonderful

transitions from word to word, sentence to sentence, thought to unthought. Data collection and data analysis cannot be separated when writing is a method of inquiry. And positivist concepts, such as audit trails and data saturation, become absurd and then irrelevant in postmodern qualitative inquiry in which writing is a field of play where anything can happen—and does.

There is much to think about here as conventional qualitative inquiry comes undone—in this case, as writing deconstructs the concept *method*, proliferating its meaning and thereby collapsing the structure that relied on its unity. But how does one "write it up" after the linguistic turn? Postmodern qualitative researchers have been courageous and inventive in this work, and Richardson identified and described this writing both as "experimental writing" (Richardson, 1994) and as "CAP ethnography" (Richardson, 2000). Of course, there is no model for this work since each researcher and each study requires different writing. I can, however, briefly tell a small writing story about my own adventures with *postrepresentation*.

As I said earlier, in my study with the older women of my hometown, I set out to study subjectivity and qualitative inquiry using poststructural analyses, so my charge was to critique both the presumed unified structure of an autonomous, conscious, knowing woman who could be delivered to the reader in rich, thick description as well as the presumed rational, coherent structure of conventional qualitative inquiry that could guarantee true knowledge about the women. Never having read a postmodern qualitative textbook, I initially tried to force—to no avail—postmodern methodology into the grid of interpretive/positivist qualitative inquiry. When the lack of fit became apparent and then absurd, I began to deconstruct that structure to make room for difference.

At the same time, I began to assume a writerly reticence to describe or represent my participants and thereby encourage some kind of sentimental identification. After all, it was subjectivity, not the women, that was the object of my inquiry. I became wary of the not-so-innocent assumption of interpretivism that the women should be

drilled and mined for knowledge ("Who are they?" "What do they mean?") and then represented. This did not seem to be the kind of ethical relation these women who had taught me how to be a woman required of me. I am reminded here of a comment by Anthony Lane, the film critic for *The New Yorker*, who suggested that instead of asking whether David Lynch's film, *Mulholland Drive*, makes sense ("What does it mean?"), viewers should ask what Laurence Olivier once demanded of Dustin Hoffman ("Is it safe?") (Lane, 2001). In interpretive research, we believe representation is possible, if perhaps unsafe, but we do it anyway with many anxious disclaimers. In postmodern research, we believe it isn't possible *or* safe, and so we shift the focus entirely, in my case, away from the women to subjectivity. We increasingly distrust the "old promise of representation" (Britzman, 1995, p. 234) and, with Pillow (2003), question a science whose goal is representation.

In my own work, I have developed a certain writerly incompetence and underachievement and am unable to write a text that "runs to meet the reader" (Sommer, 1994, p. 530), a comfort text (Lather & Smithies, 1997) that gratifies the interpretive entitlement to know the women. Rather than being an "epistemological dead end" (Sommer, 1994, p. 532) (the women as objects that can be known), the women are a line of flight that take me elsewhere (the women as provocateurs). This is not to deny the importance of the women or to say that they are not in my texts since they are everywhere, but I gesture toward them in oblique ways in my writing by relating, for example, one of our vexing conversations that burgeoned into splendid and productive confusion about subjectivity or by relating an aporia about methodology they insist I think. And when someone asks for a story about the women, I give them a good one, and if they ask for another, I say, "Go find your own older women and talk with them. They have stories to tell that will change your life."

Nevertheless, I long to write about these older women who are dying, dying, dying and fear I will someday, but only after wrestling with that postrepresentational question: *What else might*

writing do except mean? That writing will involve a *politics and ethics of difficulty* that, on the one hand, can only be accomplished if I write but, on the other, cannot be accomplished on the basis of anything I already know about writing. There are no rules for postrepresentational writing; there's nowhere to turn for authorizing comfort.

What has postmodernism done to qualitative inquiry? I agree with Richardson's (1994) response to this question: "I do not know, but I do know that we cannot go back to where we were" (p. 524). Or, as Deleuze and Parnet (1977/1987) put it, "It might be thought that nothing has changed and nevertheless everything has changed" (p. 127). At this point, I return to the criteria that Richardson has set for postmodern ethnographic texts. Can the kind of writing I have gestured toward here—writing under erasure—exhibit a substantive contribution, aesthetic merit, reflexivity, impact, and reflect lived experience? I believe it can. But even more importantly, writing as a method of inquiry carries us "across our thresholds, toward a destination which is unknown, not foreseeable, not preexistent" (Deleuze & Parnet, 1977/1987, p. 25), perhaps toward the spectacular promise of what Derrida (1993/1994) called the "democracy *to come*" (p. 64), a promise those who work for social justice cannot not want. I think about this democracy often since it promises the possibility of different relations—relations more generous than those I live among, fertile relations in which people thrive.

The paradox, however, is that this democracy will never "present itself in the form of full presence" (Derrida, 1993/1994, p. 65) but nonetheless demands that we prepare ourselves for its arrival. Derrida (1993/1994) explained that it turns on the idea that we must offer "hospitality without reserve" to an "alterity that cannot be anticipated" from whom we ask nothing in return (p. 65). Thus, the setting-to-work of deconstruction in the democracy-to-come is grounded in our relations with the Other. In postmodern qualitative inquiry, the possibilities for just and ethical encounters with alterity occur not only in the field of human activity but also in the field of the text, in our writing. In these overlapping spaces, we

prepare ourselves for a democracy that has no model, for a postjuridical justice that is always contingent on the case at hand and must be effaced even as it is produced. Settling into a transcendental justice and truth, some deep meaning we think will save us, may announce a lack of courage to think and live beyond our necessary fictions.

Ethics under deconstruction then, is ungrounded, it is "what happens when we cannot apply the rules" (Keenan, 1997, p. 1). This ethics of difficulty hinges on a tangled responsibility to the Other "that is not a moment of security or of cognitive certainty. Quite the contrary: the only responsibility worthy of the name comes with the withdrawal of rules or the knowledge on which we might rely to make our decisions for us." The event of ethics occurs when we have "no grounds, no alibis, no elsewhere to which we might refer the instance of our decisions." In this sense, *we will always be unprepared to be ethical.* Moreover, the removal of foundations and originary meaning, which were always already fictions, simply leaves everything as it is but without those markers of certainty we counted on to see us intact through a text of responsibility. So, how do we go on from here? How do we get on with our work and our lives?

Deleuze (1969/1990) suggested that the events in our lives—and in this essay, I'm thinking specifically of all those relations with the Other that qualitative inquiry enables—tempt us to be their equal by asking for our "best and most perfect. Either ethics makes no sense at all, or this is what it means and has nothing else to say: *not to be unworthy of what happens to us*" (pp. 148–149). The event, then, calls us to be worthy at the instant of decision, when what happens is all there is—*when meaning will always come too late to rescue us.* At the edge of the abyss, we step without reserve toward the Other. This is deconstruction at its finest and, I believe, the condition of Derrida's democracy-to-come. This democracy calls for a renewed "belief in the world" (Deleuze, 1990/1995, p. 176) that, I hope, will enable relations less impoverished than the ones we have thus far imagined and lived. As I said earlier, the setting-to-work of deconstruction

is already being accomplished by postmodern qualitative researchers in all the fields of play in which they work.

As for me, I struggle every day not to be unworthy of the older women of my hometown who keep on teaching me ethics. It may seem that I am not writing about them in this essay, but I assure you they are speaking to you in every word you read. Brooding and writing about our desire for their presence (meaning) in this text and others I might write occupies much of my energy, yet I trust writing and know that one morning I will awaken and write toward these women in a way I cannot yet imagine. I trust you will do the same, that you will use writing as a method of inquiry to move into your own impossibility, where anything might happen—and will.

■ PART 3: WRITING PRACTICES

Laurel Richardson

Writing, the creative effort, should come first—at least for some part of every day of your life. It is a wonderful blessing if you will use it. You will become happier, more enlightened, alive, impassioned, light-hearted, and generous to everybody else. Even your health will improve. Colds will disappear and all the other ailments of discouragement and boredom.

—Brenda Ueland, *If You Want to Write*

In what follows, I suggest some ways of using writing as a method of knowing. I have chosen exercises that have been productive for students because they demystify writing, nurture the researcher's voice, and serve the processes of discovery about the self, the world, and issues of social justice. I wish that I could guarantee them to bring good health as well.

Metaphor

Using old worn-out metaphors, although easy and comfortable, invites stodginess and stiffness after a while. The stiffer you get, the less flexible you are. Your ideas get ignored. If your writing is clichéd, you will not "stretch your own imagination" (Ouch! Hear the cliché of pointing out the cliché!) and you will bore people.

1. In traditional social scientific writing, the metaphor for theory is that it is a "building" (e.g., structure, foundation, construction, deconstruction, framework, grand) (see the wonderful book by Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Consider a different metaphor such as "theory as a tapestry," "theory as an illness," "theory as story," or "theory as social action." Write a paragraph about "theory" using your metaphor. Do you "see" differently and "feel" differently about theorizing using an unusual metaphor? Do you want your theory to map differently onto the social world? Do you want your theory to affect the world?

2. Look at one of your papers and highlight your metaphors and images. What are you saying through metaphors that you did not realize you were saying? What are you reinscribing? Do you want to do so? Can you find different metaphors that change how you "see" ("feel") the material and your relationship to it? Are your mixed metaphors pointing to confusion in yourself or to social science's glossing over of ideas? How do your metaphors both reinscribe and resist social inequities?

Writing Formats

1. Choose a journal article that exemplifies the mainstream writing conventions of your discipline. How is the argument staged? Who is the presumed audience? How does the article inscribe ideology? How does the author claim "authority" over the material? Where is the author? Where are "you" in the article? Who are the subjects and objects of research?

2. Choose a paper that you have written for a class or published and that you think is pretty good. How did you follow the norms of your discipline? Were you conscious of doing so? What parts did the professor/reviewer laud? Did you elide over some difficult areas through vagueness, jargon, a call to authorities, science writing norms, and/or other rhetorical devices? What voices did you exclude in your writing? Who is the audience?

Where are the subjects in the paper or article? Where are you? How do you feel about the paper or article now? How do you feel about your process of constructing it?

Creative Analytical Writing Practices

1. Join or start a writing group. This could be a writing support group, a creative writing group, a poetry group, a dissertation group, a memoir group, or the like (on dissertation and article writing, see Becker, 1986; Fox, 1985; Richardson, 1990; Wolcott, 1990).

2. Work through a creative writing guidebook (for some excellent guides, see Goldberg, 1986; Hills, 1987; Ueland, 1938/1987; Weinstein, 1993).

3. Enroll in a creative writing workshop or class. These experiences are valuable for both beginning and experienced researchers.

4. Use "writing up" fieldnotes as an opportunity to expand your writing vocabulary, habits of thought, and attentiveness to your senses and to use as a bulwark against the censorious voice of science. Where better to develop your sense of Self—your voice—than in the process of doing your research? What better place to experiment with point of view—seeing the world from different persons' perspectives—than in your fieldnotes. Keep a journal. Write writing stories, that is, research stories.

5. Write a writing autobiography. This would be the story of how you learned to write, the dicta of English classes (topic sentences? outlines? the five-paragraph essay?), the dicta of social science professors, how and where you write now, your idiosyncratic "writing needs," your feelings about writing and about the writing process, and/or your resistance to "value-free" writing. (This is an exercise used by Arthur Bochner.)

6. If you wish to experiment with evocative writing, a good place to begin is by transforming your fieldnotes into drama. See what ethnographic rules you are using (e.g., fidelity to the speech of the participants, fidelity in the order of the speakers and events) and what literary ones

you are invoking (e.g., limiting how long a speaker speaks, keeping the "plot" moving along, developing character through actions). Writing dramatic presentations accentuates ethical considerations. If you doubt that, contrast writing up an ethnographic event as a "typical" event with writing it as a play, with you and your hosts cast in roles that will be performed before others. Who has ownership of spoken words? How is authorship attributed? What if people do not like how they are characterized? Are courtesy norms being violated? Experiment here with both oral and written versions of your drama.

7. Experiment with transforming an in-depth interview into a poetic representation. Try using only the words, rhythms, figures of speech, breath points, pauses, syntax, and diction of the speaker. Where are you in the poem? What do you know about the interviewee and about yourself that you did not know before you wrote the poem? What poetic devices have you sacrificed in the name of science?

8. Write a "layered text" (cf. Ronai, 1995; Lather & Smithies, 1997). The layered text is a strategy for putting yourself into your text and putting your text into the literatures and traditions of social science. Here is one possibility. First, write a short narrative of the self about some event that is especially meaningful to you. Step back and look at the narrative from your disciplinary perspective. Then insert into the narrative—beginning, midsections, end, or wherever—relevant analytical statements or references using a different typescript, alternative page placement, or a split page or marking the text in other ways. The layering can be a multiple one, with different ways of marking different theoretical levels, different theories, different speakers, and so forth. (This is an exercise used by Carolyn Ellis.)

9. Try some other strategy for writing new ethnography for social scientific publications. Try the "seamless" text in which previous literature, theory, and methods are placed in textually meaningful ways rather than in disjunctive sections (for an excellent example, see Bochner, 1997). Try the "sandwich" text in which traditional social science

themes are the "white bread" around the "filling" (Ellis & Bochner, 1996), or try an "epilogue" explicating the theoretical analytical work of the creative text (cf. Eisner, as cited in Saks, 1996).

10. Consider a fieldwork setting. Consider the various subject positions you have or have had within it. For example, in a store you might be a sales clerk, a customer, a manager, a feminist, a capitalist, a parent, or a child. Write about the setting (or an event in the setting) from several different subject positions. What do you "know" from the different positions? Next, let the different points of view dialogue with each other. What do you discover through these dialogues? What do you learn about social inequities?

11. Write your "data" in three different ways—for example, as a narrative account, a poetic representation, and readers' theater. What do you know in each rendition that you did not know in the other renditions? How do the different renditions enrich each other?

12. Write a narrative of the self from your point of view (e.g., something that happened in your family or in your seminar). Then, interview another participant (e.g., a family member or seminar member) and have that participant tell you his or her story of the event. See yourself as part of *the participant's* story in the same way as he or she is part of your story. How do you rewrite your story from the participant's point of view? (This is an exercise used by Ellis.)

13. Collaborative writing is a way in which to see beyond one's own naturalisms of style and attitude. This is an exercise that I have used in my teaching, but it would be appropriate for a writing group as well. Each member writes a story of his or her life. For example, it could be a feminist story, a success story, a quest story, a cultural story, a professional socialization story, a realist tale, a confessional tale, or a discrimination story. Stories are photocopied for the group. The group is then broken into subgroups (I prefer groups of three). Each subgroup collaborates on writing a new story—the collective story of its members. The collaboration can take any form—drama, poetry, fiction,

narrative of the selves, realism, and so forth. The collaboration is shared with the entire group. Each member then writes about his or her feelings about the collaboration and what happened to his or her story—and life—in the process.

14. Consider a part of your life outside of or before academia with which you have deeply resonated. Use that resonance as a "working metaphor" for understanding and reporting your research. Students have created excellent reports and moored themselves through the unexpected lens (e.g., choreography, principles of flower arrangement, art composition, sportscasting). Those resonances nurture a more integrated life.

15. Different forms of writing are appropriate for different audiences and different occasions. Experiment with writing the same piece of research for an academic audience, a trade audience, the popular press, policymakers, research hosts, and so forth (Richardson, 1990). This is an especially powerful exercise for dissertation students who might want to share their results in a "user-friendly" way with their fellow students.

16. Write writing stories (Richardson, 1997). These are reflexive accounts of how you happened to write the pieces you wrote. The writing stories can be about disciplinary politics, departmental events, friendship networks, collegial ties, family, and/or personal biographical experiences. What these writing stories do is situate your work in contexts, tying what can be a lonely and seemingly separative task to the ebbs and flows of your life and your self. Writing these stories reminds us of the continual cocreation of the self and social science.

> *Willing is doing something you know already—there is no new imaginative understanding in it. And presently your soul gets frightfully sterile and dry because you are so quick, snappy, and efficient about doing one thing after another that you have no time for your own ideas to come in and develop and gently shine.*
>
> —Brenda Ueland, *If You Want to Write*

▣ NOTE

1. The CAP acronym resonates with "cap" from the Latin for "head," *caput*. Because the head is both mind and body, its metaphorical use breaks down the mind-body duality. The products, although mediated throughout the body, cannot manifest without "head-work." In addition, "cap," both as a noun (product) and as a verb (process), has multiple common and idiomatic meanings and associations, some of which refract the playfulness of the genre—a rounded head covering or a special head covering indicating occupation or membership in a particular group, the top of a building or fungus, a small explosive charge, any of several sizes of writing paper, putting the final touches on, lying on top of, surpassing or outdoing. And then, there are the other associated words from the Latin root, such as capillary and capital(ism), that humble and contextualize the labor.

▣ REFERENCES

Barthes, R. (1986). *The rustle of language* (R. Howard, Trans.). Berkeley: University of California Press. (Original work published in 1984)

Baudrillard, J. (1988). Simulacra and simulations. In M. Poster (Ed.), *Jean Baudrillard: Selected writings* (P. Foss, P. Patton, & P. Beitchman, Trans., pp. 166–184). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. (Original work published in 1981)

Becker, H. S. (1986). *Writing for social scientists: How to finish your thesis, book, or article.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bochner, A. (1997). It's about time: Narrative and the divided Self. *Qualitative Inquiry, 3,* 418–438.

Bové, P. A. (1990) Discourse. In F. Lentricchia & T. McLaughlin (Eds.), *Critical terms for literary study* (pp. 50–65). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Britzman, D. P. (1995). "The question of belief": Writing poststructural ethnography. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 8*(3), 229–238.

Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity.* New York: Routledge.

Butler, J. (1992). Contingent foundations: Feminism and the question of "postmodernism." In J. Butler & J. W. Scott (Eds.), *Feminists theorize the political* (pp. 3–21). New York: Routledge.

Clifford, J., & Marcus, G. E. (Eds.). (1986). *Writing culture: The poetics and politics of ethnography.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Davies, B. (1994). *Poststructuralist theory and classroom practice.* Geelong, Australia: Deakin University Press.

Davies, B., Dormer, S., Honan, E., McAllister, N., O'Reilly, R., Rocco, S., & Walker, A. (1997). Ruptures in the skin of silence: A collective biography. *Hecate: A Woman's Interdisciplinary Journal, 23*(1), 62–79.

Deleuze, G. (1988). *Foucault* (S. Hand, Trans.). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. (Original work published in 1986)

Deleuze, G. (1990). *The logic of sense* (C. V. Boundas, Ed.; M. Lester, Trans.). New York: Columbia University Press. (Original work published in 1969)

Deleuze, G. (1995). *Negotiations: 1972–1990* (M. Joughin, Trans.). New York: Columbia University Press. (Original work published in 1990)

Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1987). Introduction: Rhizome. In *A thousand plateaus: Capitalism and schizophrenia* (B. Massumi, Trans., pp. 3–25). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. (Original work published in 1980)

Deleuze, G., & Parnet, C. (1987). Many politics. In *Dialogues* (H. Tomlinson & B. Habberjam, Trans.). New York: Columbia University Press. (Original work published in 1977)

Denzin, N. K. (1978). *The research act.* New York: McGraw-Hill.

Denzin, N. K. (1997). *Interpretive ethnography: Ethnographic practices for the 21st century.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Derrida, J. (1974). *Of grammatology* (G. C. Spivak, Trans.). Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press. (Original work published in 1967)

Derrida, J. (1981). *Positions* (A. Bass, Trans.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (Original work published in 1972)

Derrida, J. (1994). *Specters of Marx: The state of the debt, the work of mourning, and the new international* (P. Kamuf, Trans.). New York: Routledge. (Original work published in 1993)

Dreyfus, H. L., & Rabinow, P. (1982). *Michel Foucault: Beyond structuralism and hermeneutics* (2nd ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Ellis, C. (1991). Sociological introspection and emotional experience. *Symbolic Interaction, 14,* 23–50.

Ellis, C. (2004). *The ethnographic "I": A methodological novel about autoethnography.* Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira.

Ellis, C., & Bochner, A. P. (Eds.). (1996). *Composing ethnography: Alternative forms of qualitative writing.* Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira.

Finke, L. A. (1993). Knowledge as bait: Feminism, voice, and the pedagogical unconscious. *College English, 55*(1), 7–27.

Fishkin, S. F. (1985). *From fact to fiction: Journalism and imaginative writing in America.* Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Foucault, M. (1970). *The order of things: An archaeology of the human sciences.* New York: Vintage Books. (Original work published in 1966)

Foucault, M. (1985). *The history of sexuality,* Vol. 2: *The use of pleasure* (R. Hurley, Trans.). New York: Vintage Books. (Original work published in 1984)

Foucault, M. (1986). *The history of sexuality,* Vol. 3: *The care of the self* (R. Hurley, Trans.). New York: Vintage Books. (Original work published in 1985)

Foucault, M. (1998). Nietzsche, Freud, Marx. In J. D. Faubion (Ed.), *Aesthetics, method, and epistemology* (J. Anderson & G. Hentzi, Trans., pp. 269–278). New York: New Press. (Original work published in 1967)

Fox, M. F. (Ed.). (1985). *Scholarly writing and publishing: Issues, problems, and solutions.* Boulder, CO: Westview.

Goldberg, N. (1986). *Writing down the bones: Freeing the writer within.* Boston: Shambala.

Habermas, J. (1975). *Legitimation crisis* (T. McCarthy, Trans.). Boston: Beacon. (Original work published in 1973)

Habermas, J. (1984). *The theory of communicative action,* Vol. 1: *Reason and the rationalization of society* (T. McCarthy, Trans.). Boston: Beacon. (Original work published in 1981)

Habermas, J. (1987). *The theory of communicative action,* Vol. 2: *Lifeworld and system: A critique of functionalist reason* (T. McCarthy, Trans.). Boston: Beacon. (Original work published in 1981)

Hassan, I. (1987). *The postmodern turn: Essays in postmodern theory and culture.* Columbus: Ohio State University Press.

Hills, R. (1987). *Writing in general and the short story in particular.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Jackson, A. (2003). Rhizovocality. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 16,* 693–710.

Keenan, T. (1997). *Fables of responsibility: Aberrations and predicaments in ethics and politics.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lane, A. (2001, October 8). Road trips. *The New Yorker,* p. 8.

Lather, P. (1993). Fertile obsession: Validity after poststructuralism. *Sociological Quarterly, 34,* 673–693.

Lather, P. (2000). Against empathy, voice, and authenticity. *Women, Gender, and Research, 4,* 16–25.

Lather, P., & Smithies, C. (1997). *Troubling the angels: Women living with HIV/AIDS.* Boulder, CO: Westview.

Levine, D. H. (1985). *The flight from ambiguity: Essays in social and cultural theory.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Marcus, G. E., & Fischer, M. M. J. (1986). A crisis of representation in the social sciences. In G. E. Marcus & M. M. J. Fischer (Eds.), *Anthropology as cultural critique: An experimental moment in the human sciences* (pp. 7–16). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Margolis, E., & Romero, M. (1998). The department is very male, very white, very old, and very conservative: The functioning of the hidden curriculum in graduate sociology departments. *Harvard Educational Review, 68,* 1–32.

Nespor, J., & Barylske, J. (1991). Narrative discourse and teacher knowledge. *American Educational Research Journal, 28,* 805–823.

Pillow, W. S. (2003). Confession, catharsis, or cure? Rethinking the uses of reflexivity as methodological power in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 16*(2), 175–196.

Racevskis, K. (1987). Michel Foucault, Rameau's nephew, and the question of identity. In J. Bernauer & D. Rasmussen (Eds.), *The final Foucault* (pp. 21–33). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Richardson, L. (1990). *Writing strategies: Reaching diverse audiences.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Richardson, L. (1994). Writing: A method of inquiry. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 516–529). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Richardson, L. (1997). *Fields of play: Constructing an academic life.* New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Richardson, L. (2000). Writing: A method of inquiry. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook*

of qualitative research (2nd ed., pp. 923–948). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Richardson, L., & Lockridge, E. (2004). *Travels with Ernest: Crossing the literary/sociological divide.* Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira.

Ronai, C. (1995). Multiple reflections of child sexual abuse: An argument for a layered account. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, 23,* 395–426.

Rorty, R. (1967). *The linguistic turn: Essays in philosophical method.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Saks, A. L. (1996). Viewpoints: Should novels count as dissertations in education? *Research in the Teaching of English, 30,* 403–427.

Scheurich, J. J. (1993). The masks of validity: A deconstructive investigation. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 9*(11), 49–60.

Scheurich, J. J. (1995). A postmodernist critique of research interviewing. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 8*(3), 239–252.

Scott, J. W. (1988). Deconstructing equality-versus-difference: Or, the uses of poststructuralist theory for feminism. *Feminist Studies, 14*(1), 33–50.

Scott, J. W. (1991). The evidence of experience. *Critical Inquiry, 17,* 773–797.

Sommer, D. (1994). Resistant texts and incompetent readers. *Poetics Today, 15,* 523–551.

Spivak, G. C. (1974). Translator's preface. In J. Derrida, *Of grammatology* (G. C. Spivak, Trans., pp. ix–xc). Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Statham, A., Richardson, L., & Cook, J. A. (1991). *Gender and university teaching: A negotiated difference.* Albany: State University of New York Press.

St. Pierre, E. A. (1995). *Arts of existence: The construction of subjectivity in older, white southern women.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Ohio State University, Columbus, OH.

St. Pierre, E. A. (1997a). Circling the text: Nomadic writing practices. *Qualitative Inquiry, 3,* 403–417.

St. Pierre, E. A. (1997b). Methodology in the fold and the irruption of transgressive data. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 10*(2), 175–189.

St. Pierre, E. A. (1997c). Nomadic inquiry in the smooth spaces of the field: A preface. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 10*(3), 363–383.

Trinh, M. T. (1989). *Women, native, other: Writing postcoloniality and feminism.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Ueland, B. (1987). *If you want to write: A book about art, independence, and spirit.* St. Paul, MN: Graywolf Press. (Original work published in 1938)

Visweswaran, K. (1994). *Fictions of feminist ethnography.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Weinstein, D. (1993). *Writing for your life: A guide and companion to the inner worlds.* New York: HarperCollins.

Wolcott, H. F. (1990). *Writing up qualitative research.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

THE SAGE HANDBOOK OF

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

THIRD EDITION

EDITORS

NORMAN K. DENZIN
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

YVONNA S. LINCOLN
Texas A&M University