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What is autoethnography?
Epistemological aspects, opportunities and challenges of autoethnographic research in police authorities

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Abstract

Triggered by the so-called "crisis of representation" anthropologists in recent decades have increasingly questioned the previously clear separation of "field" and "home." Likewise, the rigid concept of the "other" has also been unsettled, and the positionality of the field researcher has come more into focus. At the same time, the objects of research have also changed, expanding to potentially include all phenomena of the contemporary world and ultimately preparing the way for an anthropology "at home." To solve the problem of representation, anthropologists have developed ethnographic research methods further – for example, collaborative research designs and cooperation between insiders and outsiders as equal research partners. It is within this context that the genre of autoethnography, in which researchers are "locals" conducting research on their own group, emerged. The self-identification of anthropologists with their research participants, as well as their practical (pre-)knowledge about them, are thus central features of autoethnographic research. However, the concept of auto-ethnography remains relatively fuzzy, with diverging ideas concerning how to define the "auto" and what is meant by the researchers' inclusion into the research field. Autoethnographic research throws a particularly sharp light on fundamental epistemological, methodological, and ethical problems that affect the discipline of

anthropology as a whole. This paper addresses these issues against the background of the author's own autoethnographic and collaborative research experience.

Keywords

The author

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1.   Introduction

At the beginning of our research, Jan, my colleague from the research project, and I introduce ourselves at the police station. [...] After a short while, the shift supervisor and I realize that we look familiar. So, we think about how we know each other and come to the conclusion that we were on duty at the same time about six years ago at the 1st police station in Mittelstadt. This seems to have broken the ice immediately. [...]

As Jan is accompanying the head of the department to a staff exercise, Lukas and I start patrolling alone. During the patrol, my patrol partner Lukas tells me about the events of a recent resistance he experienced during the execution of an arrest warrant. In response to my questions about his emotions, Lukas finally replies, "Phew, we can finally talk openly!" and laughs. I also have to grin and ask him if he's not usually open in the presence of Jan, to which Lukas replies curtly, "Yes, I don't know, it does feel a bit different somehow." [...]

My uniform makes me recognizable as a patrol officer, and I am also perceived as such by the other police officers. Despite my repeated reminders that I am also a member of the research team and that I am conducting a participant observation together with Jan, this often seems to have been overlooked due to my primary perception as a police officer. For example, towards the end of the field research, a colleague tells me in disbelief after I had discussed an anthropological text with Jan, "Oh, you also have shares in the research project? I thought you were just Jan's babysitter!" This shows that Jan was more clearly identified as an "outsider" (not least because he was the only one in the group wearing civilian clothes) than was the case with me.
(Excerpts from my 2020 field diary).

This article refers to my research activities as part of my dissertation at the University of Mainz[1] and my work as a law enforcement officer. In this paper, I address my dual role as an anthropologist and my socialization and position as a police officer, as well as my specific positionality in researching the police. The primary focus here is on the opportunities, challenges, and risks of conducting research on the police as a police officer. In this context, the question arises as to what extent such research is anthropological at all: because isn't anthropology fundamentally about phenomena that are a priori unknown to the researchers (Bierschenk 2013: 90)? In this sense, autoethnographic research – and, ultimately, the present work – sheds a particularly sharp light on a number of fundamental *epistemological*, *methodological*, and *ethical* questions that affect

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anthropology (and sociology) as a whole. These aspects are addressed against the background of my own autoethnographic (and collaborative) research experience.

2.   The position of the researcher in the field

> In anthropology, sociology, or history, the hero is the person about whom we are speaking, *not* the scholar who is speaking. From an epistemological point of view, the scholar is of no interest to us unless what he has to say about his personal position aids our understanding of what he has to say about others. (Olivier de Sardan 2015: 9 f., emphasis in the original).

Olivier de Sardan asserts that the "heroes of the story" in the social sciences should not be the narrator but rather those who are talked about and researched. From an epistemological point of view, the authors are not of interest at all unless they have a special relation or position to the field that requires a more detailed explanation and may be of importance to the readers. As both a police officer and scientist researching his own profession, I do have such a special relation to the field, one that should be scrutinized more closely and which I would therefore like to discuss in more detail in the following.

Though ethnographers who are – or at least once were – police officers themselves and who research the police are not uncommon, these individuals often do not reflect upon their particular positionality within the field. In most cases, their (historical) connection to the police is only barely mentioned, if at all. For example, in the preface to his classic book, *Cop Culture - Der Alltag des Gewaltmonopols* (*Cop Culture - The Everyday Life of the Monopoly on Violence*), Behr briefly mentions that he himself was once a police officer and thus knows the police from the "inside," but he does not otherwise reflect further on his resulting - in my view - special relationship with the research field (Behr 2008: 7 ff.). Even in Behr's other texts on the police, there is often only a small reference, if any, to his police past, which often receives no further attention in the course of his analyses (Behr 2000, 2001, 2006, 2010, 2016, 2018). An exception in this regard is Behr's 1993 study on the police in Thuringia, in which he reflects, at least to some extent, on his role as a (former) "colleague from the West" in relation to the research field (Behr 1993: 10 ff.).

Waddington, who was once a police officer and, like Behr, also gave up the police profession to study sociology, does not usually reveal to his readers that he himself has a police background. If he refers to this background at all, it is usually in a discreet way, as in the preface to the book he co-edited with Kleinig and Wright entitled *Professional Police Practice: Scenarios and Dilemmas*. There, he writes, "My background may have disposed me to look kindly on my former colleagues, but what really impressed me was the dedication and quality of the young people whom I accompanied on routine patrol as part of my research fieldwork" (Waddington 2013: 3). However, there is no actual reflection on his special relationship with the police resulting from this experience, nor is there any mention of it in his other publications (see, among others, Waddington 1991, 1993, 1999; Waddington et al. 2004). In the acknowledgments of his book *Liberty and Order: Public Order Policing in a Capital City*, he even emphasizes his role as an *external researcher* without disclosing that he himself used to be a policeman: "This willingness to accept the scrutiny of an

external observer is, I am sure, a telling index of the confidence that officers of all ranks had in themselves and their colleagues" (Waddington 1994: IX). His readers often only learn about his professional past within the police via alternative sources, such as the internet.[2]

Moskos, another ethnographer, trained as a police officer with the Baltimore Police Department after studying sociology in order to conduct intensive field research with and about the police. He practically went the opposite way of Behr and Waddington, who came from the police to the social sciences and not, like Moskos, from ethnography to the police. The reasons why Moskos trained as a police officer were simply pragmatic:

> Originally, my goal was not to be a police officer at all. I was an Ivy League graduate student planning a comparatively mundane one-year study of police socialization. [...] As a sociology graduate student, I took to heart the argument that prolonged participant-observation research is the best and perhaps only means of gathering valid data on job-related police behavior. [...] As an institution, police have been labeled insular, resentful of outsiders, and, in general, hostile to research, experimentation, and analysis. (Moskos 2008: 3 f.)

Although Moskos only used the police as a stepping stone to advance his dissertation, which, in his eyes, was merely a necessary means - not to say an evil - to this end (ibid.: 13), he impressively describes in the context of his (auto)ethnography how quickly the "transformation from civilian to police" (ibid.: 34 ff.) took place and how his personal experiences as a policeman in the Baltimore ghetto successively influenced his thinking: "It's easy to get frustrated at times. I was no exception. After five months on the street, I wrote in my notes: Fucking junkie ass who pissed me off. [...] I grab his shirt and tell him to sit down and wait for the [ambulance]"(ibid.: 44). Although Moskos addresses his personal background (and his relationship to the field) more strongly than Behr or Waddington, he nevertheless also largely ignores it with regard to his research results and fails to adequately reflect on the extent to which his particular role in the field also influenced his research.

My (auto)ethnography on the police is not comparable to any of the three aforementioned ethnographers in terms of its starting point. Like Behr and Waddington, I did not give up the profession of police officer for the social sciences, nor was I, like Moskos, already a studied social scientist before joining the police. I was indeed, like Behr and Waddington, already police-socialized when I devoted myself to anthropology, but I did not resign from the profession of police officer for this endeavor. Nor do I intend to leave the police force (again) following my dissertation, as Moskos had. Moreover, an essential difference between the four of us is that my "transformation from police officer to anthropologist"[3] took place quasi-parallel to each other,

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[2] The Times (2018), Professor Peter Waddington obituary, https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/ef5a8bec-4ca2-11e8-9812-5f003d09c84c, last accessed 02.05.2020.

[3] With this formulation, I allude to Moskos' quote "transformation from civilian to police" (Moskos 2008: 34). In this context, I use the term transformation synonymously for my second professional socialization, namely, that of an anthropologist and social scientist, which I experienced in the course of my work in the research project and at the Department of Anthropology and African Studies of the University of Mainz.

that is, while I was actively pursuing the police service as a police officer. Not least for this reason, as I elaborate on in more detail in the following, I try to focus more on my particular positionality working among the police in the context of my (auto)ethnography than my aforementioned role models did.

3.   Origin and meaning of "autoethnography"

First, I would like to address the question of what is commonly understood by ethnography and how it is distinguished from autoethnography.

The terms "auto" and "ethnography" originate from Greek. Their consideration from an etymological point of view already gives an initial idea of the focus and intention of ethnographic research, according to which "ethno" (ἔθνος = éthnos) stands for "nation" or "other" and "graphy" (γραφία = graphía) can be translated as "writing". The added root "auto" (αυτό = auto) means "self" (Doloriert and Sambrook 2012: 83; Erickson 2011: 45). Accordingly, ethnographic (field) research can be understood primarily as a "study of groups and people as they go about their everyday lives," in the context of which "the ethnographer enters into a social setting and gets to know the people involved in it;" that is, she or he "participates in the daily routines of this setting, develops ongoing relations with the people in it, and observes all the while what is going on. Indeed, the term 'participant observation' is often used to characterize this basic research approach" (Emerson et al. 2011: 1). Usually, the research field is "not previously known to the ethnographer in an intimate way" (ibid.), which is one of the main differences between ethnographic and autoethnographic texts (cf. Adams et al. 2015: 1 f.; Hughes and Pennington 2017: 6 ff.). Thus, autoethnography is "an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze *(graphy)* personal experience *(auto)* in order to understand cultural experience *(ethno)*" (Ellis et al. 2010a: 2). Characteristic of any autoethnography – regardless of its degree of "auto", "ethno," or "graphy" (cf. Reed-Danahay 1997: 2; Wall 2008: 39) – is "the use of personal experience to examine and/or critique cultural experience" (Holman Jones et al. 2013: 22). The central characteristic here is that the researchers – in contrast to "classical" ethnography – are themselves the subject of their studies (Hughes and Pennington 2017: 5), in that they conduct research on themselves or on the group to which they belong (Reed-Danahay 1997: p. 8). In this context, autoethnography refers not only to a research method but also, as we shall see, a particular form of academic writing (Ellis and Bochner 2000: 739). I will go into more detail on further specifications and special features of autoethnographic research, as well as the history of autoethnography, in the following section.

4.   The history of autoethnography

Following this initial overview of the term and methodological foundations of "autoethnography," I would now like to turn to the history of autoethnographic research. The writing of scientific self-narratives is not a new phenomenon; indeed, it has a long tradition in anthropology, as evidenced, for example, by Leiris' research diaries, which he published in 1934

in his work *L'Afrique fantôme* (cf. Ploder and Stadlbauer 2013: 379; also Leiris 1988 [1934]).[4] Malinowski, on the other hand, consistently separated his ethnographic accounts from his personal diary in order to emphasize their strictly scientific character.

4.1   First-generation autoethnography [5]

Heider was one of the first scholars to use the term "autoethnography" as a method of qualitative social research in the context of his ethnological research among the Grand Valley Dani[6] in Indonesia and West New Guinea (Adams et al. 2017: 1; Doloriert and Sambrook 2012: 84; Reed-Danahay 1997: 4). In his research, he asked 60 Dani school children the question, "What do people do?" and evaluated their responses; he called this process a Dani *auto-ethnography*: "This is called a Dani auto-ethnography, and it provides information about the Dani's own understanding of their world" (Heider 1975: 3). He further explains to his readers what he ultimately understands by the term "auto": "This paper is a report of what can be called a Dani auto-ethnography: 'auto' for autochthonous, since it is the Dani's own account of 'what people do;' and 'auto' for automatic, since it is the simplest routine-eliciting technique imaginable" (ibid.).[7]

Hayano, on the other hand, who adopted Heider's terminology, as well as the thought behind it, understood autoethnography as "ethnographies of [our] 'own people'" (Hayano 1979: 99); in this context, he speaks of "the native-as-ethnographer" (ibid.: 101). Hayano also distinguished between two types of autoethnography:

> The [first] criteria for auto-ethnography [...] must include some prior knowledge of the people, their culture and language, as well as the ability to be accepted to some degree, or to "pass" as a native member. [...] The second major type of auto-ethnography is that written by researchers who have acquired an intimate familiarity with certain subcultural, recreational, or occupational groups. [...] The shared similarities among auto-ethnographies are that, in each case, the researchers possess the qualities of often permanent self-identification with a group and full internal membership, as recognized both by themselves and the people of whom they are a part. (Hayano 1979: 100)[8]

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[4] In the book *L'Afrique fantôme,* first published in 1934, Michel Leiris reports on his 21-month journey (from mid-1931 to early 1933) from Dakar to Djibouti. Within the text, Leiris impressively combines ethnography with autobiographical references in his travel diary (cf. Leiris 1988 [1934]).

[5] The term is borrowed from the text "Organisational autoethnography" by Doloriert and Sammbrook (2012).

[6] This is an indigenous people from the Grand Baliem Valley inhabiting the central highlands of Irian Jaya Province in West New Guinea (Harrer 1987: 240 f.; Ploeg 1966: 255 ff.).

[7] Actually, Heider is merely formulating the basic program of post-Malinowskian anthropology, according to which researchers should strive to see and understand the world from the indigenous perspective. In this sense, virtually all anthropology would be autoethnographic. He therefore defines "auto" differently from later ethnographers, for whom "auto" refers to the positionality of the researcher.

[8] Hayano's understanding of "full internal membership" (Hayano 1979: 100) is, in a narrower sense, only applicable to organizations with formal membership or else suggests an outdated concept of culture, according to which cultures have rigid external boundaries or a clear closure to other

For Hayano, this means that some ethnographers "who have done intensive participant-observation research" (ibid.) fulfill the conditions for autoethnography. Following Lewis, the question of the researcher's standpoint – whether they are (still) *outsiders* or (already) *insiders* – also plays a central role in the distinction between ethnography and autoethnography. According to this understanding, it is not only the researchers themselves who have an influence on this but also those being researched (Hayano 1979: 100; see also Lewis 1973: 599). Hayano argues that autoethnography is an inherent aspect of qualitative anthropology or post-Malinowskian anthropology in a certain sense; he further considers the research of one's own culture as well as the indigenous population by *insiders* as a gain for qualitative social research (Hayano 1979: 103; Hayano 1982; Pratt 2008). I discuss possible positive aspects of autoethnographic texts in more detail in Section 7.1.

Reed-Danahay developed the method further towards the end of the 1990s and advocated for autoethnographers to link the "auto" more strongly with the "ethno" in their texts (Doloriert and Sambrook 2012: 84). She distinguished between two types of autoethnographic texts:

> The term [autoethnography] has a double sense - referring either to the ethnography of one's own group or to autobiographical writing that has ethnographic interest. Thus, either a self (auto) ethnography or an autobiographical (auto) ethnography can be signaled by 'autoethnography.' (Reed-Danahay 1997: 2)

Based on these two types, she derived three categories: The first category she called "*native anthropology*" (ibid.), in which the "former" subjects of ethnological fieldwork themselves become authors of studies about their own group (ibid.). The second category she called "*ethnic autobiography*" (ibid.), which entails personal narratives by members of ethnic minorities. The final category she called "*autobiographical ethnography*" (ibid.), in which anthropologists combine their personal experiences with ethnographic writing. In all three categories, Reed-Danahay primarily focuses on the research of "foreign" ethnographers within their own (and, from a Eurocentric perspective, usually distant) society, whereas the research of ethnologists "at home" was not initially in focus (ibid.).

4.2 Second-generation autoethnography [9]

At the beginning of the millennium, a new genre of autoethnography emerged, largely through the works of researchers such as Adams, Bochner, Ellis, and Holman Jones (see Adams 2006, 2008; Adams et al. 2015, 2017; Ellis 2004; Ellis and Bochner 2003; Ellis et al. 2010a; see also Alexander 2006; Boylorn 2011; Callahan 2008). Alexander 2006; Callahan 2008; Boylorn 2011) a new genre of autoethnography, in which the ethnographer's "*self*" is ultimately at the *centre of the research*: "Their move away from Hayano's autoethnography and Reed-Danahay's auto/ethnography is

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(individual) cultures (for more on the discussion of the concept of culture in anthropology, see, among others, Abu-Lughod 1991; Lentz 2009, 2013; Sökefeld 2001).

[9] The term is borrowed from the text "Organisational Autoethnography" by Doloriert and Sambrook (2012).

indicative of their introspective narrative, making the auto the main focal point of the study" (Doloriert and Sambrook 2012: 84). Since Ellis and her colleagues are still among the most cited autoethnographers, this trend has largely prevailed, with most autoethnographies today dealing primarily with emotional and (deeply) personal experiences, as well as private topics of the researchers: "[T]he term 'autoethnography' is more widely used today, especially by evocative and heartfelt autoethnographers who often focus their narrative on their one self" (ibid.). In this context, autoethnography is often understood as a kind of self-therapy for researchers (Ellis et al. 2010b: 350; Warren 2000: 186), which some ethnographers formulate as a major point of criticism of autoethnographic texts, describing them in part as selfish, egocentric, or narcissistic (Morse 2002: 1159; Roth 2008: 5).

Wall, for example, processes her own experiences as an adoptive mother in her texts: "This narrative offered a synopsis [...] of my own experience as a parent of an internationally adopted child. In it, I told my motivations to adopt, the adoption process, and the arrival experience" (Wall 2008: 46). Likewise, Holman Jones writes in an article about her experiences regarding the adoption of her child:

> When I was about to become an adoptive mother, I wanted to understand my experience in relation to the experience of others [...]. My autoethnographic projects often begin with personal experiences that I want and need to understand more deeply and meaningfully. (Adams et al. 2017: 7)

She further reveals that autoethnography "has offered [her] a way of writing, experiencing, and understanding a number of moments, turns, and absences in [her] life" (Adams et al. 2013: 670). Adams, too, often deals with personal themes in his texts, such as experiences related to his own homosexuality (cf. Adams 2006: 704 ff.; Adams 2011: 136; Adams et al. 2017: 6 f.). Boylorn, another autoethnographer, writes, among other things, about her experiences of prejudice against people of color and her life as a black woman in a so-called "black community": "Now, I want to talk about [...] the lives of black woman as a black woman who is also an autoethnographer" (Boylorn 2017: 14).

Linked to this trend of "heartfelt autoethnography" (Doloriert and Sambrook 2012: 84), a "critical autoethnography" has established itself, as it were, directing its attention primarily to the conditions and circumstances of the construction of cultures/societies (Holman Jones 2018: 5). Holman Jones conceptualizes this critical autoethnography as "the study and critique of culture through the lens of the self" (ibid.: 4), whereby the practices of autobiography ("writing about the self") and ethnography ("the study of and writing about culture") merge (ibid.: 4 f.). She goes on to state that a critical autoethnography:

> Provides us with nuanced, complex, and specific insights into particular human lives, experiences, and relationships. [...] Further [...] critical autoethnograph[y] work[s] to bring attention to the ways cultures are created and compromised through institutional, political, social, and interpersonal relations of power. (Holman Jones 2018: 5)

According to Holman Jones, critical autoethnographers see their work as a means of drawing attention to their political standpoint by explicitly including the privileges and exclusions they themselves have experienced: "Critical autoethnographers view their work as a means of pointing out the *politics* of their positioning, explicitly acknowledging the inevitable privileges and marginalizations they experience" (ibid., emphasis in original). Much like critical ethnography, critical autoethnography aims "to address processes of unfairness or injustice within a particular lived domain"(Madison 2012: 5). Autoethnographers understand (social) injustice as, for example, ableism,[10] racism, xenophobia, sexism, heteronormativity, or age discrimination (Holman Jones 2018: 5; see also Alexander 2006; Boylorn 2011; Holman Jones 2005; Madison 2012; Todd 2016).

4.3   Organizational autoethnography

Also around the turn of the millennium, another variation of autoethnography began to emerge known as "organizational autoethnography" (Doloriert and Sambrook 2012: 86).[11] The focus in organizational autoethnography (OAE) is to further elucidate the relationship between the individual (here, the researcher) and the organization concerned (Doloriert and Herrmann 2018: 223). The spectrum of research in this vein ranges from studies on personnel, personnel management, marketing strategies (for personnel recruitment), and working atmosphere to organizational culture and corporate philosophy. Organizational autoethnography can encompass nearly all forms of organization, including family businesses and large corporations, as well as various authorities, ministries, non-profit organizations, and non-governmental organizations (Brannan et al. 2007: 397 ff.; Doloriert and Herrmann 2018: 222). Some researchers formulate the need for (auto-)ethnographic organizational research against the background of the (often rapid) changes in the world of work and the resulting change in working conditions due to constant technological progress (Brannan et al. 2007: 396).

As with "classic" autoethnography, a critical branch developed within organizational autoethnographic research in the form of "critical organizational autoethnography" (Doloriert and Herrmann 2018: 226). The principal concern with such an approach is to uncover sources of grievances (e.g., abuse of power or discrimination) in the researched organization: "Together, autoethnography and organizational research transform personal stories into critical investigations and interventions, *about* power, *of* difference, and *for* organizational change" (Herrmann 2017: 7, emphasis in original).

Doloriert and Sambrook are of the opinion that autoethnography is excellently suited for researching organizations, as an ethnographic view of the organization from the inside (i.e., with a certain prior knowledge or understanding about certain organizational practices, processes, and

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[10] Ableism is discrimination against people on the basis of a (chronic) illness or disability (see https://www.wortbedeutung.info/Ableismus/, last accessed: 25.05.2020).

[11] The establishment of autoethnography in organizational research and the increasing interest in it can be demonstrated by the large number of citations of the methodology in various articles and journals (Doloriert and Herrmann 2018: 222); in this context, Doloriert and Herrmann even speak of an "impressive explosion" of interest in "organizational autoethnography" (ibid.).

logics) is highly beneficial for conducting an accurate analysis (Doloriert and Sambrook 2012: 86; see also Blundo 2014: 72). Additionally, organizational autoethnography is an attractive research method for many researchers for pragmatic reasons, such as easier field access (since researchers are often already part of the organization) or the presumably lower research effort (since one's own research can ideally be combined with one's own activities) (Doloriert and Sambrook 2009: 30).

Within their conceptualization, Doloriert and Sambrook (2009: 31) distinguish between two categories of autoethnographic research: the *"researcher-is-researched"* category, in which the researchers are the focus of the investigation, turning the "auto" into the "ethno," and the *"researcher-and-researched"* category, in which the researchers, as members of the researched group, share a common identity with the group, using their "auto" to understand the "ethno" of the researched:

> In researcher-and-researched, the focus of the inquiry is on understanding the researched culture (conventional 'ethno' ethics), but there may be some focus on the researcher's personal reveal, whilst in researcher-is-researched the focus is on the researcher's experiences, or story ('auto ethics' and relational ethics). (Doloriert and Sambrook 2009: 37, emphasis in original)

Doloriert and Sambrook also favor a return to "first generation autoethnography" in the sense of Hayano and, following his understanding of "self-observation in ethnographic research" (Hayano 1979: 100), propose *three* different variants of an autoethnography related to organizations (Doloriert and Sambrook 2012: 86):

1) *Autoethnography by means of higher knowledge of/about the organization[12]*
   Doloriert and Sambrook understand this as autoethnographic research into one's own organization. Because of this affiliation, researchers generally have easier access to the field and already possess relevant organizational knowledge:

   > This is increasingly popular, due not least to the convenience of researching one's own organization [...]. Contributions here explore the autoethnographer as a researcher/teacher/administrator, etc., doing scholarly work, and/or as an employee working in an organization (that happens to be [higher education]). (Doloriert and Sambrook 2012: 86).

2) *Autoethnography by means of knowledge from former organizational affiliation[13]*
   Doloriert and Sambrook conceptualize this category as autoethnographic research of an organization to which the researcher once belonged, relying on the information and knowledge accumulated during this period of affiliation:

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[12] In the original, referred to as "autoethnography within Higher Education (HE) organizations" (Doloriert and Sambrook 2012: 86).

[13] In the original, this is referred to as "autoethnography within 'previous/other life' organizations" (Doloriert and Sambrook 2012: 86).

> Autoethnographers sometimes write about their experiences elsewhere, particularly their work experiences prior to entering [higher education], although this could include work experiences simultaneously with [higher education]. (Doloriert and Sambrook 2012: 86).

3) *Autoethnography as a member of another organization*[14]

This category entails researchers becoming part of another (and hitherto unknown) organization. Since this variant is usually difficult to realize, they recommend – referring to Kempster and his colleagues (Kempster et al. 2008: 3 ff.) – conducting joint or collaborative research in which one of the researchers comes from outside and another researcher is already a member of this "other" organization:

> Autoethnography as complete member research is arguably more difficult to achieve given the tensions and impracticalities of becoming a complete member researcher in an organization other than the researcher's own. [...] Opportunities arise through what Kempster et al. (2008) refer to as co-produced autoethnography where at least one author is researcher and at least one other a practitioner working in an "other" organization [...]. (Doloriert and Sambrook 2012: 87).

4.4   The six authors and the autoethnography[15]

The above discussion clearly indicates that autoethnography has been subject to numerous conceptualizations, currents, and emphases over time - especially regarding the accentuation of the *"self"* in relation to the research field (Hughes and Pennington 2017: 10 ff.; Ploder and Stadlbauer 2013: 403 f.). This is one of the reasons why alternative terms are repeatedly found in within the literature on the subject, but which, in principle, describe the same thing: an ethnographic method (of qualitative social science research) "to explicate the [insider] role of the researcher in relation to research participants, at times making the researcher a participant in the study as well" (Hughes and Pennington 2017: 13). Ryang, for example, uses the term *"self-cultural anthropology"* for this (Ryang 2000: 297), whereas Adler and Adler speak instead of *"complete-member-research"* (Adler and Adler 1987) and Crawford uses the term *"personal ethnography"* (Crawford 1996). Abu-Lughod, in her book *Writing Women's Worlds: Bedouin Stories*, adopts the term *"narrative ethnography"* (Abu-Lughod 1993), while van Maanen favors the term *"self-ethnography"* (van Maanen 1995), and Lejeune proposes the term *"ethnobiography"* (Lejeune 1989). Brandes uses the term "ethnographic *autobiography"* (Brandes 1979), and Whitinui chooses

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[14] In the original, this is referred to as "autoethnography as complete member research in other organizations" (Doloriert and Sambrook 2012: 87).

[15] The title here is based on the Buddhist parable "The Six Blind Men and the Elephant" from the 6th century BC; I use this metaphor as a symbol for the many different interpretations of the autoethnographic method on the part of ethnographers as well as its various forms (cf. Bangert 2008, "Die sechs Blinden und der Elefant", http://www.kurtbangert.de/downloads/5_Die_sechs_Blinden_und_der_Elefant.pdf, last accessed: 30.05.2020). I was inspired to use this parable by Hughes and Pennington (2017: 5).

the term *"indigenous ethnography"* (Whitinui 2014). In addition to these (mostly synonymous) terms for autoethnography, there are others that are used (primarily) in the context of social and cultural anthropology (Ellis and Bochner 2000: 739 ff.; Ploder and Stadlbauer 2013: 379 f.). Autoethnography as a discipline – or at least a sub-discipline – of the social sciences "includes an array of descriptors (e.g., critical autobiography, ethnobiography [...] – to name a few)" (Rossman and Rallis 2012: 94), which is why it is difficult to precisely define and delimit its methodology. For this reason, numerous autoethnographers understand the term "autoethnography" as a generic term for (all) ethnographic texts in which researchers refer to their own experiences or social spaces and make these the central theme of their research (Ellis and Bochner 2000: 739; Hughes and Pennington 2017: 11; Ploder and Stadlbauer 2013: 379):

> Consequently, the [...] term *autoethnography* has come to be the favored name for a form of critical reflexive narrative inquiry, critical reflexive self-study, or critical reflexive action research in which the researcher takes an active, scientific, and systematic view of personal experience in relation to cultural groups identified by the researcher as similar to the self (i.e., us) or as others who differ from the self (i.e., them). (Hughes and Pennington 2017: 11, emphasis in original)

Despite the recommendations of leading autoethnographers to understand autoethnography as a "collective term for various [forms] of scientific self-narration" (Ploder and Stadlbauer 2013: 379), the designation "at-home ethnography" has nevertheless prevailed, especially in *insider-based organizational research*. But what is the difference between the two methods? As with "(organizational) autoethnography," the social or cultural context of the researcher is of particular importance for "at-home ethnography." But in contrast to autoethnography, Alvesson asserts that the researchers and their (highly) personal experiences are not the research focus to the same extent in at-home ethnography:

> At-home ethnography is a study and a text in which the researcher-author describes a cultural setting to which s/he has a 'natural access' and in which s/he is an active participant [...]. The researcher works and/or lives in the setting and uses the experiences and knowledge of and access to empirical material for research purposes. [...] The term at-home ethnography draws attention to one's own cultural context, what goes on around oneself rather than putting oneself and one's experiences in the center. At-home ethnography, then, is a bit different from some recent work in which the deeply personal experiences of the researcher are in focus. This kind of work is often labeled autoethnography. (Alvesson 2009: 159 f.)

This is already the most fundamental distinguishing feature of both "genres"[16] because in both "organizational autoethnography" and "at-home ethnography," the researchers are not "merely" observing scholars in the context of their participant observation but rather become "ultimate" participants in the field – in this case, the organization under study – as a result of their

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[16] Another distinctive feature often mentioned is the narrative perspective of the researcher, because autoethnographers usually write their texts in the first person, whereas "at-home ethnographers" usually prefer the third person for this purpose (cf. Herrmann 2017: 1; Ellis et al. 2010b: 347 f.; Vickers 2019: 19).

membership in the researched group (Vickers 2019: 15; Czarniawska 2012: 132).[17] Particularly on the basis of a "first generation autoethnography" in the sense of Hayano, the differences articulated by Alvesson and Einola become almost completely marginalized (Alvesson 2009: 160; Alvesson and Einola 2018: 213).[18] Accordingly, the unifying element of both ethnographic genres lies in the *insider role of the* researcher, the resulting self-identification with the researched group, and the accompanying (prior) knowledge about the participants, settings, and (informal) practices (cf. Hayano 1979: 100 f.). In this sense, "at-home ethnography" has more in common with "(organizational) autoethnography" than it differs from it, which could justify subsuming "at-home ethnography" under the rubric of autoethnography; this is especially true for the category of "researcher-and-researched autoethnography" (cf. Doloriert and Sambrook 2009). But even if some scholars may not share this view in its entirety, it is at least a closely related discipline whose boundaries and transitions partially overlap – or, to use Alvesson and Einola's words: "'At home' and 'auto' may overlap" (Alvesson and Einola 2018: 213). Therefore, an autoethnography in the sense of Hayano's interpretation does not exclude an "at-home ethnographer [who] may observe how others deal with hierarchical relations and not focus so much on one's own personal experiences of hierarchies" as an autoethnographer per se (ibid.). Furthermore, according to Vickers, emotions also play a key role in "at-home ethnography," which cannot be ignored by ethnographers (Vickers 2019: 16) – another characteristic that it ultimately has in common with autoethnography.

5.   Legitimation of an (autoethnographic) anthropology of the police

The question now arises as to how autoethnographic research – linked to the question of the necessity of anthropology "at home" – can be legitimized. For what purpose does cultural and social anthropology serve "when it is no longer a discipline specializing in the research of 'primitive' indigenous groups and when the term 'ethno' has become popularized in the broadest conceivable combinations" (Bierschenk et al. 2015: 1)?

Although this chapter focuses on autoethnography, its history cannot be considered in isolation from the history of anthropology as a whole, whose conditions and influences have inherently affected the genre of (auto-)ethnography. The influences, currents, and developments within the social sciences and (German-language) anthropology discussed in this section will only be presented in excerpts and in condensed form, as their concluding and detailed treatment would exceed the scope of this working paper. However, in my opinion, the focal points are at least the essential cornerstones in the history of social and cultural anthropology.

Until the end of the 19th century, leading anthropologists still understood social and cultural anthropology as a research practice that relied on the travel and experience reports of expedition

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[17] Merton uses the term "ultimate participant" for this (Merton 1988: 18). Also see Anderson, who speaks of "complete member research" (Anderson 2006: 378).

[18] Both "first generation autoethnography" and "at-home ethnography" focus on the researcher's own cultural context, but without placing the "self" at the centre of the research - unlike, for example, the proponents of "second generation autoethnography" (see sections 4.1 and 4.2).

participants and the pronouncements of colonial officials and missionaries. One's "own" knowledge of foreign peoples then was (only) nourished by reading from home, which is why the form of ethnological research at that time is often referred to as "armchair anthropology" (Hirschauer and Amann 1997: 10). Around 1900, anthropology experienced a shift in which the prevalent research practice involved sporadic interviews and interactions with indigenous people, prompting ethnologists to leave their accommodations – usually passenger or expedition ships, as well as mission stands – for research excursions before promptly returning to them (Kohl 2012: 100 ff.; Hirschauer 2010: 212 f.). Due to the excursion character of this research practice, I refer to this form of cultural anthropology as "excursion anthropology." About 20 years later, Malinowski's famous treatises, in which he advocates for "understanding the native's point of view [...] and visualizing *his* view of *his* world" (Malinowski 1979 [1922]: 49; emphasis in original), marked a break in anthropology, which now followed the paradigm of participant observation within the framework of long-term field research, thus signaling a turn away from "armchair" and "excursion" anthropology. As a result, ethnography has come to be associated with anthropology, which is generally considered its discipline of origin (van Maanen 2011: 14; Hahn 2014: 63; Hirschauer and Amann 1997: 10; Naidoo 2012: 1 f.).[19] The central characteristic of this classical phase of ethnographically based anthropology was the unambiguous definition of "the Other," which was fundamentally located in foreign geographical spaces.

Since the "Writing Culture" debate, which culminated in the 1986 anthology *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* by Clifford and Marcus, ethnography – and with it, anthropology – found itself in a crisis of representation (Marcus 2008: 1).[20] This raised two fundamental issues: First, the distinction between "in the field" and "at home" became increasingly questionable, and second, it brought researchers and their positionality in the research context into greater focus. The change of perspective demanded by Malinowski, in which ethnographers were supposed to see the world through the eyes of the natives, often resulted in the exaggeration and glorification of foreign peoples and their rites, which were then frequently degraded to "noble savages" and "primitive peoples" (Hirschauer 2010: 213 f.). Instead of the desired understanding, the "unavoidable 'contamination' of the foreign by the own" (Hirschauer 2013: 231; own translation) led to an exoticization of the Other, the so-called process of "othering" (ibid.). Connected to this crisis of representation was thus not only the criticism that the "voices of the natives were drowned out by the authoritative voice of the anthropologist" (Bierschenk 2013: 83; own translation) but also the question of reflection, that is, to what extent a researcher (from the "Global North") was at all able to speak for the researched (from the "Global South") (Rottenburg 2013: 71; see also Berg and Fuchs 1993: 34 ff.). Moreover, researchers pointed out that so-called "primitive peoples" were increasingly disappearing in the course of globalization (Schmied-Kowarzik and Stagl 1981: VII), that post-colonial societies were able to "defend themselves" against the words written about them, and that they themselves were becoming "native anthropologists" (Schott 1981: 62; see also Ashcroft et al. 2002: 4 ff.; Bierschenk 2013: 88).

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[19] For the above (history of social and cultural anthropology), see also van Maanen 2011: 15 ff.

[20] The 1986 anthology edited by James Clifford and George E. Marcus contains several essays by leading anthropologists on topics related to the "writing culture" debate and shaped it to a considerable extent (Clifford and Marcus 1986; Marcus 2008: 1).

The problem of "othering" by "foreign anthropologists" and their associated "fear of difference" was accompanied by a shift towards a social and cultural anthropology within one's own social context (Bierschenk et al. 2015: 14; see also Marcus 2008: 7; Schiffauer 1997).[21] This trend was additionally reinforced by advancing globalization and growing industrialization, the effects of which – including migration and urbanization – made possible a multitude of "experiences of foreignness in one's own society" (Hirschauer and Amann 1997: 12; own translation) and offered countless opportunities for analyzing "inside stories" on one's own doorstep (ibid.; see also Lynch 1994: 355 ff.). Bierschenk et al. (2015: 13) have also argued that it is not necessary to travel to distant or exotic places in order to experience foreignness. It should also be noted that as a result, the separation between "home" and "field" inherent in Malinowski's field research paradigm largely dissolved – though it did not disappear entirely (Bierschenk 2013: 88).

As a consequence of the so-called "crisis of anthropology," the objects of research within anthropology finally changed and, in a sense, underwent an expansion (Schlehe 2013: 97). Even if today's anthropology, which encompasses the study of a wide range of subjects including the modern state, sport, music, religious movements or modern media, is thus closer to sociology than "classical" anthropology (conducted in foreign countries), their basic attitudes and perspectives on various objects of research still differ (Bierschenk 2013: 89 ff., Bierschenk et al. 2013: 22 f.; Hirschauer 2010: 207 ff.; Krings 2013: 266; Streck 2013: 38 ff.): Despite its rapprochement with sociology and the increasing interdisciplinarity of the subject, it has, in my view, succeeded in maintaining its unique perspective on the field, as well as its typical method of *changing perspectives.* In doing so, anthropology has also succeeded in keeping its goal of "methodically controlled [...] access to (relatively) foreign life worlds" in view (Bierschenk 2013: 81; own translation). In relation to the (auto)ethnography being discussed here, this aim is fulfilled since solid insights into the "world of the police" are often limited for outsiders, which means that the inner life of the police is (relatively) foreign to a large number of people – such as the majority of the members of my research team. But even for me, the field of the police is not known without restrictions, which is why my research within the police is certainly not automatically or always autoethnographic to the same degree: although I am a police officer and consequently have (many years of) service experience, various areas and organizational units of the police, such as the Special Operations Command, the Water Police, or the Air Squadron, are (relatively) foreign even to me. A large organization like the police, with numerous branches and several thousand employees, has many sub-areas that are not always known to its members. In this respect, the distinction between *insider* and *outsider* is only relative, which means that the concept of membership turns out to be more problematic than it appears at first glance. Despite my membership in the police organization, I am still a relative *outsider* in relation to individual organizational units. This also applies to my rank, through which I – due to my recognizability as a middle manager – distinguish myself from certain areas or colleagues within an organizational

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[21] Furthermore, criteria that were still common in the context of colonial conquest (keyword "ethnologists as stooges of the colonial powers") became controversial in the course of decolonisation at the latest and made the "call for a new anthropology" louder (cf. Rottenburg 2013: 57 f.). Furthermore, the change in the hitherto common concept of culture / the changing understanding of culture equally promoted the process of establishing an anthropology "at home" (cf. Streck 2013: 47; Lentz 2013: 113 ff.).

unit and am thus (always) also a relative *outsider* (cf. Clarke 1991: 119 ff.; Clarke 2005: 154; Clarke and Star 2008: 113 f.).

In order to solve the crisis of representation – one could also speak of a crisis of legitimacy – some ethnologists have called for the development of innovative methodological approaches (in addition to the concept of an anthropology "at home") (Schlehe 2013: 97 f.). In the course of this endeavor, research collaborations between *insiders* and *outsiders,* in which *insiders* act as (equal) research partners, have become increasingly important (ibid.).[22] According to this approach, the different perspectives of the research participants are expanded through comparative discussions, mutual translations, and continual exchanges among one another (ibid.: 101). The close cooperation between *insiders* and *outsiders,* as well as the comparison of their perspectives, perceptions, experiences, and findings, prove to be extremely enriching – both in the field and in the evaluation and analysis (ibid.: 107). According to Schlehe, the most essential methodological reorientation now lies in the fact "that understanding is no longer understood as a one-dimensional process, [but] rather within the framework of multidirectional perspectives as characterized by mutual translation" (ibid.: 108; own translation).[23] Schlehe further argues that anthropologists who conduct research as *insiders* within their own society also have the advantage of possessing crucial contextual knowledge and intuitive understanding (ibid.: 99). Furthermore, they can draw on so-called "first-hand knowledge" and do not have to be content with so-called "second-hand knowledge" (cf. Caronia 2018: 116).[24]

Another positive (and by no means insignificant) "side effect" of this collaborative approach is that researchers are now no longer required to speak (exclusively) with the "borrowed authority of the natives," but instead, "the natives themselves make use of their voice" (Bierschenk et al. 2015: 12, own translation; see also Malinowski 1979 [1922]). This paradigm becomes all the more evident in autoethnographic texts – regardless of whether they have a collaborative character or not. Incidentally, I see this as an important (if not *the* most important) advantage of my autoethnography of the police: by conducting ethnographic research within and about the police as a police officer, I can dispense with the "artifice of borrowed authority." Moreover, the problem of "othering" is, in my view, largely marginalized due to my (more or less strong) affiliation with the research field. In this context, Kondo states, "Anthropologists – either 'indigenous' or in a position not completely outside the culture – are in a particularly advantageous position to criticize this tradition from within" (Kondo 1986: 83). The researcher's own affiliation with the field, along with their resulting identification with the researched, which is typical of autoethnography, justify the "breakthrough" of (m)any ethnological research "at home." And, as

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[22] A substantial part of Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan's research, for example, is based on this principle (e.g., Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan 1998, 2011).

[23] Ethnological research in teams is no longer uncommon today (Bierschenk 2013: 87), nor is its multidisciplinary composition, for example, in order to have easy access to necessary expertise such as laws and regulations (Bierschenk et al. 2015: 10). Moreover, many anthropologists now work together with local researchers, which means that the "paradigm of the *lone white male*" is increasingly disappearing (Bierschenk 2013: 87, emphasis in original).

[24] The notion of the "superiority" of so-called "first-hand knowledge" over "second-hand knowledge" is based, among other things, on the so-called "emic turn" in the social sciences, which has been considered by many ethnographers as a legitimization for researching their own milieus (see Caronia 2018; Merton 1972; vom Lehn 2016).

already mentioned, being "at home" in the police does not mean being "at home" writ large, since various organizational units of the police are also (relatively) foreign to me. In this vein, Caronia speaks of "cognitive oscillation," according to which the two epistemic positions of "at-home" and "abroad" can, in her view, also be subject to various fluctuations in an ethnography "at home" (Caronia 2018: 115). According to Caronia, this is particularly true of organizational research by *insiders* "because this oscillation is produced by the inner complexity of most organizations where the ethnographer copes with known and unknown territories of knowledge" (ibid.). Following Hirschauer, the police, due to its complexity, ultimately produces for me a multitude of "special cultural worlds that are neither accessible to general everyday experience nor to [social or cultural anthropology]" (Hirschauer 2010: 215, own translation). This also puts my feeling of being "at home" with the police into perspective.

Notwithstanding the distinctive features of anthropology and sociology, it should be pointed out once again that the existing parallels and commonalities between the two subjects cannot be denied (Hirschauer 2010: 214). For this reason, Bierschenk et al. (2015) – despite their fundamental conviction of existing ethnological specificities (see above) – also point out that anthropology and sociology (today) do not necessarily differ from each other in principle regarding their methods. They also point out that, for this reason, in most countries, "'anthropology abroad' and 'anthropology at home' have been subsumed under one disciplinary umbrella and pursued in the same department for a long time" (Bierschenk et al. 2015: 11). Moreover, in the United States, for example, many anthropologists have no experience of research and teaching outside the United States; therefore, American anthropologists have no reservations about "anthropology at home" (ibid.). So why should this be a problem for anthropologists in Germany or Europe? If anthropology and sociology hardly differ from each other anymore in terms of their methods, and the "auto" within ethnography – as already explained – is becoming increasingly important, why should this then apply exclusively to sociology and not equally to anthropology? Because this development, which incidentally was also an outgrowth of the crisis of representation, was by no means limited to anthropology but must rather be seen as a general point of criticism in and of qualitative social research. The accompanying doubt about the researcher's ability to be objective and the realization that researchers always bring their own experiences and prior knowledge – not to say their subjectivity – into their research contributed significantly to the establishment of autoethnography in the social sciences, which now joins the methodological repertoire of qualitative social research (Hughes and Pennington 2017: 9 f.; see also Ellis et al. 2010a). However, a "consonance" of social science methods is by no means synonymous with the sharpened view of things from the outside that is typical of anthropology (Krings 2013: 266). Even if one of the greatest challenges of contemporary anthropology, according to Krings, is to return the gaze trained on foreign semantics and practices to the phenomena and institutions of one's own society, I would like to encourage young researchers not to hastily deny an "anthropology on one's own doorstep" (ibid., own translation), since there is, after all, also plenty to discover "at home" (Bierschenk et al. 2015: 13; Streck 2013: 47).

Finally, I would like to mention that according to Ellis, Adams, and Bochner, the purpose of an autoethnography is usually to make both *insiders* and *outsiders* better understand one's own or someone else's object of research (Ellis et al. 2010a: 4). The research field of the police is predestined for this: Due to the diversity of areas and organizational units, my field research

within the police is equally suited to bring my own colleagues (*insiders*) a little closer to the "world of the police," as well as to make it a little more comprehensible to *outsiders* - not least because of their frequently cited "tendency" to close themselves off from the "outside world."

6. How much "auto" is there in my (auto)ethnography?

Regarding the characteristics of a "heartfelt autoethnography" (Doloriert and Sambrook 2012: 84) and a "critical autoethnography" (Holman Jones 2005: 5), I clearly distinguish myself from "second generation" autoethnographers because my autoethnography does not contain (highly) personal content from my private life nor does it allow deeper insights into the "inside of my soul" (Ploder and Stadlbauer 2013: 383). Although I bring my own experiences as a police officer into my research and thus draw on my existing organizational knowledge, these experiences relate exclusively to the professional context, which means that my research as a whole has less personal involvement and emotionality than most authors of "second generation autoethnography" (cf. Adams et al. 2017: 5 ff.; Ploder and Stadlbauer 2013: 400). In this sense, my texts are also not suitable for self-therapy, as I do not address any events that have "thrown me off track" or triggered existential crises (Ellis et al. 2010a: 4). Furthermore, the phenomena described in my autoethnography do not reveal (socially) critical aspects to the same extent as, for example, the texts by Boylorn (2006; 2008; 2011), Alexander (2006), Holman Jones (2005), or Todd (2016).

My research is thus more in the vein of "first generation autoethnography" in Hayano's sense because as a police officer and ethnologist researching his own profession and professional group, I regard my texts as "ethnographies of [my] 'own people'" (Hayano 1979: 99). In this respect, I fulfill the criterion of an autoethnographer who "include[s] some prior knowledge of the people, their culture and language, as well as the ability to be accepted to some degree, or to 'pass' as a native member" (ibid.: 100), since I was ultimately "socialized by the police" as a result of my training as a police officer and my professional experience as a policeman. Thus, I have both formal and informal prior knowledge, speak the same language ("police jargon"), and am identifiable as a police officer because of my uniform – for both internal and external observers. In this sense, I believe it is both a "self (auto) ethnography" and an "autobiographical (auto) ethnography" (Reed-Danahay 1997: 2), in which the degree of "auto" and "ethno" varies. My dissertation research on the police not only contains "researcher-**and**-researched" passages, in which I use my "auto" primarily to understand the "ethno," but also "researcher-**is**-researched" sections, in which I make references to my own experiences and place the "auto" more strongly in the center.

Since this is an ethnography of a German state police force, it is also an "organizational autoethnography" in the sense of Doloriert and Sambrook (2012: 86 f.) due to my affiliation with this police organization; according to this, it is primarily an *"autoethnography within higher education organizations"* (Doloriert and Herrmann 2018: 224), since in my capacity as a police officer, I have a higher level of knowledge about the organization being researched (here, the state police). In terms of individual organizational units, such as the police department or the police college, my work can also be understood (at least partially) as an *"autoethnography within 'previous/other life' organizations"* (ibid.) because my knowledge of these organizational units,

which I also draw on for my autoethnography, is equally fed by my former affiliation with these organizations. Since I first had to become a member of a police department (again) for the purpose of my field research in the guard and patrol service, the variant of *"autoethnography as complete member research in other organizations"* (ibid.) also applies to my work. As a result of my affiliation with the Technical Presidium, I was also required to become a member of another organizational unit (in this case, the police station being researched) in order to conduct autoethnographic research within it. Regarding my field research in the guard and patrol service, it was necessary to be seconded to the precinct in order to conduct "complete member research" within this organizational unit.

Furthermore, in relation to my joint research with the research team from the University of Mainz, for whose members the field of the police was more or less unknown, it was a matter of "collaborative autoethnography" (Chang et al. 2013: 17), according to which the researchers of the research team and I collaboratively analyzed and interpreted the data collected in the field (for example, in the context of operational training). Chang and his colleagues, in principle, assume that all researchers (equally) "reflect [...] in their autobiographical data" (2013: 24), but I also understand this to mean work in which at least one of the researchers reflects on their autoethnographic data with external researchers, thus aligning with the autoethnography under discussion here. Kempster and his colleagues also speak in this context of a "co-produced autoethnography" (2008: 2 ff.), where one of the researchers belongs to the researched organization (in this case, myself) while another researcher (for example, Jan Beek, who accompanied me as an external researcher during my fieldwork) comes from outside. This describes my own approach and positionality. Many of the problems I faced as a "native anthropologist" in the context of my autoethnographic organizational research were absorbed by my membership in a research team. Though the methodology of ethnographic teamwork is not very well developed in anthropology, it is in sociology - for example, in the framework of grounded theory developed by Glaser and Strauss (Glaser and Strauss 1965, 2006; see also Charmaz and Mitchell 2007). The specificity of my research, therefore, lies in the combination of an organizational anthropological autoethnography with ethnographic teamwork, thereby allowing me to have a kind of double membership.

On the basis of these considerations, it becomes apparent that my specific position – depending on the research field and focus – varies within my dissertation research; after all, various autoethnographic categories come into play that are not (or cannot be) clearly delimited from each other (e.g., various sub-forms of autoethnographic organizational research combined with collaborative aspects). However, despite the versatility of my autoethnography, it can at least be situated within the family of *"organizational autoethnography,"* encompassing both *"researcher-is-researched"* and *"researcher-and-researched"* relationships and located partially *"within higher education"* as well as *"within 'previous/other life' education."* Furthermore, it also combined aspects of *"complete member research"* with *"collaborative"* and *"co-produced"* research as a result of the exchange and cooperation with my research team.

7.   Opportunities, challenges, and risks of autoethnography

Autoethnographic research within one's own society or organization can reveal diverse possibilities; at the same time, however, it can also pose specific challenges for autoethnographers. Additionally, autoethnography may carry specific risks for both the researcher and the researched, which should always be carefully considered by the autoethnographer.

7.1   Possibilities of (my) autoethnography

One of the most obvious advantages of autoethnographic (organizational) research – as mentioned above – is easier access to the field. This applies, above all, to areas and organizations to which external researchers often have difficulties gaining access (Doloriert and Sambrook 2012: 86). In this way, autoethnographers can, in principle, include topics in their research that are frequently denied scientific observation (from the outside), including "unpopular" research topics that those responsible for the organization may shy away from for fear of "negative" findings (e.g., studies on corrupt structures within their own organization), as well as topics whose (public) presentation is simply unpleasant for those responsible for the organization (e.g., research on topics such as sexism or mobbing within their own organization). In this respect, autoethnographic research is, at least partially, suitable for closing existing gaps in research (Adams et al. 2017: 3).

In addition, autoethnographers can view certain phenomena, such as experiences of discrimination, from a different perspective than ethnographers who are themselves unaffected, which may give autoethnographic texts a unique authenticity (Adams et al. 2017). Due to the fact that autoethnographies are often written in the first-person, it is also possible for researchers to make their degree of involvement and participation in the situation clear, thus placing themselves explicitly in the context and contributing to the authenticity of the text (Ellis et al. 2010b: 347 f.).[25] Central to this is a description of the position from which the researcher observed things and an indication of the bias this ultimately generates (Lentz 1989; Olivier de Sardan 2015). But at least as important – apart from the positioning carried out by the ethnographers in the field themselves – are the processes of becoming positioned by the researched (Streck et al. 2013: 19). As an autoethnographer and police officer, I was granted entirely different insights into the organization that were denied to Jan due to his recognizability and perception as an outsider. Because I was not *immediately* and *permanently recognizable* as a researcher but primarily perceived as a colleague due to my uniform, I was differentially positioned in the field compared to external researchers. Under certain circumstances, this could lead to research subjects behaving more authentically towards me – for example, by paying less attention to their "impression management" – than they would when external persons are present, which can have potentially considerable influence on the data material itself and its validity (cf. Berreman 1962). But this can also lead to ethical problems, which I discuss in more detail below.

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[25] At this point, it should only be noted for the sake of completeness that this also applies in principle to "classic" ethnographic texts, which are written by the ethnographer in the first person (cf. Streck et al. 2013: 18).

Furthermore, as already mentioned, autoethnographers can usually draw on existing organizational and contextual knowledge, which is indispensable for the necessary understanding of both formal and informal everyday practices and routines of action (cf. Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan 2019: 246 f.; Pollner and Emerson 2007: 122; Schlehe 2013: 99). Therefore, common customs, rituals, or languages (jargon) do not have to be learned by the researchers but are usually already present to them (Alvesson 2009: 163). In principle, this makes it possible to shorten the field stay without losing essential aspects of the research field or leaving them undiscovered (Vickers 2019: 12). In any case, ethnographic research now increasingly leans towards substituting prolonged and extensive field visits with several shorter ones: After all, who can and wants to spare their collaborators for a year or even longer, or is willing to finance such long research projects today (Bierschenk 2013: 86; Jackson 1987: 9)?

7.2 Challenges and risks of (my) autoethnography

7.2.1 The danger of "going native"

A substantial challenge for autoethnographers is that the hermeneutic concept of distance is shaken as a result of their "shared identity" with the research field, although this could also entail positive aspects (see above) (Kondo 1986: 75; Warren 2000: 187). This carries the risk of the autoethnographer being unable to detach themselves from the object of research to the necessary extent. Consequently, essential aspects and findings of the field could remain hidden due to "tunnel vision" and "blind spots," thereby presenting the risk of misinterpretation and misunderstanding (Caronia 2018: 114 ff.; Strathern 1987: 17 ff.; Ybema and Kamsteeg 2009: 102 f.). However, even if the risk of "going native" may seem higher for autoethnographers than for "classic" ethnographers (Vickers 2019: 18), this danger also exists with regard to "typical" ethnographies (cf. Emerson et al. 2011: 41 f.; van Maanen 1995: 20).[26] For example, Kirkham, an American criminologist, impressively describes how, following his academic training for research purposes, he underwent training as an officer at the Jacksonville Sheriff's Department and, in the process, literally mutated from professor to patrolman:

> We confronted them, and I asked one for identification, displaying my own identification. He sneered at me, cursed, and turned to walk away. The next thing I knew, I had grabbed the youth by his shirt and spun him around, shouting, "I'm talking to you, punk!" I felt my partner's arm on my shoulder and heard his reassuring voice behind me, "Take it easy, Doc!" (Kirkham 1974: 136)

Waddington picks up on this in his book *Policing Citizens* and describes Kirkham's "transformation in the field" as "having 'gone native'" (Waddington 1999: 103).

To avoid "going native," it is necessary to regularly employ various distancing and alienation techniques often employed in sociological research (Emerson et al. 2011: 42; Vickers 2019: 18 ff.). One example is the *development of a new view of what is already familiar* (also called alienation), whereby the familiar is largely viewed as *if it were foreign to the ethnographer* (Hirschauer 2013: 236

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[26] Strictly speaking, autoethnographers should rather speak of the challenge of "being native" instead of "going native."

ff.; Hirschauer and Amann 1997: 9 ff.). This involves, among other things, observing the "everyday world as a phenomenon" through which the familiar is methodically "alienated" by the researchers attempting to distance the observed research object from themselves (Hirschauer and Amann 1997: 12; see also Zimmerman and Pollner 1976: 64 ff.). Additionally, there are other – mostly social theoretical – methods of distancing, such as the concept of "doing differences" proposed by West and Fenstermaker (1995: 8 ff.; see also Hirschauer 2014: 182 f.). Put simply, the basic ethnomethodological assumption here is that social distinctions must first be *practiced* and are thus (merely) part of an actual reality (Hirschauer 2014: 182). There are, of course, other important texts and theories in this regard; however, the detailed consideration of these would exceed the scope of this paper (e.g., Hirschauer 2010: 216 ff.).

Due to the lack of foreignness of the autoethnographer, due in part to their belonging to the researched group and familiarity with everyday experiences within the research field, the *explication of already implicitly existing knowledge* is particularly vital for this context (Hirschauer 2010: 221 ff.). Emerson et al. (2011: 42) advise ethnographers to occasionally withdraw from the field and make conscious interruptions in their analysis and observations in order to re-establish distance from the research object. This aligns with what Olivier de Sardan calls an "epistemological break" (2015: 195). It is also helpful to discuss one's research data with other researchers and to repeatedly exchange ideas about the field with them – in the spirit of collaborative research (Chang et al. 2013: 18 ff.). Thus, Jan and I discussed the field and events we jointly experienced there several times over the course of the field research. I also refer to this process as "intersecting perspectives," in which the views and perspectives of the *social researcher* "intersect" with those of the *police officer.* With the help of these "intersecting perspectives," we were able to bring our data ("stories") together and "find some commonalities and differences and then wrestle with the stories to discover the meanings of the stories in relation to their sociocultural contexts" (Chang et al. 2013: 18). By discussing our data with the research team after our field stay – that is, with a certain temporal and spatial distance from the field – we also increased "the sources of data from a single researcher to multiple researcher perspectives" (Chang et al. 2013: 23), which, I believe, also optimized the objectivity and validity of our data.

7.2.2 The (special) protection of research participants

Aside from questions of distancing oneself from the field, I also consider the protection of informants and research participants to be a fundamental challenge of autoethnography. Autoethnographers, in particular, bear a unique responsibility towards their participants who, due to their social proximity to the ethnographer, are usually more difficult to disguise and thus easier to identify (by third parties) (Ellis et al. 2010b: 350; Tullis 2013: 248 ff.), because "writing about the self always involves writing about others" (Adams 2006: 720). Or, to use Tullis' words:

> Autoethnographers may claim the stories they write or perform are their own, but they ultimately cannot avoid implicating others in their writings or performances. The 'others' who appear in autoethnographies are partners, friends, family, students, colleagues, neighbors, clients, community members, and sometimes strangers. (Tullis 2013: 248)

Therefore, as an autoethnographer, I must be particularly careful and considerate with the data of my informants, as even typical pseudonymization and anonymization techniques (e.g.,

changing the location, time of research, age, or gender) are not necessarily sufficient for protecting the individual concerned. For example, if I talk about a superior, they could still be identifiable in principle, at least for a certain group of people (Adams et al. 2015: 56 ff.; Ellis et al. 2010b: 350; Roth 2008: 6 ff.). Even if I generally succeed in "disguising" my research field, it is possible that people who know me personally, such as my circle of colleagues, could, with a little "skill," find out when I was assigned to which office and from where and whom the information mentioned may have come. In this context, I must, therefore, always consider whether the events, actions, and statements that occurred within my research could possibly have consequences for the participants concerned, which could ultimately range from social (exclusion within the service group, falling out of favor with superiors, etc.) to legal sanctions (initiation of disciplinary and/or criminal proceedings). The maxim in this context must, therefore, always be to keep the risks and consequences for those involved as low as possible – even more so than should apply to non-autoethnographic research (cf. Tullis 2013: 249 f.; Hernandez and Ngunjiri 2013: 269 f.). At the same time, as an autoethnographer, I must take into account the extent to which my "concealment measures" may also influence the integrity of my work and possibly lead to misinterpretations or false conclusions (Ellis et al. 2010b: 351; Tullis 2013: 251). In this context, the risk should not be underestimated that research participants may recognize themselves in autoethnographic texts, disagree with the image of themselves "drawn" there, and harbor resentment towards the author for the relevant passage; in extreme cases, this could potentially strain the relationship or even lead to irreparable damages to the friendship with that person (Hernandez and Ngunjiri 2013: 270). In addition, autoethnographers should bear in mind that these people can, in principle, "fight back," for example, by questioning the scientific nature of the text out of frustration at the perceived vilification or by spreading rumors about the researcher among colleagues (Ellis 2004: 95; Hughes and Pennington 2017: 24 f.; van Maanen 2011: 152 f.).

7.2.3   The ethical dilemmas of autoethnographic research

Another central challenge (as well as a central ethical dilemma) lies in having to explicitly weigh which information I disclose and which I do not, which boils down to whether this information was given to me as a researcher and social scientist or as a friend and colleague. This dilemma is somewhat inherent in autoethnographic research and thus concerns other autoethnographers (see Adams et al. 2015: 52; Boylorn 2017: 13). For instance, as Adams states, "Because I am 'one of them' – that is, […] a perceived 'insider' – I presume that these others feel safe in sharing their […] secrets with me, trusting that I will not ridicule or out them to others" (2015: 52). As can be seen from one of my field notes, due to my dual role as a police officer and social scientist, participants were not always aware that I was both a colleague and a researcher. This became more than clear towards the end of my field research at the police station when a colleague said to me incredulously, "Oh, you also have shares in the research project? I thought you were just Jan's babysitter!" (Field note from 17.03.2020) I was surprised by this, as my role as a social scientist in the field – despite my function as a patrol officer – should have been quite clear to my colleagues (at least according to my understanding), not least because I emphasized this several times at the beginning and throughout my field research. In addition to my dual role as an autoethnographer and police officer was the dual role of my research participants as both informants and colleagues or friends. It turned out that the tensions between *official* and *private communications* or between *official* and *discreet listener* exist for both sides and that they are not always easy to separate or distinguish for

all participants in the field. In my opinion, this tension between disclosure and concealment is intensified in the context of autoethnographic research by the fact that research participants usually come from one's own environment; I also knew some of the research participants from before the beginning of my research and may have had a long-standing collaboration or even friendship with them (cf. Ellis et al. 2010b: 351).

The problematic nature of the question of disclosure or concealment ultimately exists on two levels: the ethical level – what was I told or what did I experience in which role? – and the moral level – what can I disclose in good conscience without this resulting in disadvantages for the person or persons concerned (van Maanen 2011: 8, 160; Warren 2000: 185 ff.)? This dilemma was particularly pertinent during my research in the patrol car, which is generally regarded by police officers as a confidential and intimate place. Here, colleagues are usually more likely to open up than in a conversation at the police station because the rule is: "What happens in the patrol car, stays in the patrol car!" (Hunold 2019: 56) Therefore, as a researcher – especially in the patrol car – I had to regularly make sure that my colleagues were actually aware that I was also a researcher, leading to difficult decisions regarding which information (from the patrol car) I could "process" in which form (van Maanen 2011: 25; Tullis 2013: 248).

7.2.4 The protection of one's own person

The tensions of disclosure and concealment mentioned above relate not only to the field as such or to various research participants but also to the autoethnographer's own person: "The second tension of ethnography, the writer of fieldnotes is encouraged to inscribe not only the setting but himself" (Warren 2000: 186). The "entanglements" of autoethnographers with the field create potential risks for the researchers themselves that they should not ignore. For example, the treatment of unpopular topics or the open criticism of certain structures could have negative consequences for autoethnographers (Doloriert and Sambrook 2009: 35 ff.). In my capacity as an autoethnographer working as a policeman, I am exposed to the risk of experiencing negative repercussions and (social or legal) sanctions from my superiors, colleagues, or other organizational members as a result of certain revelations, which I may have to deal with in the aftermath of publishing my monograph (Hernandez and Ngunjiri 2013: 273 f.). It takes little imagination to guess that "pronounced" criticism from one's superiors may not be conducive to the positive development of one's own career opportunities, regardless of the organization in which one conducts (autoethnographic) research (ibid.).

In this context, autoethnographers should bear in mind that a life after research in the researched environment must still be possible (Ellis et al. 2010a: 12; Hughes and Pennington 2017: 24) – this is an essential difference with classical anthropology. Since autoethnographers continue to belong to the researched institution even after their own research, they may be subject to various constraints, dependencies, or pressures – such as the threat of being transferred or denied promotion – which should not be underestimated by researchers (Ellis et al. 2010a: 12). This aspect gains additional importance when considering that we spend most of the day or week at our workplace (Herrmann 2017: 6). Already while writing my field notes, as well as during the writing of this paper, I continuously tried to be aware of who I could upset with the collected data, how this could possibly result in disadvantages and reprisals for me, my informants or the

organization of the police itself (to which I ultimately feel obliged to a certain extent). In other words, a particular danger of autoethnography lies in the possible auto-censorship of the researcher. For the sake of completeness, it should be noted that these ethical considerations are also fully valid for "classic" ethnography; however, in the context of autoethnographic texts, due to the proximity of the researchers to their fields, special reflection and consideration are required (see also Vickers 2019).

8. Critical reflections on the (auto)ethnographic methodology

As a postulate of a modern methodology, Bierschenk (2013: 87) asserts that there should be no normatively prescribed and uniform field research practice in contemporary social and cultural anthropology; instead, the approach should always be oriented towards the specifics of the respective research object and the research problems that may arise from it. In his view, this in no way exempts an ethnographic research design from adequately reflecting and ultimately meeting the criteria of validity, reliability, and representativeness.[27] However, in the view of Ellis et al. (2010b: 351), the questions of validity, reliability, and representativeness that are generally valid in empirical social science research must partially be "rethought" or adapted to the method of autoethnography; therefore, they speak of reliability, generalizability, and validity instead of validity, reliability, and representativeness.

8.1 Reliability, validity, generalizability

The question of reliability in autoethnographic research, therefore, primarily refers to the plausibility of the authors (Ellis et al. 2010b). Regarding validity, autoethnographers are first and foremost concerned with the probability of their accounts; the aim is to convey to the reader that the events they describe are likely to happen. Generalizability in this context stands for the degree to which the experiences described by the autoethnographers are linked to the experiences of the readers (or, at least, people known to them) and are, in principle, comprehensible to them (Adams et al. 2020: 10; Ellis et al. 2010b: 351 f.; see also Bochner 2002: 86). In order to meet these criteria, (auto)ethnographers must base their (auto)ethnographies on theories and argumentation from social science research so that "readers will have no difficulty recognizing the authority of the scholarly voice, not just its authenticity" (Bullough and Pinnegar 2001: 20) and view their texts as more than just an amalgamation of "stories" (Hughes and Pennington 2017: 26).[28]

Thus, the dilemma of (auto)ethnographic research lies in the fact that readers are often left with little more than trust in the sincerity of the (auto)ethnographer and the accuracy of their text.

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[27] In empirical social science research, the terms objectivity, reliability, and validity are also used for the time being - for example, in the field of questionnaire evaluation (for more details, see Diekmann 2014: 247 ff.).

[28] The question of generalizability arises for all ethnographic research, as it usually only describes individual cases. Consequently, the question arises as to which aspects lead me as a researcher to assume that the situation described simultaneously has characteristics that also apply elsewhere (see, among others, Epstein 1979; van Velsen 1979).

Olivier de Sardan also calls this an "ethnographic pact" between the authors and their readers: "This [ethnographic pact] is a gauge of our seriousness and deontology: what I am describing really happened, the statements I am quoting were really made, the reality I am narrating is true; it is not a figment of my imagination" (2015: 14). Readers of (auto)ethnographies often have little opportunity to adequately verify the data and events presented there; therefore, it is advisable to compare the works of different ethnologists on the same (or at least similar) objects of research and to take these into account as well (ibid.: 56).

However, it must also be kept in mind that autoethnographies usually refer to specific (experienced) situations that have arisen out of a concrete (socio-cultural) context. Thus, a claim to general validity cannot necessarily be made on the basis of them (beyond the specifically studied field/group). The data collected by the autoethnographer are also in a (close) spatial and temporal context to the researched group (Anderson and Glass-Coffin 2013: 78; Olivier de Sardan 2015: 58). Therefore, my observations at the police station are primarily "valid" in relation to the specific service group I researched there and do not automatically apply to the same extent to all police stations in Germany. As Anderson and Glass-Coffin note, "Autoethnographic inquiry itself, as well as autoethnographic publications, represents understandings and insights captured at one point (or more) in temporal or sociocultural contexts" (2013: 78). It is worth noting that these considerations apply generally to ethnographic texts and are not entirely specific to autoethnographic research.

8.2   Subjectivity of (auto)ethnographic research and texts

Moreover, field notes and finished (auto)ethnographies can *never* be considered in isolation from their authors, as they are *always the* result of the selective and subjective perception of their creators (Adams et al. 2017: 2; Emerson et al. 2011: 247; Erickson and Stull 1998: 5; Olivier de Sardan 2015: 58, Warren 2000: 184; Wall 2008: 41 f.). Ultimately, ethnographers make a series of conscious and unconscious decisions in the field (as well as afterward) that carry over into deciding what they write about and what they may (want to) omit: "He must decide where to start, [...] what to include, and what to ignore. While writing, he determines whose points of view to present, what is significant about a person or event, and what is incidental and can be left out." (Emerson et al. 2011: 246).
With the help of joint or collaborative research designs, the existing subjectivity can be countered (at least in part) according to the principle of objectification through teamwork. The control of one's own data and findings on the basis of exchange between autoethnographers and their research colleagues (regardless of whether in the field or afterward, or whether from the subject or outside the subject), as well as with their research participants, who can read what the authors have written, incorporate supplementary thoughts, or even write counter-arguments, increases the "objectivity" of the data. At the same time, it also takes into account the necessary quality criteria of autoethnographic research – reliability, generalizability, validity, and representativeness (Callier et al. 2017: 38; Chang et al. 2013: 23 ff.; Schlehe 2013: 107).

Even if there is now a consensus within (qualitative) social science research that "absolute" objectivity is *not* possible in (auto)ethnography (Adams et al. 2017: 2; Emerson et al. 2011: 247;

Wall 2008: 41 f.), it should be noted that this applies in principle to all research in the social sciences:

> The anthropologist is certainly not the only one to be subjected [...]. The same is true of all social sciences, even the most quantitative ones: they are constantly faced with the risk of misinterpretation and overinterpretation at various levels, from the construction of the research topic to the manifold ensuing levels of interpretation. (Olivier de Sardan 2015: 58)

Moreover, critics of ethnography – or of qualitative (social) research as such – should bear in mind that socio-cultural phenomena, contexts and interactions, for example, cannot be depicted and understood to the same extent without it; quantitative social research or even the natural sciences are not sufficient for this (Adams et al. 2015: 9; Henecka 2009: 183 f.; Hirschauer 2010: 208). In this sense, critics should not underestimate the (complementary) potential and performance of ethnographic research (Amann and Hirschauer 1997: 7 ff.). For example, Toren and de Pina-Cabral speak of a "persuasive analytical power of ethnography" that enables ethnographers to effectively analyze the various categories and practices of human action and, thus, decisively contribute to understanding socio-cultural contexts (2009: 12). In my view, this potential can, by no means, only apply to "classical" ethnography; it is also equally valid for autoethnography due to its existing "kinship," despite the weaknesses of autoethnographic research pointed out in this chapter. In this sense, I would like to conclude this section with the following slightly modified quotation from Caronia:

> Generally speaking, scholars advocating [autoethnography] are quite aware of the risks: from the tunnel vision to unaware positioning, from the insider's overestimation of (her) organization's efficacy to the social and ethical dilemma implied in studying one's own milieu. Nevertheless, once these biases are controlled, the benefits of "being at-home" seem to be greater than the limits, at least for the advocates of [autoethnography]. (2018: 114)[29]

9. Conclusion

As demonstrated by the various examples given above, the number of (former) police officers who conducted research as social scientists in – or, at least, about – the police is larger than I had initially assumed before starting my monograph. However, on the basis of the publications used as examples, it also became apparent that these researchers did not reflect on the specifics of their

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[29] In addition to the limitations and weaknesses of (auto)ethnography discussed in this article, there are other factors - such as the researcher's memory or the presence of the researcher in the field - that influence the "quality" of (auto)ethnographic research, which are only briefly mentioned here, as their detailed treatment would, in my opinion, exceed the scope of this article (see, for example, Wall 2008: 54; Olivier de Sardan 2015: 55 f.). In addition, I am leaving aside the fact that researchers usually combine different ethnographic methods, such as participant observation, case analysis, and interviews, which also influence the quality criteria - validity, reliability, and representativeness (see, for example, Bierschenk 2013: 87; Olivier de Sardan 2015: 25 ff.).

(dual) role as police officers and researchers to the same extent (Behr 1993, 2006; Kirkham 1974; Moskos, 2008; Waddington 1994, 2013).

Furthermore, as anthropology changed, so did the procedures of the discipline, which is why the establishment of autoethnography in the canon of qualitative social research methods cannot be considered independent of the currents, developments, and influences of cultural and social anthropology (van Maanen 2011: 15 ff.). For example, the crisis of representation or the "writing culture" debate triggered a real "fear of difference" (Bierschenk et al. 2013: 25), which ultimately favored an anthropology "on its own doorstep" and helped autoethnographic research to become acceptable (Doloriert and Herrmann 2018: 222; Rottenburg 2013: 57 f.). This development can also be used as a basis for legitimizing anthropology "at home" (Bierschenk et al. 2015: 13 f.; Caronia 2018: 116; Schlehe 2013: 97 ff.).

The classification and determination of the genre of an ethnographic text is not always easy or even possible due to the manifold existing genres of autoethnographic research - not least because different (auto)ethnographic genres are sometimes combined in one text (cf. Adams et al. 2015: 46 ff.; Adams et al. 2020: 6 f.). Despite the variety of terms used in the context of autoethnographic research – such as *"self-cultural anthropology"* (Ryang 2000: 297), *"self-ethnography"* (van Maanen 1995), *"complete-member-research"* (Adler and Adler 1987), and *"narrative ethnography"* (Abu-Lughod 1993) to name a few – these can generally be subsumed under the umbrella of autoethnography (Hughes and Pennington 2017: 11). If the aforementioned criteria of an autoethnography are used as a basis for the monograph under discussion here, it can be seen that – depending on the topic or research field – it differs considerably with regard to its degree of *"auto"* and *"ethno"* (cf. Ploder and Stadlbauer 2013: 403 f.; Reed-Danahay 1997: 2). Nevertheless, it can be stated that this work is an organization-based autoethnography in a collaborative research context – a "collaborative organizational autoethnography," so to speak (Chang et al. 2013: 17; Doloriert and Sambrook 2012: 86 f.).

In conclusion, although the methods of autoethnography (some would say ethnography in general) contain distinct weaknesses, their strengths and consequent benefits for cultural and social anthropology outweigh them (Adams et al. 2015: 9; Amann and Hirschauer 1997: 7 ff.; Caronia 2018: 114; Hirschauer 2010: 208;). In this context, it should also be pointed out that an ethnography "at home," that is, an "ethnograph[y] of [our] 'own people'" (Hayano 1979: 99), not only offers opportunities; it is also associated with special challenges and risks of which autoethnographers should always be aware (Adams et al. 2020: 8 f.; Horowitz 1986: 409).

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