

Reflexivity essay



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Rather than study the elderly Chicanos of LA as was her original intention, Barbara Myerhoff shifted her focus to her own ethnicity, choosing instead to conduct her ethnographic study on her native ground for *Number our days*. Her reflexivity is apparent in and is a result of her decision to study the aging Jewish population of Venice, California, reflecting somewhat in her affinity for her male correspondent, Schmuell, and her identification with the educated males of the group over the females. She cannot help but be affected by the saddening accounts of the elderly she will inevitably join. Similarly, in Cruikshank's *Life lived like a story*, reflexivity is central to the author's ability to interpret and disseminate the various stories within a meaningful, interrelated context.

Reflexivity is an important tool of ethnography because it allows for the researcher to become a part of the story, to incorporate herself into the narratives as a participative reporter. The information gathered becomes more applicable as a result, and the reader perhaps feels more involved in the study because they, like the author once was, are a newcomer to the information presented in the text. I would implement reflexivity in my study for this reason. I imagine that it could only help me convey my data in a more personal, holistic light. I would utilize the principle of reflexivity by avoiding an aloof detachment from my sample population. My involvement in the communities I study would be real and formative, and I would comment on my own growth as a researcher at the same time I provided a meticulous and scientifically viable study.

In *Number Our Days*, she explained that she intended to study elderly Chicanos in LA, but readily changed direction when they asked her why she

did not study her own people, and subsequently took part in inventing the method of ethnography at home. Later Jewish ethnographic anthologies including, *Judaism Viewed from within and from without*, were inspired by Myerhoff's work. She inspired Jews to apply anthropological methods to the study of Judaism, as well as, anthropologists to view Jews as legitimate ethnographic subjects.