

The UWM LGBTQ+ Studies Program presents

## Workshopping Autoethnography and Queer Theory



A workshop by LGBTQ+  
Studies Visiting Scholar  
[Dr. Tony Adams](#) (he/they)

7 November 2022, 1-2:15  
Reception to follow until 3 PM  
UWM Fireside Lounge

### About the program

In this interactive workshop, we will explore how and why autoethnography and queerness are good for each other. We will foreground possibilities of merging the principles and practices of autoethnography with the principles and practices of queer theory. We will also discuss the art—the skills, crafts, and processes—of doing and writing queer autoethnography. Numerous examples will be used throughout. Ample time will be provided for discussion.

### About Tony Adams

Dr. Tony Adams is a Caterpillar Professor and Chair of the Department of Communication at Bradley University. He has (co)authored and (co)edited nine books including *Narrating the Closet: An Autoethnography of Same-Sex Attraction* (Routledge), *Autoethnography* (Oxford University Press), and the *Handbook of Autoethnography* (Routledge).

### Cosponsors include

The Departments of Communication, Political Science, Psychology, and Sociology; Women's and Gender Studies and the Urban Studies Program

[www.tonyeadams.com/uwm](http://www.tonyeadams.com/uwm)

# Doing Queer Autoethnography

1. How could you include personal experience in your research? What concerns or questions do you have about doing so?
2. Identify (queer) experiences that you have felt to be formative and, if shared, might offer insights about an (queer) issue or topic.

# Defining Autoethnography

## **Auto**

**Self, Subjectivity, Identity,  
Personal Experience**

## **Ethno**

**Society, Culture, Community**

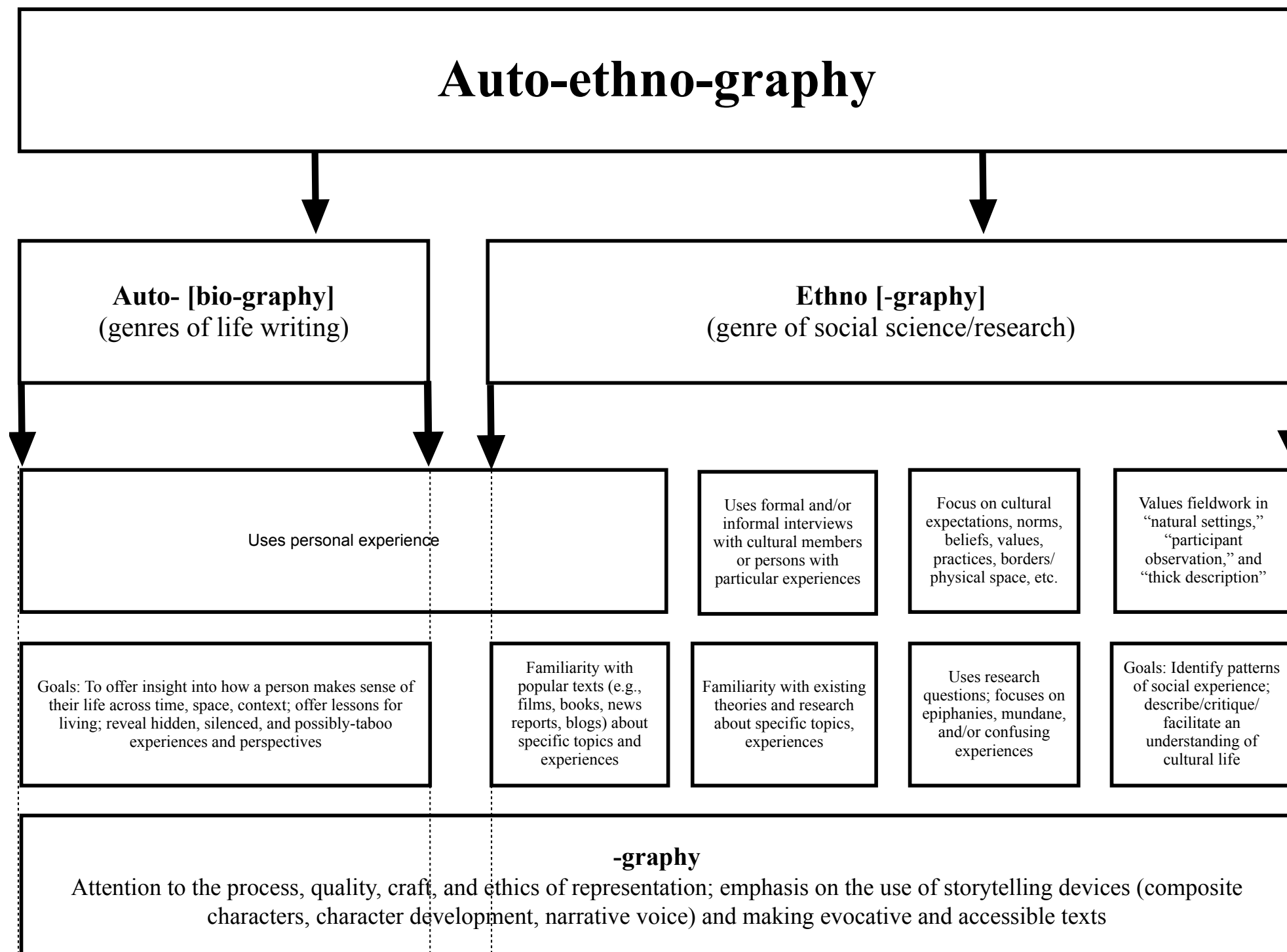
## **Graphy**

**Representation:  
life writing + social science**

# Why Autoethnography?

- Identify and address ethical violations in research
- Realization that social research—especially qualitative research—is never neutral or objective
- Recognition that identities shape perception, experience, and knowledge
- Increased attention to narrative and storytelling in/as research
- Increased attention to emotion, feeling, affect
- Recognition of the epistemic potentials of personal experience

# Key Components of Autoethnography





# Queer as ... Catfish



*Catfish* (2010)

# Defining Queer | Theory

## **Queer Identities, Relationships, and Desires**

LGBTIA+ | same-sex/gender attractions | gender and sexual fluidity | not Str8

## **Queer Messages, Values, and Practices**

that do not align with (heteronormative) conventions regarding pleasure, desire, intimacy, and relationships

## **Queer Affects**

(Re)claiming and celebrating emotions, feelings, psychological and physiological conditions shrouded in silence, secrecy, and shame

## **Queer Temporality**

Queer identities and desires in/through time, circumstance, experience; queer world-making—promoting new ways to be queer and live queerly

# Autoethnography (AE) + Queer Theory (QT) = Good for each other

AE disrupts canonical ideas about research; critical autoethnography (CAE) uses personal experience to identify and challenge harmful cultural norms and practices, advocates progressive world-making	QT identifies, challenges, deconstructs, pollutes what passes as “normal” with regard to sex, gender, sexuality, intimacy, pleasure, desire; emphasizes queer world-making
Given the use of personal experience, we can use AE to study everyday situations—“natural settings”—and to demonstrate insider knowledge	AE can be used to show and study queerness in action, in natural settings tinged and tangled with sex, gender, sexuality, intimacy, pleasure, and desire
With AE, we illustrate an investment in our research; we implicate ourselves in our interactions, observations, findings, representations	By using AE with QT, we we implicate ourselves in our interactions, observations, findings, representations about queerness
AE emphasizes subjectivity, standpoints, experiences with difference	QT: Too White and Western; detached from lived experience, not personal enough
AE: Criticized for being atheoretical	QT: Abstract, dense, esoteric, impractical
AE: Values accessible and practical texts (autobiography + ethnography)	QT: Abstract, dense, esoteric, impractical

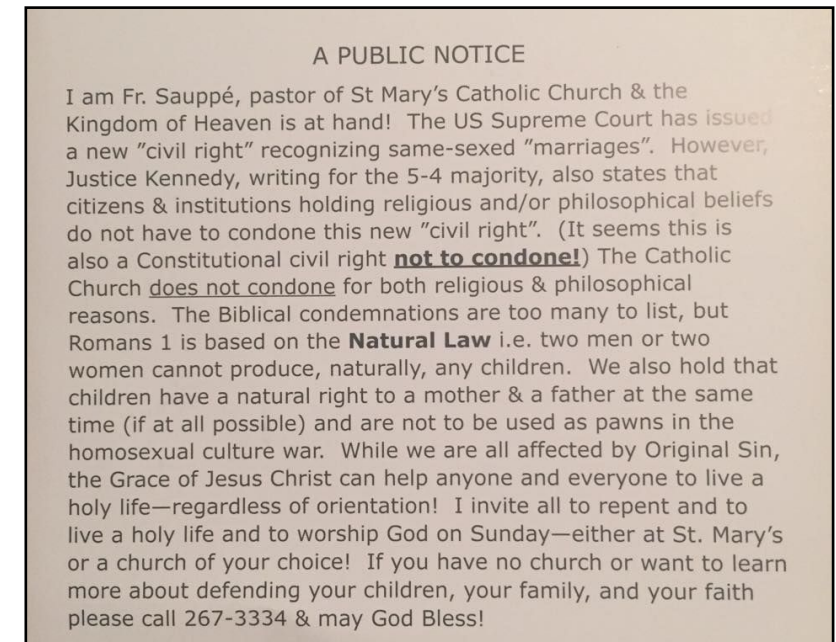


# Which (Queer) Experiences?

<b>(Research) Questions</b> about our experiences	When, where, and how is queerness regulated, disregarded, challenged? Moments of queer confusion, hesitation ...
<b>Experiences with Social Identities</b> Standpoint theory, intersectionality, microaggressions	Navigating contexts as queer; living with queer identities, tendencies, desires, affects
<b>Common   Unique Experiences</b> Epiphanies, aesthetic moments, patterns; insightful outliers, methodological dilemmas	Queer epiphanies; everyday queer moments; patterns of experience tied to sex, gender, sexuality, pleasure, desire  Research practice: dilemmas studying queer persons, populations, experiences
<b>Problematic Research   Representations</b>	Understudied queer topics; anti-queer values, practices, arguments, representations
<b>Demonstrate Insider Knowledge</b> Natural settings, difficult-to-access situations	Access to queer “natural settings,” difficult-to-access queer experiences and situations
<b>Illustrate Sense-making Processes</b>	Exploring queer identities and desires; living queerly and/or with queer affects

# Examples

## Safety, Sacrifice, and Survival Living in/through anti-queer contexts

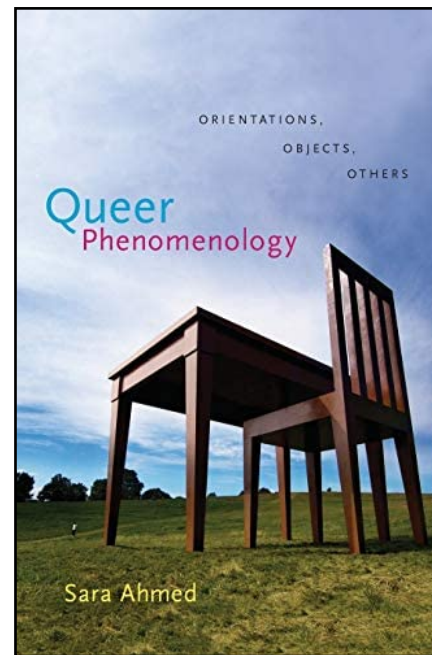
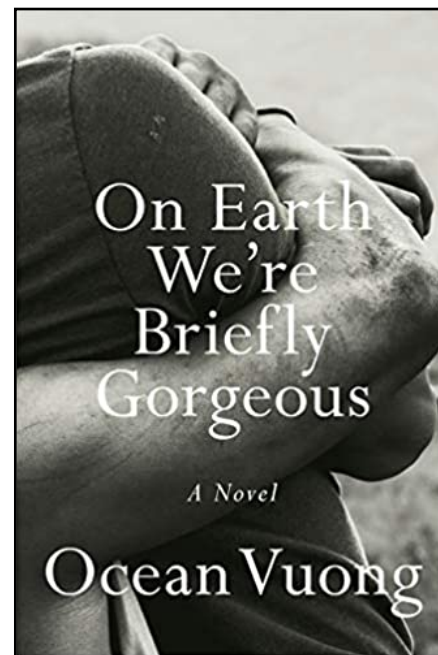
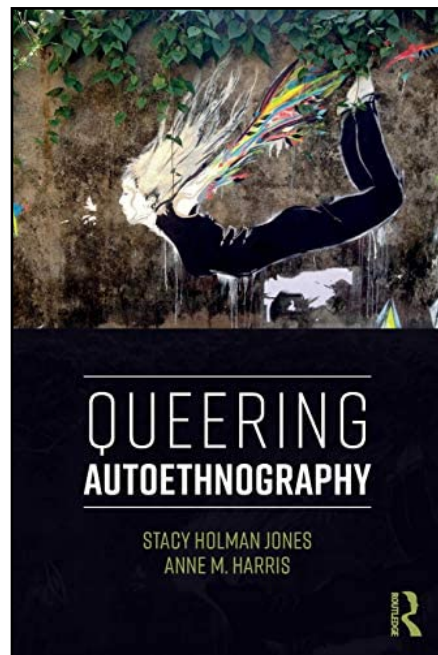


## Size, Sexuality, and Stuffing Queering food, weight (gain), and desire



# Queer | Autoethnography

# Examples



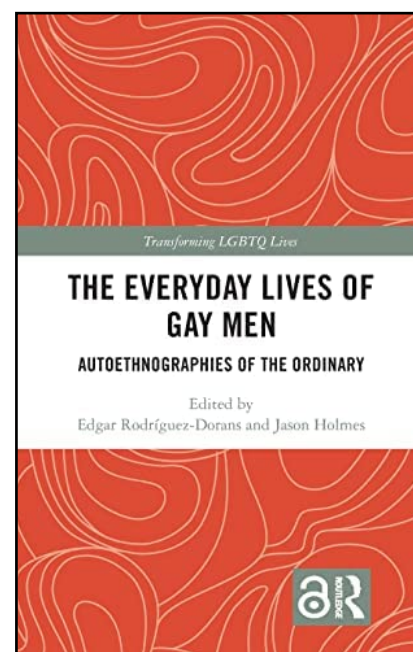
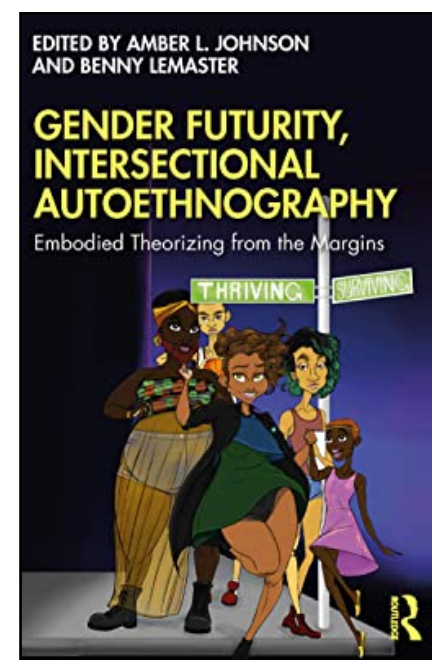
**My Best Informant's Dress: The Erotic Equation in Fieldwork**, Esther Newton, *Cultural Anthropology* (1993)

**Cruising in the Research Field: Queer, Feminist, and Cyber Autoethnography**, Tankut Atuk, *International Review of Qualitative Research* (2020)

**The Maroon Boxer Briefs: Exploring Reflexivity in Interview Research**, Jaime Garcia-Iglesias, *Qualitative Research* (2021)

**Desire in Evidence**, Stacy Wolf, *Text and Performance Quarterly* (1997)

**Dirty**, Ragan Fox, *Text and Performance Quarterly* (2019)



**The Evidence of Felt Intuition: Minority Experience, Everyday Life, and Critical Speculative Knowledge**, Phillip Brian Harper, *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* (2000)

**Portrait at an Exhibition: An Unlikely Affair with Grief**, David Kottenstette, *Journal of Autoethnography* (2020)

**Queering Queer Conversations**, David Purnell, Christina Ivey, and Andy Sturt, *Journal of Autoethnography* (2021)

**On [Be]coming in Boystown**, Billy Huff, *Journal of Autoethnography* (2022)

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# Comments

&

# Questions

# Queer Autoethnography

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