

Chapter 15

Integrating

Autoethnography

Into Qualitative

Dissertation Research

Brian Hibbs

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-0894-1555>

Dalton State College, USA

ABSTRACT

Abstract: The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the theory and practice of utilizing autoethnography across multiple disciplinary fields. The chapter begins with an exploration of the autoethnographic approach and the underlying principles supporting the approach. The chapter then examines a wide array of forms that autoethnographies may take along with recommendations for conducting such research. Next, the chapter considers various criteria which may conceivably be used to establish the quality and merits of autoethnographic studies along with a review of several investigations in various disciplinary areas which have employed autoethnographic methods. Finally, the chapter ends with a call to motivate and inspire readers to consider incorporate autoethnography into their research efforts.

INTRODUCTION

Researchers conducting investigations over the last several decades are intimately familiar with the quantitative versus qualitative debate that still rages strong to this day in many disciplinary fields. For example, with respect to the field of applied linguistics, Mirhosseini (2017) comments on the fact that a predominance of quan-

DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3693-3069-2.ch015

titative research still exists and that qualitative research in this area is still not as widely accepted, thus resulting in significantly fewer studies that employ qualitative methods. Consequently, due to the predominance of statistical investigations in academic publications, “qualitative research continues to remain a relatively small stream rather than a major trend of inquiry in the area of language education” (p. 1).

Despite this trend, however, qualitative investigations are progressively entering the mainstream of research in academia and are becoming more prevalent in prestigious journals in the field, utilizing a wide variety of methods and approaches involved in both data collection and analysis procedures. One specific qualitative genre that has been increasingly exploited but is still relatively unknown is autoethnography. Therefore, the intention of this chapter is to offer readers a survey of what autoethnography is and how to conduct an autoethnographic study in their respective contexts.

AUTOETHNOGRAPHY AS QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHOD

Naidoo (2012) defines ethnography as “a qualitative methodology that lends itself to the study of the beliefs, social interactions, and behaviours of small societies, involving participation and observation over a period of time, and the interpretation of the data collected” (p. 1). Likewise, Creswell (2009) explains that ethnography is “a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher studies an intact cultural group in a natural setting over an extended period of time” (p. 13). Originating from the disciplinary field of anthropology, ethnographic studies are commonly designed such that the researcher spends considerable time in a specific cultural community in order to better understand the community’s stance (an “emic” or insider’s perspective) towards a given phenomenon, in contrast to conventional empirical research, which generally establishes an “etic” or outsider’s view of the world. Ethnographic studies typically highlight the learning one has gained from spending significant time amongst members of a given cultural community in order to better understand the structure, organization, behaviors, values, etc. of this group.

Building on this definition, Hughes et al. (2012) visualize autoethnography as “a form of critical self-study 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 or as others who differ from the self” (p. 209). This description underscores the idea that, unlike ethnography, which tends to focus on the study of a particular cultural group which is external to the researcher, autoethnography focuses on a consideration of internal self-introspection as a starting point to recognize the weight of one’s personal history in the investigative process. Mirhosseini (2018) posits that the essential characteristic of autoethnographic re-

24 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/integrating-autoethnography-into-qualitative-dissertation-research/364415

Related Content

Convergence at What Cost?: A Quasi Experiment of Professional Identity under the Bologna Process

Daniel A. Glaser-Segura, Suzanne D. Mudge, Constantin Bratianu and Ivona Orzea (2014). *Handbook of Research on Trends in European Higher Education Convergence* (pp. 183-201).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/convergence-at-what-cost/110092

Using Experiential Learning to Improve Student Attitude and Learning Quality in Software Engineering Education

Ferdinand Ndifor Che, Kenneth David Strang and Narasimha Rao Vajjhala (2021). *International Journal of Innovative Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* (pp. 1-22).

www.irma-international.org/article/using-experiential-learning-to-improve-student-attitude-and-learning-quality-in-software-engineering-education/273133

Opportunities and Challenges of Cybersecurity for Undergraduate Information Systems Programs

Shouhong Wang and Hai Wang (2022). *Research Anthology on Advancements in Cybersecurity Education* (pp. 361-382).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/opportunities-and-challenges-of-cybersecurity-for-undergraduate-information-systems-programs/292119

LGBT College Student Career Development: Goals and Recommendations for Faculty Members

Elizabeth L. Campbell and Michael A. Burrows (2020). *International Journal of Innovative Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* (pp. 29-40).

www.irma-international.org/article/lgbt-college-student-career-development/260947

Pre-College Instruction: Protecting Academic Integrity and Meeting Students' Needs

Jacob R. Russell and Dani V. McMay (2020). *Higher Education Accessibility Behind and Beyond Prison Walls* (pp. 153-182).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/pre-college-instruction/257583