A woman with long dark hair, wearing a black dress, stands in a doorway. She is looking directly at the camera. The background is a plain, light-colored wall. The text 'AUTOETHNOGRAPHY' is overlaid in large, bold, yellow letters across the middle of the image.

AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

A methodology on the edge

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AIM: TO EXPLORE AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

- briefly outline research project
 - describe autoethnography
 - place on research continuum
 - acknowledge challenges
 - justify as methodology
-

OUTLINE

Working title: “The experience of childhood emotional neglect”

Context:

- long term effects of childhood physical neglect/abuse and childhood sexual abuse well-documented (Mullen, et al, 1996; Howe, 2005),
 - childhood *emotional* neglect and abuse less visible (Mullen, et al, 1996; Wright, et al, 2009) and less clearly defined (Music, 2009).
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Research aim:

- bridge the gap between subjective, autobiographical account, ('misery lit;' Muncey, 2010), and objective, third person account
- add participants' voices to a rigorous study (Faulkner, 2012)

Research design:

- bracketing interviews, 8 unstructured individual interviews, focus group(s); thematic analysis

AUTOETHNOGRAPHY – WHAT IS IT?

- combination of autobiography (me, telling my own story) and ethnography (telling the story of a group of people or a culture) (Reed-Danahay, 1997)
 - origins in anthropology and ethnography
 - can an outsider ever gain a true, authentic picture of a group that is 'other'?
-

PLACING AUTOETHNOGRAPHY ON THE CONTINUUM

Quantitative research

Qualitative research



- modernist
- positivist
- objective
- “one truth”
- RCT

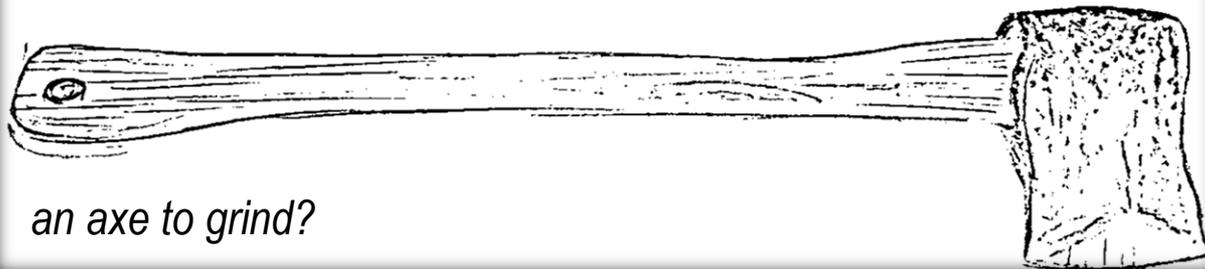
- post-modern,
- constructivist,
- subjective
- “multiple truths”
- ‘personal experience’
methods



Characteristics

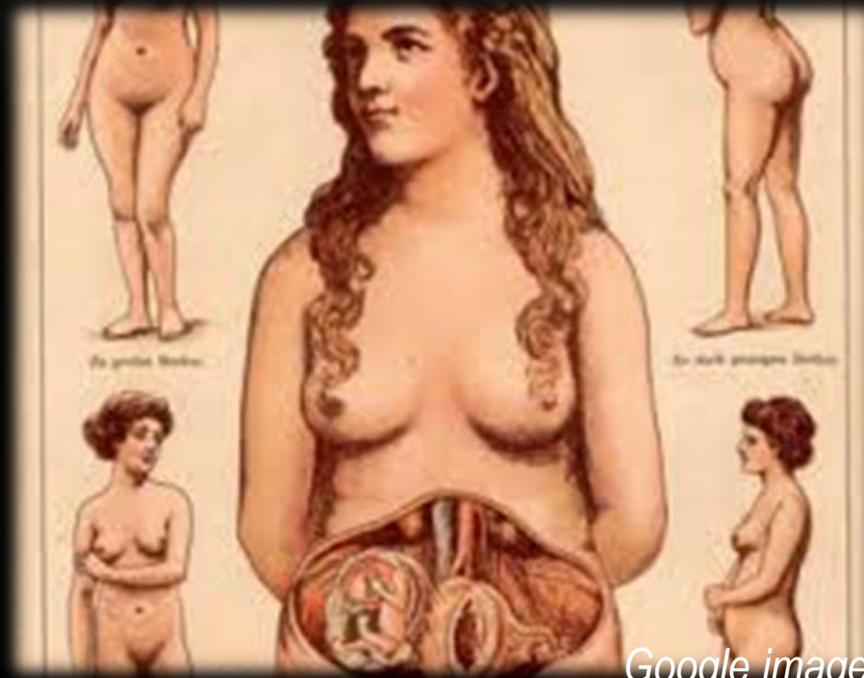
- boundary-crossing – the researcher as researched, both ‘insider and outsider’ (Reed-Danahay, 1997)
- researcher’s willingness to embrace subjectivity, rather than deny it (Ellis, 2004) and the ‘judicious use of our vulnerable selves’ (Etherington, 2004)
- high level of researcher reflexivity (Grant, Short & Turner, 2013)
- blurring boundaries between research and creative writing (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005)

- 'the self within a social context' (Reed-Danahay, 1997)
- challenge prevailing discourse; give voice to marginalized discourses (Harper & Thompson, 2012; Reed-Danahay, 1997)
- 'feminist' methodology (Reed-Danahay, 1997)
- aims to provoke action (McLeod, 2011)



- evokes the 'lived experience' (Etherington, 2004)

MY VULNERABLE SELF



Google images

'...it is work we must do in anguish' (Josselson, 1996)



CHALLENGES

- 'memories are tricksters and shape-shifters' (Sparkes, 2013)
- danger of imposing my views on my audience (Wall, 2008)
- balancing scientific rigour with purpose of autoethnography (Wall, 2008)
- ethical tensions around self-care and care of participants (Kottler, 2015; Etherington, 2009; Bond, 2004)

REFLEXIVITY



*'The outcome of reflexive research is usually uncomfortable for the reader,'
(McLeod, 2011)*

JUSTIFICATION

- humanist vision of the (social) world (McLeod, 2011)
- person-centred approach to counselling (Rogers, 1957; Price, 1999)
- 'privileges the individual' (Muncey, 2010)
- challenging prevailing discourse
- 'enrich and empower participants' (Price, 1999)
- social justice/social action (McLeod, 2011)

SUMMARY

Autoethnography is...

- post-modern, feminist qualitative research method
 - elements of autobiography and ethnography
 - blurs boundaries between research and creative writing
 - high level of reflexivity
 - challenges prevailing discourse
 - uncomfortable to conduct, uncomfortable to read
 - a good fit for the research project
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