

exciting, experiential and based around a learning paradigm. A couple of years later I attended the launch of the CRAC publication *What do PhDs do?* (UK GRAD, 2004) and saw how well-researched labour market information could completely transform my understanding of the value of my qualifications and career choices. I realised that much of the thinking that I had done about my career was based on narrow horizons and misinformation. I was bitten by the bug and rapidly moved myself into a job where I could attempt to influence and improve the careers of others. Ultimately I was to go on to work at CRAC and then at iCeGS (one of Smith's 'eggs').

When my personal careers work epiphany took place I felt that the approaches to careers work that I was discovering through CRAC were new and innovative. As I read more about the history of careers work (for example in Watts, Law, Killeen, Kidd, & Hawthorn, 1996 and Peck, 2004) and met people with long experience in careers, I began to realise that I was often rediscovering the past and that alongside many others I was guilty of not remembering or knowing enough about it. However, Smith's book demonstrates just how much we have failed to remember about the history of careers work and CRAC's pivotal role in making this history.

Some sort of bridge reminds us of the historical context within which careers work has developed, but it also celebrates the power of entrepreneurial agency to influence that context and to transform the social and political landscape.

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Creating autoethnographies, by T. Muncey, 2010, London, Sage, 152 pp., £22.99, ISBN 978-1847874733

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This book is concerned with autoethnography as an autobiographical genre of research in which the subjectivity of the researcher is explicitly taken as the object of enquiry. Autoethnography is defined as 'an artistically constructed piece of prose, poetry, music or piece of art work that attempts to portray an individual experience in a way that evokes the imagination of the reader, viewer or listener' (p. 2). The term refers both to the process and the product of writing that analyses personal experience in order to understand social and cultural issues.

Autoethnography recognises that any piece of research is deeply intertwined with the subjectivity of the researcher. Processes of research often point up these

connections and are enhanced by their explicit inclusion – indeed, Muncey tells us that integrity may require us as researchers to own in a transparent way our subjective interests in researching particular issues. Autoethnography emerges from a realisation that conventional genres and approaches to research and writing do not offer models that can express the ‘intangible and complex feelings and experiences’ (p. 2) that accompany interpretive processes in which we are deeply implicated as subjects as well as researchers.

However, autoethnography, like all research genres, is a contested term with diverse connotations. Muncey offers clarity of understanding of the term, its evolution as a facet of anthropological research, and some of the key influences in postmodernist thought that have helped to widen its application in psychological and sociological disciplines. On this basis, Muncey locates her own approach clearly and succinctly. Her take on autoethnography is more akin to that of Carolyn Ellis (1999; Davis and Ellis, 2008; Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011), whose work is foundational to evocative autoethnography, a genre in which the emotional and embodied experiences of the researcher are drawn upon to allow for clearer understanding of particular life experience to emerge. Far from being either self-indulgence or simplistic storytelling, this genre works to enhance layered and nuanced reflexive capacities, increasing self-understanding and, by extension, offering resources for understanding of others. Muncey quotes Ellis:

Well, I start with my personal life. I pay attention to my physical feelings, thoughts and emotions. I use what I call systematic sociological introspection and emotional recall to try to understand an experience I’ve lived through. Then I write my experience as a story. By exploring a particular life, I hope to understand a way of life. (Ellis, 1999, p. 671)

Nonetheless, this approach also comes with a warning. Using self-stories as a research genre can exact a cost in that it requires high degrees of creative capacity, a desire and ability to reveal and work with one’s own vulnerability and a capacity to sit with open-endedness and ambiguity. Muncey emphasises the point that autoethnography is not a genre that fits all contexts and issues and its use calls for particular contextual sensitivity to determine its congruence with a research question.

Throughout the book Muncey draws on practical examples of autoethnographies to illustrate and exemplify the genre. The references at the end of each chapter are well chosen and offer the beginning autoethnographer many options for further targeted reading. The first half of the book is devoted to defining and substantiating the term autoethnography and its status as a genre of research. The second half concerns itself with the practicalities of composing and evaluating an autoethnographic account. The later chapters also offer an insight into phases and stages of the creative process and the criteria by which research texts of this kind might be judged.

Even these practicalities, however, are layered with deeper reflections on more philosophical reflections on memory, aesthetics and the unconscious. Where the early sections of the book offer glimpses of autoethnographies folded into scholarly reflections and distinction, the final two chapters offer both a complete autoethnographic account, drawn from another researcher, and a reflection on the creative process which acknowledges how synchronicity and vulnerability often inform the genre in practice. Indeed, one of the synchronicities that accompanied the writing of

this review was that I wrote it during a time of some confusion and doubt about my own autoethnographic work for my doctoral thesis. I therefore read the book with two purposes in mind – the review and the research. Although this slowed down the reviewing process considerably, it had the wonderful effect both of clarifying many issues for my dissertation and of helping me to live more easily with the vulnerabilities and doubts that inevitably accompany the process of engaging in a scholarly way with my emotional and embodied experience. A slow review was a small process to pay for the clarity that ensued.

The genre of autoethnography is rich and exciting and is highly relevant, as Peter McIlveen (2007, 2008) has shown in Australia, to practitioners in the field of guidance and counselling. Like other approaches to Narrative Inquiry, this genre does not lend itself to methodological formula. In this, of course, it mirrors the complexity of subjectivity to which we are all prey in both our own lives and in our work with clients. It is of vital importance in fields of professional practice that require high degrees of reflexivity and interpersonal skill that we discover and develop modes of research that are congruent with the philosophical beliefs that underpin our discipline. This book has made a distinctly helpful contribution to that process.

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