

Example of article review on critique

[Profession](#), [Student](#)



Study Program

Review of Keenan, J. & Evans, A. 2014. “ I am a starbucks worker my life no longer belongs to me’: the performance of estrangement as a learning tool,’ Teaching in Higher Education, vol. 19, no. 2, pp. 101-112.

This paper examines the use of autoethnography as a means of approaching the experience of estrangement, thereby making the researcher’s personal experience a topic of investigation. Autoethnographic practices that emphasize the location of the researcher as an important response to post-structuralist epistemologies in which older forms of certainty in the validity traditional scientific inquiry have been edged out by greater knowledge that experience is an important contributor to Knowledge.

Social scientists have of late began to see themselves as a phenomenon and are now writing evocative personal stories especially centered on their academic and personal lives. Their main objective is to understand themselves or some aspect of their lives in a cultural context. The readers also play an active role when invited to the writer’s world and are evoked into feeling level about the events the author describes and are stimulated to use whatever they learn to reflect and understand their own lives. The researchers offer the discussion of estrangement autoethnography that is a method of learning through doing. The practice requires activities that separate the student from their surroundings. They provide an explanation on how this method is linked to another experience oriented learning tools, the disadvantages of the technique and a case study of it being used in practice, in a consumer culture model (Keenan & Evans, 2014).

In this paper, the writer explores the use of estrangement autoethnography

as a way of encouraging student autonomy and enhancing the learning process. The authors include a case study that needs estrangement in consumer spaces so as to challenge the perspective of students on normal environment. During the research students welcomed the activity and considered it as one which influenced their perspective on consumer culture and gave them knowledge through experience on which to base their theory. By exploring such activities as part of teaching practice and learning in cultural studies, the researchers give evidence the effectiveness of autoethnography in improving learning amongst university students and give a model of conducting a performance of estrangement.

Autoethnography can be said to be a form of self-reflection and writing which explores the personal experiences of the researcher and serves to connect this autobiographical story to the wider social, political, and cultural understanding and meanings (Denzin, 2000). Autoethnography concentrates on the writer's subjective experience instead of the interactions with other people's beliefs and practices. It is a form of self-reflective writing that is mainly used in performance studies, as a method of English and living educational research. Autoethnography is a method or form of research which involves self-observation and self-reflection in the context of writing and ethnographic field work (Keenan & Evans, 2014). Further, it is a research story, writing and method that connect personal and autobiographical to the social, cultural and political scene (Carolyn, 2004).

Higher education also features prominently as the contextual background for autoethnography in this study because it is convenient to research one's own organization or institution. Contributions like this one explore the auto-

ethnographer as a researcher, an employee, a scholarly administrator or a teacher practicing in higher education. There are several contributions that the researcher makes that gives insight to the student auto-ethnographer such as the power that exists in the relationship between the student and supervisor. Autoethnography has been largely used by teachers as a research method in examining their own practice. A good example is the use of autoethnography to allow students from minority groups reflect on oppression structures. The use of autoethnography in this way shifts the teacher-student relationship dynamics from ‘if you show me, I understand’ to ‘I show myself’. Autoethnography allows students to reflect on their place in a social context using the experiential learning with the potential for change in the ways in which students understand their relation to the environment (Keenan & Evans, 2014).

Thirty students were registered to take the course, and they could choose between the autoethnographic essay and a standard academic essay.

Twelve of the 30 students aged between 20 and 28 opted for the autoethnographic task. There were an equal number of male and female students; four students were from East Asia and Eastern Europe while the rest were born in the UK. They were involved in additional experiential tasks involving activities like standing toe-to-toe with fellow students. They then examined their feelings in relation to normal social experiences. The purpose of this study was to produce a style of learning in which the experiences of a student became the springboard for engaging with taught theories (Keenan & Evans, 2014). It made the learning experiences realer and believable.

The researcher uses autoethnography to make himself the first

communicator and to depict how people are trying to overcome their problems and the meaning of their problems. According to the researchers, autoethnography is an ethical practice and helps to provide a caregiving function. In essence, autoethnography can be said to be a story that replays an experience through which people find meaning and that meaning helps them to cope with that experience (Denzin, 2000). In real life, when someone loses a loved one, they go about wondering how life will be without that person. In such scenarios especially in religious homes, people will go about asking the question ‘ why God?’ Assuming that getting an answer will enable them to go about living. People who try to offer an explanation to make the bereaved feel better come up with reasons such as ‘ it was their time to go’. With such realizations, a person can make sense of and copes with the tragic experience which happened. In this way, autoethnography is performed. This research examines the use of ethnography as a teaching method in higher education. It also examines teachers in higher learning institutions. It focuses on critical race theory and whiteness as a lens of reflecting on the researcher’s experiences while working with students of different backgrounds. The researchers use autoethnographic pedagogy to alter their ways of teaching and interacting with college students. By applying this method, they translated four notions of autoethnographic qualitative research methodology and adapted them to become their pedagogical practices. This research involved a case study in which students were engaged in critical reflection of their normal daily environment using estrangement and autoethnography. The researchers discuss relationship between their approach and other more traditional tools for learning. They

then offer a practical example of how they used estrangement and autoethnography in their teaching. They then present the results of the case study followed by a discussion on how this learning model can be further developed in other education settings.

They coined these notions from past conceptions about autoethnography and suited them into pedagogical tools to use with students towards recognition of their environment in the context of experience. They gained information through reflection, which was helpful as they began to transit from their regular coursework and activities of supervision that they had done weekly in the past to discussing their experiences about learning from their experiences. They became interpreters and authors of their ways of life and their thoughts about students were the foundations. As teachers, they felt that they should care deeply for the students, but such conversations also showed that they felt the student's lives at home and in school were not adequate, and they needed to fill the missing gaps. Their identities as privileged teachers did not compel them to explore the role they played in the school as an institution that was similar to the roles they played in the society as a whole. Their ritualistic habit of narrating their lives in comparison to that of other students was disrupted at school or during the experiences of university coursework, and they were able to reflect from a different angle making them report positively (Keenan & Evans, 2014).

The researchers used methods from within ethnography including estrangement. The use of estrangement in traditional ethnographies has a long history. By engaging in the native's culture, the researcher puts himself in the objective position of being able to see things without cultural baggage

for the first time of the natives, thereby producing what has been called the ‘god trick’ of seeing everything from no specific location (Carolyn, 2004). Most recently, estrangement techniques have aligned themselves with social constructionism and interpretive methods by making the normal appear strange. Estrangement activities provide a crucial platform to recognize how reality is organized which is similar to the idea of alienation or ‘culture shock’ (Carolyn, 2004). Estrangement provides a person with a sense of being a quasi-outsider, meaning the experience of the ethnographer is located in systems of race, culture, sexuality, culture, class and so on, therefore, allowing for the critical link to autoethnography (Carolyn, 2004). So as to broach the issue of everyday practice, the researchers destroyed the fourth wall between them and the students and changed position as the pedagogue and shifted into admission of their personal thought about teaching students. This is where they became participants in the study, broke the silence and invited students to do the same. Autobiographical sharing together with autoethnography provided room for them to discover their common experiences as students while learning as they had never done before. Autoethnography was, therefore, crucial and important in exposing positions and attitudes that the researchers had before they disrupted their narrations about the everyday lives and habits of students. To expect comprehension and reflection on the part of the students about diversity without modeling their own development was to remain in the role of the old traditional pedagogue (Denzin, 2000). By sharing their personal stories, they were able to break the wall of their instructive and put themselves in the chaotic arena of exploring race together with the students.

The researchers used themselves to understand their participants. They use the shared similarities, skin color, similar background experiences and their placement in the school community of color process and provoke discussions about race. By using autoethnography pedagogy to model self-study and to teach, they brought their practice to a new area reflected in the explanation of how transformative the value of self-study and existential orientation can be. The researchers draw on the practice of autoethnography as a means of approaching the experience of estrangement, thereby making the experience of the researcher a topic of investigation on its own (Carolyn, 2004). Autoethnography has gained greater popularity in the academic community as part of crisis representation and increasing concern from the ways of knowledge representation that highlights the location of the researcher in the production of knowledge. Therefore, ethnographic practices that emphasize the location of the researcher is a crucial approach in response to post-structuralism epistemologies in which older forms of certainty on the validity of scientific research have been replaced by more awareness on the importance of experience in contributing to knowledge (Keenan & Evans, 2014).

The main critique of qualitative research and autoethnography in general emanates from the traditional social science methods which emphasize on the objectivity of social research. In this critique we consider researchers as journalists or soft scientists and their studies, including autoethnography is normally considered unscientific, entirely personal, exploratory or full of bias (Denzin, 2000). It is argued that most qualitative researchers regard

materials produced by soft interpretive methods are neither reliable nor objective. The criticism of autobiographical methods in anthropology is due to their validity on claims that they are unrepresentative and lack objectivity. Emotional and evocative genres of autoethnography have also received criticism from most analytic proponents because they lack ethnographic relevance because they are too personal. This research can, therefore, be criticized for being biased, self-absorbed, navel-gazing or even emotionally incontinent.

Conclusion

Autoethnography is rooted in the social context of the author and uses lived experience as the primary data. Autoethnography usually focuses on the phenomenological and interactional dimensions of the researchers' experiences and interactional dimensions of such experiences because it allows the author to emphasize the mutability and fluidity of meanings in their context-dependency.

This study is limited by the fact that the researchers' positions as teachers studying students in the same environment put them at a disadvantage because of their familiarity with students since most of them shared similar backgrounds. This common ground made it possible to open up discussions and assisted them in understanding themselves. This research study is just the beginning of a few conversations. More should be done, not only in higher education, but also with those people who are in the study. There are several limitations in this study. The scope of the research was narrow, but it enabled the intimacy required for in-depth dialogue (Keenan & Evans, 2014). The researcher could not change the demography of students of color and

cultural difference or the needed relationships and their intersection in learning institutions. Another limitation is that learning in relation to cultural studies lacked the critical move towards locating such reflections within larger social structures. Some responses leaned towards a sense of personal inequality instead of the wider cultural inequality. We can also question whether such activities have equal benefits to students.

The advantage of this study is that it can give us an insight into problems that we often overlook in culture such as identity, race and life in academia. In addition to enabling the researchers to make sense of their experiences, this study engages readers to consider doing things differently. This study also enabled the researchers to achieve personal understanding of themselves in relation to people of different races (Denzin, 2000).

Reference List

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