



BATTLES OF WOUNDED ME: AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC CANTATA

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ABSTRACT

Narrative inquiry involves the “why” as opposed to the quantitative research question “how many”. Within that narrative (qualitative) framework, critical autoethnography takes the research puzzle two steps further by asking “why me”, and then expanding the researcher’s question to “why us”. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) take a three dimensional approach to narrative lives, *Inward/Outward, Backward/Forward, and Situated within a place*. Meaningful autoethnography begins with a collection of the researcher’s life experience(s). These life experiences are then woven into a story, captivating an audience with its *Inward/Backward* focus. It is a methodological framework, itself being framed within the narrative halls of qualitative research. Critical autoethnography grabs that captivating story from the individual focus of its initial telling and, through intense examination, places it within the context of a greater knowing that now moves *Outward/Forward*. Performative autoethnography embodies this storied knowledge of self and enacts the knowledge of self in relation to other, thereby *situating* this Artist/Researcher/Teacher/Scholar... firmly in the present, while critically analyzing the past in order to improve the future. Performative autoethnography processed through arts based research methods is the darkroom in which I develop these snapshots of my life. Trauma theory is the frame in which they hang, and both the written and performed accounts serve as my artistic showcase, through which I hope to encourage a more embodied critique and discussion. I want readers and audience members to personify their critique through their own experiences, both triumphant and failed (Boal, 1992). Like Boal, I write with no goal or expectation of catharsis. This is not intended to provide a fairy tale ending to any issues presented, but rather this is an open processing of personal traumatic life events through a layering of arts based ways of knowing. The use of creative writing, monologues, song, movement, and drawing as inquiry, process, and product is my way of decoding the narratives of *Wounded Me*. [The author can be reached at aupshaw1@crimson.ua.edu]