An Evocative Autoethnography: A mental health professional’s development.

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the University of Brighton for the Professional Doctorate of Nursing

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I declare that the research contained in this thesis, unless otherwise formally indicated within the text, is the original work of the author. The thesis has not been previously submitted to this or any other university for a degree, and does not incorporate any material already submitted for a degree.

Signed

Dated
Acknowledgements:

The writing of this thesis has been one of the most significant academic challenges I have had to face. Without the continuous support, guidance and patience of the following people this Doctorate would not have been completed:

- Dr Alec Grant who agreed to supervise me throughout the work despite his other academic and professional commitments.
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- And to the many who have contributed knowingly and unknowingly to this work, I thank you.

This dissertation is dedicated to Jonathan Redmond and Ruth Polly, my dear old Mum, Ivy Jane Short (Nee Flowers), my dear old pot and pan, Patrick Oliver Wakefield Short and my very dear old mate Wyngate.
Sat with three friends talking about books we have read.

**Dave** talks about a book he has read

**Wendy** says ‘I read that book. I don’t remember the passages you are talking about’.

**Dave** says ‘Oh Ok maybe it was that other book’. He then talks about another book.

**Wendy** says ‘I have read that one as well. I think you have made a mistake. I don’t remember that either’.

**Dave** then says ‘Well maybe what I thought happened in the book has happened to me?’
Abstract

This work grew out of a need to try to understand my often experienced sense of being misunderstood, misrepresented and marginalised. A prerequisite to helping others in mental health nursing is arguably some requirement to understand one’s self. But who is the self? In this thesis I use an autoethnographic approach to examine how the self, multiple selves and identity formation is socially constructed. Social constructionism contends that categories of knowledge and reality are actively created by social relationships and interactions. As an autobiographical genre of writing, this evocative autoethnography has been written in the first person displaying my multiple layers, connecting my selves to the cultures I inhabit. As a reflexive methodology it offers the researcher a means of critically exploring the social forces and discursive practices that have shaped his own cultures. In addition I discuss the contrast between traditional guidelines and protocol driven ethics with more progressive relational ethics. Central to relational ethics is the question ‘What should I do now?’ rather than the statement ‘This is what you should do now.’ I continue by arguing that we use stories as ‘equipment for living’, as tools to understand, negotiate and make sense of the many different situations we encounter. In recent years, as part of the ‘narrative turn’ in the social sciences, a growing number of scholars have suggested that we live in a world shaped by these stories. I discuss connections between the cultures people occupy and how an individual’s reflexivity can keep them stuck or liberated and emancipated with regard to their personal narratives. Whilst the text is not intentionally instructional, storytelling can be instructive. By showing my vulnerabilities the work is a prism for the reader to reflect on their narratives and the cultures they inhabit.
Prologue-so what’s coming up?

This thesis has many historical phases. Whilst I am able to tell you when I started writing it, it is impossible to tell you when and where all of the ideas may have come from. As I write this introduction I try and imagine what you might look like. Where you might be as you read it. I am curious about what made you pick this thesis up. Did you start reading here? In the pages that follow you will have an opportunity to get to know me in some of my many different ways. The text has not been written to persuade you to think in particular way or to necessarily educate you; although I hope that you may learn new information; information which I have to accept, I might never know about, unless of course you tell me. I am interested in your reactions to the thesis. In this way we have a chance to co-construct new ideas.

You may notice many different voices; these voices have emerged from a wide range of different types of experiences. It is not always clear whose voice you will be hearing. You may of course recognise your own voice echoing through the pages.
Like mercury the text moves around; sometimes hard to ‘catch’, refusing to keep still. Imagine blowing a small amount of air into a balloon, not inflating it completely. Then imagine squashing this balloon in the palm of your hands, not knowing where the balloon may ‘pop out’ in between your fingers. The evolving writing of the text has been like this. Never quite knowing what will ‘pop out’ and when.

It is a messy text and whilst it conforms to linear chapters with chapter headings and page numbers the contents of each chapter have not developed in this linear
Prologue-so what’s coming up?

fashion. Linear texts usually only appear this way at their conclusion (If we choose to write them this way.)

Writing the thesis began in the winter of 2005. I was interested at that time in the different ways I felt misunderstood, misrepresented and marginalised. The text has developed into an investigation of the self and associated identity formation. Who chooses our identities and what contributes to these identities. I have become fascinated with stories and narratives. In particular the stories we develop about ourselves and stories we may hear about ourselves from others. Is there a static ‘I’ and ‘me’?

The text has been shaped by many conversations with professional colleagues, professional doctorate student colleagues, family members and friends. I have taken many opportunities to show drafts to people and have valued their feedback. I have also been invited many times to present my work to students of qualitative inquiry modules at local Universities-hence many different voices.

Influenced by the work of Richardson (1994), Bateson (2001), Freshwater & Rolfe (2004) and Speedy (2008) my work will be represented using the following formats:
Prologue-so what’s coming up?

Structure:

The bulk of the text is written in Candara font size 11, colour black, text 1. The presentation is regularly accompanied by passages of *reflexivity* written in between

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**Asterix**

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using Candara font size 11, *colour dark blue, text 2*. The reader will notice some repetitions. I have left some in deliberately to demonstrate how I believe our minds work; repeating ideas and repetitiveness. A further typographic strategy is the use of this font, *Bookman Old Style, size 11*, using *blue accent colour*. This represents what I shall call:

********************

**Meta reflexivity**

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In addition I have punctuated the text with pictures.

Some pictures compliment the written text; some convey my thoughts and feelings and some were randomly chosen depending on what my mood was like at the time of writing. I have also included photos of people that have influenced my thesis. In order to manoeuvre through the understandable, yet complicated, minefield of copyright laws, I approached all the people who I wanted to be represented in the thesis via their personal or academic departments email addresses or their publishers.

Dear...

Please forgive this unsolicited email and perhaps an unusual request. I have recently defended my Doctoral Thesis at the University of Brighton; ‘An Evocative Autoethnography: A mental health professional’s development’. I have included photos in the main text of people who have had a significant impact and influence on my work; my thesis contains a photo of you. I have been reading your work over the last few years and you have unknowingly helped me along on this Autoethnographic journey. Thank you. Whilst I have passed the viva and been awarded my Doctorate, the examiners were concerned about the copyright of the photos. I wondered if a] it is ok to use the one from the University website or b] if you have a photo of yourself that you would be willing to share which is not on the WWW and the accompanying copyright laws. I will understand if this request is unacceptable and inappropriate to you. It would however be unfortunate if I had to remove the photos. With best wishes. Nigel P Short

Some have either shared personal photos with me or given me permission to use photos from their websites and or their academic department’s websites; some
Prologue-so what’s coming up?

who I wrote to asked me not to include their photos and some regrettably did not reply. I have not used any photos without permission. I wanted you to be able see who contributed; who I connected with. The remaining photos are ones that I have taken.

Chapter one, pages 15-53, is the introduction to the thesis. I provide you with the background to the work and some early ideas surrounding my original research questions. This was an unsettling period. I was exposing my vulnerabilities to myself and to others. Many of my personal beliefs were agitated, aroused and questioned.

Chapter two, pages 54-83, takes a descriptive look at the ‘moments’ of qualitative research, as discussed by Denzin & Lincoln (1994). I unpack these ‘moments’ and consider the context ascribed to the history of these transformations. I have included some of Nigel’s moments in an attempt to illustrate ‘moments’ I have been experiencing.

Chapter three, pages 84-105, introduces the philosophical texts that have influenced this thesis. I have considered ontology and epistemology and will show
Prologue—so what’s coming up?

how the chosen philosophical principles influenced my choice of methodology; ‘autoethnography’.

Chapter four, pages 106-130, shares the theoretical perspective. I discuss my understandings of post modernism and use this approach to introduce the ethical challenges of this work and in particular draw your attention to ‘relational ethics’. I discuss the difficulty of traditional modernist procedural retrospective ethics and discuss and contrast the advantages of relational ethics. I visit the question of ethics as a practitioner. This ethical perspective anchors me within clinical and organisational spaces and not in the realms of abstraction. I take seriously however the responsibility that is unavoidable with inter-relational performances.

Chapter five, pages 131-157, addresses the methodology and methods I have used to think about what I am doing in this work. Autoethnography attracted me. It ‘feels’ different, unusual and is considered by some to be marginalised within the qualitative inquiry approaches.

Chapter six, pages 158-179, considers the criticisms aimed at the autoethnographic approach. In particularly I have drawn on some of the main protagonists; Delamont, Atkinson and Anderson. I have balanced their views by introducing
Prologue-so what’s coming up?

supporters of not only autoethnography but what we might call progressive post modern qualitative approaches.

Chapter seven, pages 180-223, explores stories, storytelling and narratives and how different realities are influenced by the different stories people tell each other and how their stories can keep people stuck liberated or emancipated. Moreover stories that are ostensibly ‘fictional’ nevertheless have an impact on the real sense of self and selves. Our actions and experiences are never isolated; our stories are intertwined with others stories.

Chapter eight, pages 224-246, provides my analysis. I consider the advantages of using the autoethnographic approach and I discuss the different ways I have collected the accompanying data. The chapter also considers validity, reliability and reflexivity. I discuss the redundancy of some qualitative researcher’s views who continue to claim that qualitative research is unscientific and invalid if it is not rigorous; what they mean by this is robustness, validity and reliability. I use alternative literature to provide other ways of determining the value of the autoethnographic approach. The chapter contains a discussion about reflexivity and how this is not necessarily a single phenomenon but assumes a variety of forms and these forms have affected this research process in all its stages.
Prologue-so what’s coming up?

Reflexivity, which has a full and uncompromising self reference, has not only been intrinsic to the thesis analysis but essential to all stages of this thesis production; reflexivity is not something that began once my ‘data’ had been collected.

*Chapter nine, pages 247-284,* draws the thesis to a writing close. It is an opportunity for me to consider the overall study. I try to address the texts strengths and limitations. I have detailed the learning that has taken place for me and how I have transformed during the writing of the thesis. In this chapter I discuss my insights, my evolving transformations and (any) new information. I am reluctant to suggest a conclusion, as this implies a closure, an ending. The thesis has provided me with insights rather than clear and precise conclusions. I have some moveable evidence of transformations that have helped to influence my perspectives and practice.

**Epilogue:** Pages 285-296, a story about a shipwreck on the southern shores of what we now call America. This story details the exploits of the mariners from the view of a Portuguese carpenter. This was my first attempt at writing a short story.

**Appendix one:** Pages 297-303, same story written in Portuguese.
Appendix two: Pages 304-310. During the writing of this work I lost a very dear friend of mine. He was diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumour in the winter of 2006. I watched him deteriorate over a year; his short term memory evaporated and it was an appallingly sad time watching this friend of mine change and lose his identities. I have included some communication from that year.

Appendix three: Pages 311-312, Wyn’s partner, Sue, invited me to say something at his memorial service. I have included my humble contribution. I lost such a great and dear friend. My friend was originally from Boston, Lincolnshire. I HAD to visit the place where he grew up after this death. I needed to see where he played, where he scraped his knees, to experience the wide open Lincolnshire skies he often told me about. Here is a picture of the farm where Wyn grew up.

References: Pages 313-336
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Chapter one

8th January 2000
The room is quiet. I can hear the muffled drone of a vacuum cleaner beyond the closed door. Big Ben is chiming 11.00am across the river. It’s wet and miserable. I think it’s Thursday. I am lying still. The single wooden bed feels solid beneath me. The cream coloured duvet lies crumpled under my unexercised body. My unwashed matted hair stinks. My right ear and clammy right cheek rest against a pillow, a pillow that’s thin, synthetic and uncomfortable. The stale starched cotton is cool. My nose breathing is shallow. Sticky discoloured saliva is leaking slowly from the corner of my mouth. My tracksuit bottoms, smelly Mambo tee shirt and black ankle socks are warm. I am shivering. I can smell the sweet sickly smell of a rotting banana. Its decomposing shape rests on the pillar-box red quarry tiled windowsill.
The unwanted White bread coronation chicken sandwich sits motionless on top of a cheap paper plate: another reminder that I am worthless. I am off my food. A white plastic cup is full of tea. I didn’t want it when it was warm. I don’t want it now it’s cold. I am tired. The sleeping tablets are working at last. I am slipping in and out of much needed drug induced sleep. Somebody I do not immediately recognise suddenly bursts into the room. He hasn’t knocked. He is now standing at the foot of the bed. His sudden appearance startles me. My heart rate increases.
‘Are you getting up?’ he shouts. ‘You have been in bed all day’.
‘I’m tired’ I whisper. I feel afraid again, He has power.
‘Don’t you want to get better? He says.
He finishes his verbal interaction aggressively by saying, through gritted teeth ‘Get up you cunt’
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He turns round and briskly walks out. The door slams shut! The room returns to a comforting peace. It envelops me. It protects. I am frightened. I have been in hospital for about a week. I know the room very well. The walls are sky blue, the ceiling magnolia. The door has a small window about head height: twelve inches by twelve inches. I remain imperial. A floral curtain covers the glass on the outside. Anybody can look in: unseen. I lie here for a little. I feel like a child. I feel almost like I did when my parents had told me off. What had I done wrong? I hadn’t been out of this room on my own during the day, since my admission. My heart is racing. It feels like it will burst through the walls of my chest. I am over breathing. In amongst my anxious thoughts I am reminded of a Crowded House lyric, it’s not clear exactly what it is, it’s something like:

\[
\text{You take away my air} \\
\text{My lungs collapses, then I die}
\]

I am worried about saying anything. I eventually get up. I make my way to the nurse’s office. The walk down the corridor is long and deliberate. I am walking in slow motion. Other people are staring at me. There are two nurses in the office. One of them is the man who swore at me. I ask him if he has a problem with me. I want to try and repair and resolve this difficulty. He says ‘What are you talking about?’ I repeat what he said to me. He denies the incident and particularly denies using the word ‘cunt’. I walk slowly back to the room, chastised. I lay down on the bed. I cover my body with the duvet and stare at the wall. I am feeling very vulnerable now.

Williams et al (2007) suggest that people who experience depression encounter a disruption in how autobiographical events are recalled, people summarise categories of events rather than a single memory. The over general memory is associated with poor problem solving skills and the accompanying difficulty in imagining future events, both of which contribute to the maintenance of the difficulty.

‘Typically, the concern for the field workers perspective is told as something of a character building conversation tale in which the field worker, who saw things one way, at the outset of the study, comes to see them in an entirely different way by the conclusion of the study’ (Van Maanen 1988, page 77)
Through reflective systematic introspection (working from an ethnographic wide-angle lens, I have focused my observations outwards on social and cultural aspects of my personal experiences; I have then looked inward, exposing my vulnerable selves: see Ellis & Bochner 2000; Ellis 2004) this Professional Doctoral study offers a critical view of the relationships I have with my multiple selves and the multiple relationships I have with others. I have focused my attention to considering the ‘self, ‘selves’ and what are labelled ‘identities’. Who are we? How are we represented, who represents us and who decides who we are, when we are and where we are at given times. It will be like looking into someone’s thinking, with many exploded and unexploded ordinances.

The work proposes that my epistemological worldviews, my acquired knowledge and the subsequent use of this different knowledge’s, are embedded in various institutional practices. By Institutional practices I mean the places I have inhabited and continue to inhabit; for example, my family, school, society, friendships and work. It is through this embodiment that my different forms of individuality are specified, experienced, governed and represented. My framework, which
contains my ontological, epistemological and methodological ideas, has a premise which is based on a ‘basic set of beliefs that guides actions’ (Guba 1990, page 17).

Mills (2000) argued that the sociological imagination placed sociology at the intersection of biography and history. He claimed that only by combining the two; translating private troubles into public issues can we make sense of our lives. By closer aligning the private self and the public self, I have the potential, not necessarily to live a less fractured life or even to experience me as less fractured, but rather an acceptance of my multiple selves in my fractured ways of being, to acknowledge and be aware of how this acceptance and acknowledgment influences wider relationships at both a particular level and a cultural level.

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Pre preamble(s)
In the spring of 1999 I received some news. This news would dramatically change who I thought I was to the different selves I think I am now. It was life changing. My relationship of 23 years was being brought to an end. I initially dealt with this in a matter of fact way. I denied what was happening. The year progressed. I became more and more psychologically disturbed. January the following year I was admitted to a psychiatric hospital in London. I have tried throughout my professional nursing career and possibly my life, to be empathic with people. Being on the receiving end of ‘care’ was a new experience. It had a profound effect on me as a person and as a nurse cognitive behavioural psychotherapist. For example through writing about this experience (Short, Grant and Clarke 2007) I have discovered the many different ways my friends and colleagues experienced my distress. This Autoethnographic Doctorate has the potential for helping me to reflect and be reflexive. It might offer other people a way of reflecting as well. Who are they? Who might they be? Stories are not just stories. Stories are social and relational. Stories are retold and rewritten. In this way we can write and rewrite our identities. I call upon the audience to advance their understanding of a complex dynamic and I believe an always potentially fascinating and enchanting world.
2nd January 2000
I am extremely nervous.
‘I’m going into hospital for a while. I need a break’. I tell a friend
I remember standing in the garden using a phone. What I don’t remember is
how this happened. I didn’t have a mobile phone. Maybe we had a wireless
phone?
A suitcase is packed. I wait for a hospital driver. I get into the car. The driver
owns a handmade brick company. I try and talk about bricks. I run out of
tings to talk about. I pretend to be asleep.

During the first term of the Professional Doctorate (Winter 2005) our student
group met the course leader of the Professional Doctorate in Education at the
University of Brighton. He introduced the idea of ‘disturbances.’ A simple idea I
thought; what do I find disturbing? He had tried it himself when he first started
researching and he continues to be guided by his disturbances. It is a novel way of
thinking about a work problem and what we might want to consider researching.
This suggestion made sense to me as a novice researcher. I liked the idea. It
seemed unusual and different. That was the attraction. Am I unusual and
different? Over the next few weeks I began to think about particular situations at
work that disturbed me. I began to notice the disturbances had themes: themes of
me feeling misheard, misrepresented and/or misunderstood. So what was it about
these situations that prompted me to think and feel this way? Ellis (2004) talks
about starting research from one’s own experiences; using our own life stories
within our cultures to look more deeply at self-other interactions.

January 2000-hospital
I regularly ruminate about my inability to sort myself out. I am a
psychotherapist for goodness sake! I know that my anxiety and depression
difficulties often place me in a vulnerable place. I become gloomy about the
future. I remind myself of all my errors and mistakes. This experience then results in restrictions that often conflict with the self that I previously experienced. For me there was a severe reduction in my confidence, my enthusiasm, my adventurousness and my generally happy go lucky perspectives.

Through active construction, deconstruction and finally reconstructions of personally evocative experiences, an evocative epistemology (Grant 2007), I have provided new meanings for my life and myself and in particular drawn attention to issues of constraint and the marginalised, disempowered and misunderstood positioning that I often experience. I suggest that these positions are expressed through power relationships, knowledge, authority and legitimacy.

A few Disturbances
It’s September 1998. I have just qualified as a nurse cognitive behaviour therapist. I attend a European Cognitive Behavioural Psychotherapy conference in Cork, Eire. After the opening ceremony I talk to another delegate. We discuss cognitive behaviour therapy and its application for children. The discussion continues for about 15 minutes. I assumed that we are both willing to contribute.

She then says: ‘Where did you do your clinical psychology training?’
I reply: ‘I am a nurse therapist not a psychologist’
The conversation ends abruptly. She walks away. No explanation. I am left alone feeling sad, perplexed and confused. What happened? What does this now say about my contribution to the conversation?

A new discussion takes place. Two new Consultant Psychologists are needed. This suggestion is met with support, agreement and no opposition.

At another meeting, a much needed discussion about ‘waiting lists’ took place. For many years I have suggested one way of managing the waiting list: to see clients as soon as possible and if they are suitable to then use an active waiting list. This approach has some supportive evidence in the literature (Short and Kitchiner 2003). This idea is met with opposition. Comments
referred to the importance of leaving people to wait and see if they really need therapy. I am not sure of this reply is satisfactory. I raise some of my concerns.

‘We need to move on with the agenda Nigel’. The conversation ends. I am left feeling unheard again. I am irritated and annoyed.

Later in the same meeting, a new member, who apologises for his late arrival, joins the group: A systemic psychologist. The ‘waiting list’ is added to the agenda again. I thought we had finished discussing this item? Another misunderstanding perhaps? The new member discusses the importance of seeing people as soon as we can. To my surprise the group members all agreed with this proposal. Perhaps my suggestion has been forgotten. It had only been about 30 minutes since my contribution! I cannot expect people to remember everything that I say. Maybe what I said wasn’t that important. Maybe it was the way I presented my case, my opinion. I feel upset again. Is it me that is not important? Is it something to do with the profession I belong to? Am I just being too sensitive? What is it? I know some colleagues who would probably say to me: ‘Let it go Nigel. It’s not worth it’.
I sometimes find it difficult to let these disturbances go. I can feel them. They were hurtful and are sometimes difficult to ‘shift’ from my embodied selves.

Heilker & Vandenberg (1996) talk about how for many years the writing of texts has been heavily influenced by an epistemology that suggests that we can only have one thought or idea in our heads at a time, that one thought leads to another and time flows in one direction only. This they suggest leads to writing that is well developed and well ordered, consistent, and methodical. They apply the theories of Mikhail Bakhtin to advance a conception of writings as a centrifugal, novelistic, dialogical, and a carnivalesque form. They further develop this idea by suggesting that the direction a piece of writing takes is often determined by the chronological sequences that occur in the writers mind. I think this occurs regularly within this text. In this way I am setting out my experiences using for example polysemia and polyvocal representations.
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22nd May 2009

Found some notes I had made in hospital. I have tried to replicate the way I now see them written on the hospital notepaper.

... up the river on each side the immense confusion of greenery tumbling down to the river’s edge
The jungle, every inch of it slithering with life.

The designated smoking area is adjacent to the hospital respiratory unit. The hustle and bustle of the main hospital corridor reminds me of the main souk in Fez, Morocco.

I wish to emphasise that I am attracted and drawn to an idea that we are not just a single person, but rather a multitude of possibilities. I assert that as autoethnographers we could be using these multiple selves to create multiple presentations. Multiple selves demand multiple presentations. In the same way the readers of this text have opportunities to utilise their multiple selves by drawing on their different selves when reading and experiencing this work. For example their reading may be influenced by where they read it, what time of the day/night they read it. Will they know who I am?

This work has a history dating back to March 1954. The developing ideas captured in this text have been constructed and reproduced time and again throughout my life. I have new thoughts popping in my head all the time. I do not know however with any certainty or accuracy when or where some of these ideas were conceived. Have I had these ideas before, did I overhear someone talking about an idea, did I perhaps read about it? Where and what is the source?
As Gergen (1991) indicates the self does not operate independently of the social; the self is understood as a social account. The self is seen as a ‘relational self’. According to the anthropologist Anthony P Cohen (1995), who a person is at any given time, depends upon who is being asked and who is doing the asking. This is similar to the narratives of psychotherapy. The people I see in the clinic have stories whose delivery is often influenced by the questions I may or may not ask and of course the questions they may ask me. I think that some people might have experiences similar to mine. I know this from conversations I have had with other people. It is my intention to be autoethnographic, a term that includes a range of research and writing approaches, which connect the personal to the cultural (Ellis 2004; Ellis and Bochner 2000). Richardson (2000) elaborates and says Autoethnographies are highly personalised, revealing texts in which the authors tell stories about their lived experiences. My writing enterprise could be described as 'faction' (Geertz 1988): an imaginative reflection on real events: a 'making out' of a particular meaningful scenario but NOT a 'making up'.

Derrida (1998) emphasises that we are unable to capture everything in our accounts. Our accounts are inexhaustible. There will always be something more that could be included. Stories, like life, are unstable and complex, they twist and turn and can never achieve full coherence. Autoethnography is what Autoethnographers do. Autoethnographers inscribe patterns of their cultural experiences. There is an assumption that where there is meaning there is culture (Ellis and Bochner 1996). My experiences do not happen in isolation. My stories
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are made up of many stories which include other people’s stories. As Freshwater and Rolfe (2004) suggest; ‘all texts are intertexts; all texts take their meaning in relation to other texts; more than that, all texts are all other texts…. (Freshwater & Rolfe 2004, page 11) they continue ‘the writer can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original’ (Freshwater & Rolfe 2004, page 11)

February 2008-Hastings
I was driving along the coast road in Hastings. A good friend is a passenger. A thought pops in my mind. I tell them that I am unable to remember what colour the flash is when a speed camera flashes. A few moments later an ambulance pulls out of a turning, on our right, joins the road we are on and heads in the same direction and is now in front of us. As he speeds away from us he has to go on the other side of the road. Our side is ‘jammed packed with traffic’. As the vehicle passes the speed camera in the middle of the road, the light ‘flashes’. This all happened within a few seconds of my earlier statement. My friend and I look at each other. ‘What a coincidence’ we both say, at the same time. This reminds us of a line from the film Muriel’s wedding. We both laugh. My friend then tells me about a similar experience she had a few days before. We smile at each other and agree we feel connected.

I have been unsuccessful with exams. I have experienced bereavement. I am also aware that some people think that we continue to be the stories that we tell. People seem to get stuck with the narratives they are provided with, or give each other or perhaps give themselves

The aims of the thesis:

• To try to understand my perceptions of being misheard, misunderstood and misrepresented from a social construction perspective.

• To use autoethnography to stimulate new ways of thinking about relational selves.
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- To emphasise and actively encourage the importance and use of active self reflection and associated self reflexivity.
- Provide me with an opportunity to develop my personal odyssey; we each have a personal history and this needs honouring.
- To encourage fruitful paths of dialogue between and across qualitative paradigms.
- Describe and discuss the difference between inductive, prescriptive and often retrospective ethics which defend organisational biases and relational ethics which compliments ethical ways of being with others and stimulates creative thinking using our moral imaginations.
- Provide opportunities for self-healing, self-compassion and new and developing multiple understandings of the many different Nigels’.
- To investigate the use of stories and storytelling in the development, maintenance of socially constructed identities.
- To not just tell stories about my selves but instead to use the details of my own life to illuminate or explore something more universal (Kron 2001, page x1)

I have addressed these aims by paying attention to the stories I tell myself, particularly taking note of situations that I have found evocative. I have documented some lived experiences to try to discover how I have acquired my particular epistemological positions or worldviews in order to try and understand me. How do my changing worldviews influence how I make sense of myself and how I make decisions and how I interpret my experiences? Ellis (2004) suggests
that researchers incorporate their personal experiences into their research by starting with a story about themselves, explaining their not one all-inclusive self. There are a multitude of possible stories, each of which, depending on where we enter, leads to new constructions of self or using our personal knowledge to help us in the research process. Our understanding of others can only develop from our experiences and these experiences involve our histories and accompanying stories. I suggest that constructions can make it possible for the self to move away from a bound self within a stable coherent Meta story to see itself in an all its shifting contradictory multiplicity and fragility.

I have used autoethnography to try to stimulate new ways of thinking about the relational self. This will contribute to my understandings of the self and perhaps more importantly people I work with clinically. I have deliberately written about me, my multiple selves within the context of the different cultures I inhabit. Whatever the specific focus, authors use their own experiences, within a context where to be human is to be damaged by life experiences, (Sloan 1996; Grant, Mulhern, Mills & Short 2004, Short, Grant & Clarke 2007), in a culture reflexively, to look more deeply at self-other interactions. By writing me into this work as the
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main character, I have questioned accepted views about silent authorship, where
the researcher’s voice is often not included in the presentation of the research
process or findings.

I hope to raise further questions, promote ongoing and evolving conversations as
opposed to finding an ‘answer’ which has the potential of closing conversations.
Hearing my tales is helping me understand my tales (Short, Grant & Clarke 2009)
and sharing my tales will possibly help other people understand their tales.

Each of us is woven into historical constructions of others
as they are into ours (Mills 2000; Gergen 2001). Identities can only be maintained if
all parties play their supporting roles. Thus I suggest that if I transform my scripts
this may influence others scripts. Offering people an opportunity to be reflective
and reflexive may offer them a mechanism for their own transformation. People’s
stories may change if they hear my story changing.

This thesis is liminal; it relates to transitional stages. I am at many boundaries and
thresholds, so some aims may emerge for the readers which I may know nothing
about. So a further aim is to not be prescriptive. The thesis has the potential for
contributing to knowledge. It is wider than personal. Like a pebble thrown into
The writings may encourage active subjective reflexivity and demonstrate and encourage further conversations about relational ethics to the audience and myself. Storytelling has a long history of healing (see for example Pennebaker 2004; Chung & Pennebaker 2007; DeSalvo 1999; Frank 1996 & Stone 1996). This thesis has offered an opportunity for self-healing and associated self-compassion and new and developing understandings for my selves and potentially for other people. A further question for this thesis is to investigate how I might have made my transformations and what contributions might I have made to the transformations of other people, albeit indirectly maybe?

In order to consider the self, I have often used the metaphor of a fresh active lake. The lake is constantly fed by a river of my experiences. These experiences flow into the lake at one end and exit at the other. The river may flow rapidly or slowly, depending on my experiences.

‘Similar to music, autoethnography is like a river running underground; you know it’s there but you can’t always see it’ (Short 2009).
The river constantly provides the lake with fresh concepts about me, while redundant ideas or redundant behaviours are flushed out of the lake and down the river. Sometimes this process of renewal and development has been interrupted and little water is allowed to enter or leave the lake, it becomes stagnant. Conversely, if too much enters the lake, it becomes flooded, unpredictable, and provides too little protection against the vagaries of life. Sometimes I have become so crowded internally that I have experienced overload. I think an essential way of ‘being’ is to regularly examine my personal lakes and explore ways to keep it fresh.

Some of my lived experiences are contextualised and juxtaposed within the cultural framework of knowledge bases around the notions of self, self-narratives, and social cognition and broader Psychosocial and sociocultural knowledge. I am interested in data that speaks to me; by this I mean data that is evocative, that touches me, that prompts emotional responses in me, that resonates, that has a particular meaning for me. Data that does not speak to me is less likely to ‘strike up a conversation with subsequent readers’ (Woolcott 1994: page 14). Woolcott (1994) continues by suggesting that qualitative researchers need to be storytellers: storytelling should be one of their distinguishing attributes. I have regularly woven me in my multiple represented ways within the text. This might help the reader to understand my biases, my emphasis and why I have paid attention to particular experiences. I believe like Cohen (1995) that many researchers are motivated by a personal intrigue, personal experiences as well as by mere intellectual curiosity.

******************************************************************************

February 2000-London. Hospital
My enthusiasm for life has drained away. I am unmotivated and I lack energy. The prospect of work is daunting and I am aware at the end of each day how much I am confabulating. I seem to be permanently hot, sweaty and cold. My creative edge has abandoned me and I feel worthless and hopeless. At the moment I am unable to see a way through the sticky treacle path that lies ahead of me.

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Further, to suppose that it is possible for a researcher to step outside their humanness, by disregarding one’s own values, experiences, and constructions, is to believe in smoke and mirrors; magic (Guba and Lincoln 1994). More ideas emerged about people’s identities and how we represent ourselves in different ways in different cultural and social settings by using different narratives; different constructions. As Brockmeier & Carbaugh (2001) suggest:

‘the self in time-can only exist as a narrative construction’ (Brockmeier & Carbaugh (2001, page 15).

As Cottle (2002) discusses; hearing and or reading the words of another person’s narrative is essentially an encounter, where we not only respond to the words of the ‘other’ -implying to echo the ‘other’- but also to our own responses. In this way I have connected scholarly and personal narratives. I will take you through my experiences of writing. You are invited to experience the different ways I express myself. I anticipate that my reflections will provide opportunities to hear not only my life but also the lives of people I have contact with. My stories are influenced by others stories and so on. It’s cyclic.
March 2000-A hospital poem

Now

*Just think what goes on*
*A tramp being beaten up*
*A young woman being raped*
*Another baby says Mamma*
*A new young puppy*

*I love you, is being said again*
*One dirty needle, more pain*
*Poor man being mugged*
*Wedding bells chime*
*Soggy corn flakes poured down the drain*

*Another young heart is torn*
*A baby seal is smashed*
*Another brilliant red morn*
*The Army dressed in fawn*
*An accident*
*A fucking crash*

*A fan club gets more mail*
*More exams to fail*
*One more school kid being hit*
*One more West Indian complaining about da shit*

*More actors on the dole*
*The rich with more mink stoles*
*Geriatrics eating cardboard*
*Another Minister boring me about the Lord*

‘Personal identity cannot seemed to be fixed...the person experiences himself as many selves, each of which is felt to have a life of its own’ (Miller 1974, cited in Gergen 1991, page 249).

Writing itself has been identified as a way of learning (Allen, Bowers & Diekelmann 1989); the process works to develop thinking through active engagement as opposed to writing for an outcome. This has demanded multiple texts, representing multiple Nigel’s and others. This representation moves me
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from the centre; holding it up for the readers to inspect. This thesis then is an evocative and highly personalised text (Ellis & Bochner 2000).

How does one do self in a way that satisfies both the often externally imposed integrity of psychotherapeutic theory and the tenets of progressive qualitative research simultaneously? Moreover, what are the implications for the morally marginalized and uncertain in an era of epistemological certainty (Short, Grant & Clarke 2007)?

As a member of an organisation I believe there is an expectation to conform to the rational, coherent and well formed side of a binary where the opposites are presumably irrationality, incoherence and fragmentation. However, if congruence and genuineness are regarded as central to the cognitive behavioural psychotherapeutic endeavour, I think it is important to try and tease out other alternatives in order to reconsider the values of binaries in this context. I am beginning to move away from binaries. By binaries I mean the positions of either or, one or other, this or that, right or wrong, negative or positive. These polarities limit the ways people may wish to think.

***************************
I have punctuated the text with some of my experiences, associated reflections, accompanying reflexivity and meaning (Harre 2004). The reader may then begin to appreciate what might have influenced me during its composition. Readers will also have an opportunity to see how I experience me as well as an opportunity to see how other people may have experienced me. Mykhalovskiy (1997) argues that the use of the self can be productive in the ways we think about the process of writing and reading and that this approach can be a source of insightful analysis. It can provide opportunities
I see writing as a performance; performing the art of writing. I am constantly trying to write ethically. For example I often wonder when I have inserted people’s faces in this text if I need to seek consent for this activity. (I think that because they are in a public space that this is ok) I am reflexing as I compose this piece. I have wanted to write many things down during the writing of this text. Ideas have been swirling around in my head. They swirl around as I write. I have been troubled by not knowing how to do it. So much of autoethnography is about me, not it. I have been surprised how difficult this has been sometimes. Like a fish swimming in water, we can sometimes forget that we are embedded in our experiences and cultures with minimal reflexivity.

I write (perform), then present to friends and colleagues then get feedback. I have used some of their contributions in this work. In this way I am able to demonstrate how my stories are made up of lots of stories. I think that people might think of writing skill as knowledge; something that once you know it, then you can do it. I believe that writing skill is tacit and arises from pure practice and response, a rhetorical operation, not necessarily an intellectual one. I will also be using different types of media; images and written records and some of the text may take you by surprise in the same way that our usual intrusions take us by surprise. These can be used not only as data but also as ways of representing different field data (Dicks, Soyinka & Coffey 2006). Ruth Behar (1997) also says that what happens within the observer must be made known if the nature of what has been observed is to be understood. In autoethnographic writing the researcher’s own epistemology is at the very heart of the researcher’s tale.

Gone fishing

A ship in the harbour is safe; but that is not what ships are built for (Shedd 1892)
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Hastings Harbour.

So who am I? Or whom am I telling you (or me) about at any one time. What am I telling you about me? Imagine a meeting at work. The participants are all new to each other. They may have read emails from each other or may have heard of each other but they have never met face to face. Some of these types of meetings often begin with a ‘round robin’ (an opportunity to take it in turn to introduce yourself to other group members). I am interested in how people describe themselves (I wonder if other people are interested as well?). These opportunities are instrumental to how you are then addressed and I believe socially constructed. For example I often say ‘Hello I am Nigel and I practice cognitive behavioural psychotherapy’. When I describe myself in this way it sounds and feels very different than ‘Hello I am Nigel and I am a cognitive behavioural psychotherapist’. I notice that many people do say ‘Hello I am ………..
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1970. Nigel aged 16. Back row far left. Patcham-Fawcett School Rugby Team (I have forgotten my kit)

I was born on the 12th March 1954 in a small bungalow in Hangleton, a small parish, 4 miles north-east from Shoreham, 3 miles north-west from Brighton and 52 miles from London. I went to Hangleton Junior School for a few months.

In 1959 the family moved to Brighton and I attended Stanford Road Junior School.

**********************

January 2000-Hospital
It was early morning, seven o’clock maybe. The ward domestic comes in the room unannounced and started hovering the carpet. How dirty can a room become overnight? The nursing staff had the unenviable task of getting me to eat and drink. Hearing their different tactics was interesting. I tried to imagine what each one would say as they came into the room.
‘You won’t be able to go home if you don’t eat and drink’. ‘C’mon it will make you feel better’

**********************

I went for about ten days without eating. I had been making small marks on the wall behind the small wooden locker in the side room with a pencil to help me keep track of the days. I had seen Gene Hackman do this in the film ‘The French Connection 2’.

I had no appetite. I was able to drink however; I had remembered liking cold Ovaltine when I had been in hospital at the age of ten. I asked the staff and was offered this drink several times a day. I was also drinking the warm cold
water from the sink in the room, making a cup with my hands like Marlon Brando does when we first see him in the in the film Apocalypse Now.

Interestingly and curiously, when I did want to drink, particularly during the night, I was told I couldn’t have one.

‘If we give you one then everyone will want one. We don’t have enough milk’.

I would then shuffle back down the long corridor to my room. On the way I would pass several nurses who were sat outside the rooms of people who needed special watching. They would look up from the books they were reading. I saw one nurse reading a book about therapeutic relationships. It felt like they all knew that my request for a drink had been met with refusal. Humiliation and more shame.

My upbringing would be described as working class. Dad was a general builder and Mum had various working ‘service’ jobs; telephonist, housekeeper and House Mother at a private Preparatory school. I excelled in sport and represented my home town of Brighton at shot-put, discus, basketball and football. I was unsuccessful with the eleven plus school exam, as a consequence attended a large ‘all boys’ secondary modern school. I left Patcham Fawcett Secondary Modern School in 1970 with a handful of CSE’s (Certificate of Secondary Education) exams. These exams were of little value against the more acceptable ‘O’ and ‘A’ level examinations. I grew up with an idea that I was and remain ‘thick, stupid and inferior’; that all other people were much brighter than me. These ideas continue to percolate through now and again despite observable successful personal achievements.

My academic studies began in 1986 when I was awarded a BSc (2:1) in Nursing in 1990 from Brighton Polytechnic. This was followed by a Post Graduate Certificate
in Education award from Thames Polytechnic in 1992. I had hoped to find a job in
Nurse Education. I thought I might be good at this. I then enrolled again at
University of Brighton and was awarded a BSc (2:1) in Cognitive Behaviour
Therapy in 1997. My professional education continued with an award of an MSc
(pass) in Cognitive Behaviour Psychotherapy from the Institute of Psychiatry,

Some Ideas

There are a couple of ideas I wish to introduce; ideas that influence and guide my
thinking, behaviours and feelings. The first idea is Landmarks; internal and
external. The second idea is jazz music.

Landmarks

My life has Landmarks: two types of Landmarks; external and internal. External
landmarks are visible and internal landmarks are usually unobservable.

External physical Landmarks.

External landmarks are physical structures. For example, people often ask for, and
are then provided with, directions by using these types of Landmarks.
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Churches           Net shops           Pubs                    Parks                  Traffic lights

‘Excuse me can you tell me how to get to Hastings Railway Station please?’

‘Yeah sure mate. You go left at the church, then right at the post office, it’s straight ahead’.

Internal Landmarks

These are the Landmarks that I have constructed: they are mine and nobody knows about them, unless I share them. For example my feelings: Anxiety or low mood or happiness an intrusive memory
Chapter one

The hospital ward had landmarks; bed rooms, bathrooms, toilets and the often comforting external phone. My experiences were influenced by my internal landmarks. The linen cupboard was immediately on the right hand side then the kitchen. On either side of the long corridor were individual rooms. Ten on each side I think. In between rooms four and five were the toilets and bathrooms. At the far end of the corridor was the lounge, the nurses’ office and the medication room.

Maybe a sense I have been here before;
Déjà vu

These internal landmarks help guide me through particular situations. The two landmarks work in tandem. When I see certain external objects, perhaps a piece of art or a building it activates my internal landmarks. For example I have spent many Sunday afternoons walking along the seashore in Hastings. I particularly like walking amongst the fishing boats. I feel good, whatever the weather. It’s restorative and re-charges my batteries. Most local people will view the boat below as a Hastings lugger (A small boat used for fishing, sailing, or coasting).

I believe that what makes the photograph significant is what it means to people. What does it activate in their internal Landmarks? For some it might represent the decline of the largest offshore launched fishing fleet; maybe warm feelings of a far off romantic weekend. For others it might be where they were taken during their photography course and for some their first trip to the coast for fish and chips. For me it represents freedom and feelings of exhilaration. We all have
different histories, different bodies, and different access to different social landmarks.

I have found physical landmarks helpful during the writing of this thesis as well; the local hospital library, books, articles and college. Paralleling these have been the activation of my internal landmarks; discussions with colleagues about my work and how their replies have made me feel and/or think and how this might have influenced which direction to head in next.

**Jazz** Some favourites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Andy Summers</th>
<th>Jimmy Scott</th>
<th>John Coltrane</th>
<th>Frank Sinatra</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Miles Davis</th>
<th>Chet Baker</th>
<th>Julian Joseph</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1926-1991</td>
<td>1929-1988</td>
<td>1966-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Jazz** is a genre that is often difficult to define, but the key is *improvisation*. Lyttelton (2007) says it requires honesty; if it’s not honest then it’s not *jazz*! The essence of *Jazz* is that it comes straight from the performer to the listener. The music tries to find a **common ground**; it is a form of music that is alive at that
moment; performers compose in the here and now of the moment. Each performance is improvised so that every arrangement is individual, of its time and place. The listener takes away their own unique interpretation. It’s something we ‘feel’ as well as think about. Each time we listen to a piece of music it has the opportunity of being heard in different ways.

“How do people know what will pop into their minds at any given moment?”

This resembles conversations I’ve had with friends and colleagues who have read my work during its evolution. They have discovered that some of their ideas transform, they improvise and recontextualise what they already knew in light of new information, particularly information that comes from hearing about my life and the way I interpret cultures. (See dialogue below) The dialogue represents an example of relational-dialogue ethics. I have taken an opportunity to seek approval of using this conversation as a way of showing autoethnography ‘in action’.
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Sent by a friend and colleague
Hotmail is playing up, hence the attachment.
I had some thoughts that I thought I would share with you, if I write things as if they are facts it’s just a short cut saves me adding ‘I think’ or ‘in my opinion’. They follow on from the stuff you sent me about Sunday and our conversation last night.

Autoethnography and madness. Being mad is about getting stuck in your head, or having a perception of the world that is distorted, coloured by your thinking/feelings.

Depression: The world is coloured by the person’s negative view—i am hopeless, the future is hopeless.

Psychosis: Again the world is assessed in terms of the self first—they are talking about ‘me’, she put that bit of litter on my drive to tell me that she is watching me.

Mania: There is a power that others don’t have, a talent, something different about them, ‘I am special’, ‘I can heal people’, ‘achieve things that others can’t’.

Low Self-Esteem/Social Phobia: ‘When I walk into the room, everyone is going to look at me’, ‘They are going to think………about me’.

BPD (can encompass the above): ‘I am crap’, ‘it’s never going to get any better for me’, and I can’t cope with feeling so bad.

There can be a big narcissistic element about all these conditions ‘I am special’, special in that ‘I can’t cope when everyone else is’, ‘others are taking time and money and effort to bug my house’, I am so awful that everyone is going to notice. Is being mad, indulgent?

When people get mad, they lose perspective and get unhappy, or out of hand in the case of someone who is manic! As therapists we try and help them to see alternative perspectives, I guess that an alternative view, a wider perspective can get them out of their heads and relieve some of the distress.

Autoethnography
As I understand it from the way you have expressed your thinking when talking about your assignment, autoethnography shares similar features. Of course I may have this completely wrong, so maybe this is probably best titled ‘how autoethnography feels to me when you describe it’. I think one of the things that worries me, when you ‘get into thinking about your assignment’ is that you seem to retreat into your head, and you don’t easily come out, maybe because its new and exciting, and in glorious technicolour in there, but maybe it means that other stuff gets lost, forgotten, ignored, passed by. Maybe autoethnography does this too, maybe it doesn’t. I’ve had some thoughts that have run through my head when you’ve talked about this style of research, they vary from ‘this is fucking brilliant stuff’, ‘this makes sense like other research doesn’t’, to, ‘how do you do this research and still make it relevant to the rest of the world, it’s too biased, to be useful’ and ‘autoethnography should carry a health warning’.

I suppose there are two main things I want to say to you about this stuff, as far as the research goes, don’t lose the ability to stand outside and critically evaluate what you are doing because you’ve got too lost in it—it would devalue a brilliant piece of work. And secondly, please, please take care of yourself. It may feel from your perspective that you can freely move in and out of this stuff, but it draws you back in to your head, and you are pretty untouchable in there, I’m not sure you always want to come out. I can see how you can move into madness, it maybe that the world can be pretty mundane, but you need to keep one foot in it or you may get swallowed up.

Just as a postscript: Think about this stuff, eh? It’s sent with lots of warmth and care.

Xxx

My reply
Hello
You sent me this a while back and I keep looking through it and at different times of the day, different times of the week and at different ‘head space’ situations. What would you think about me including it in my assignment? I would of course keep your identity safe and you will remain anonymous.

I think sometimes that one of the difficulties of doing this auto stuff is that you enter different types of places and there is no going back and at one level that’s the ways it is. I do keep myself actively ‘mundane’ as well, coz I like the ordinariness of life as well, as you know. I think my core beliefs about being authentic may create difficulties though in the sense that if I am going to do this I need to do it. I don’t mean perfection, by that I mean being honest and truthful and authentic. Just some thoughts from a settled b羟y in Hastings (it’s a lovely day here)

N x

Their reply

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In lieu of a phone call-in case I don't speak to you. Yes it's fine by me to use this stuff. I just re-read it to see if I still 'agree' with what I had written, and it still feels relevant to me. I see what you are saying about entering different types of places and then there is no going back. I think life is like that, words get said or actions made and they can never be unsaid or taken back. I was trying to think how what you do is different, cos it feels like "yeah, new things happen and change things, that's what life's about, and would be bloody boring if it weren't, so what's the big deal?" I think that when you (people) make steps into different places, generally speaking, the steps can be followed (I can follow) or at least observed from a close distance and that feels comfortable and inclusive. I'm not sure if this was always there, or if this is a part of you that has emerged recently (because I've not known you long enough) but I think the auto stuff facilitates much bigger steps, or leaps even.

So sometimes when you make those steps in other (auto) places, you disappear round corners, jump off buildings, enter parallel universes, etc. and I lose sight of you. It may be that others don't maybe I get surprised by the rapidity of your departure and panic, which is why you appear to disappear anyway, I think it scares me a little-I am usually pretty good at keeping up with changes at a pretty rapid rate, and don't panic easily-but I struggle with where your head goes on this one. Is any of this making sense?

So I suppose that link with madness is there again-people leaping off into places that you can't follow or at least it would be scary to follow. One last point then I have to go. I think the comments you get from me, work on two levels, I can be objective and professional in my opinions about your work, but when it comes to how your work affects you, it probably gets more personal for me, and then you get a different part of me looking at the same view and seeing it differently, and I guess the comments reflect that. I'd be interested to hear what you think about what I've written. I won't be back on this email today, so maybe either email my hotmail or we can chat later? x
How do I write? How am I to write? A further aim of the study is a wish to convey how it is to be me and my multiple selves and to do this I will include many different ways I experience me and the world and culture that I inhabit. How can I offer my readers a convincing story of my particular research while suggesting that there are crucial limits to accountability and narratives? How can I claim to be making a significant ‘contribution’ to a field of knowledge while asserting that the production of such knowledge must be predicated on the ethical necessity of not-knowing?

So my epistemological stance is one of uncertainty. Thank goodness for that.

I am feeling nauseous as I read and re-read these passages. I do not like writing about me. I have moments when I like autoethnography and the possibilities it offers for new conversations. On other occasions I do feel selfish, self indulgent and narcissistic. I sit down at the pc and fool myself that I can ‘just’ write. Sometimes the impact on ‘just’ writing can be disturbing. It can be lonely and frightening. I regularly hear my parents telling me to sit down, be quite and listen.

I have an idea that when I think about something other people may be thinking along similar lines. My self-narrative is a critique of the situatedness of (my) self with others in social contexts (Spry 2001). Other people will have very different reactions to the examples I provide later, but, I believe that what attracted me to this approach is that other people (might) feel and experience the concerns I have. My interpretations and appraisals connected to the experiences of others.

Harding (1995) discusses how writing can be thought as:

‘Something who’s meaning is created in a historical context of interactions with different readers and different historical periods’ (Harding 1995, page 2)
12th March 2009. It’s my birthday. I visit my elderly Mum.

During our conversation she tells me that during the 1920’s she had attended the ‘Blue Coat’ school in southeast London. She had been successful in their scholarship exam and had been offered a place at this school. She then told me that to this day that she still doesn’t know why she went to this school.

‘The place should have been offered to my Lily (her sister); she was a lot brighter than me’.
She thought she had been lucky on the day of the exam; the offer of a place at the school was a mistake surely.
‘It could not have had anything to do with my abilities’.

This sounded uncomfortably familiar to me. This could have been me saying these words. I began to realise where my ‘I’m not good enough’ might have begun its development.

These writings engage with the ethics of representation while refusing to be paralysed by its dangers. I assert the value of autoethnography and memoir, while questioning the tendency of life writing to reconstitute a humanist subject.

I was once asked ‘How will I know if I misrepresent myself?’

‘Ethnographers need to convince us not merely that they themselves have truly ‘been there’, but that had we been there we should have seen what they saw, felt what they felt and concluded what they concluded’ (Geertz 1988, page 16)

I would suggest that Geertz’s (1988) idea demonstrates a particular difficulty for autoethnographers. Whilst I believe that we need to communicate our experiences in such a way that offers the reader an insight into ‘our worlds’, the
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Way we all interpret the world is biased by our own unique ways of knowing, hence what I might feel in a situation and what I might conclude and construct from a situation may be different to the original observations and interpretations.

Van Maanen (1988) supports this idea by suggesting that:

> ‘The idea is to draw an audience into an unfamiliar story world and allow it as far as possible (my bold) to see, hear and feel as the fieldworker saw, heard and felt’ (Van Maanen 1988, page 103)

Van Maanen (1988) continues:

> ‘The audience cannot be concerned with the story’s correctness, since they were not there and cannot know if it is correct. The standards are largely those of interest (does it attract?), coherence (does it hang together?) and fidelity (does it seem true?)’ (Van Maanen 1988, page 105)

The question of an authorial presence within a text has been a difficult discussion for ethnography (see autoethnographic hostilities chapter six) and has often been managed as Geertz suggests (1988) by presenting work in a disguised form. The problem seems to stem from an epistemological position. Is it possible to present a subjective view without biasing the objectivity of the text? What is the truth? And who decides?

My writing practices weave in and out and in between categories producing knowledge in the gaps between: I think that it is the reader of autoethnographic texts who applies their own objectivity to my writings.
A figure to show the different themes that influence my knowledge's.

Bochner (2000) contributes to this debate by inviting the reader to think about their own criteria when judging ‘alternative’ modes of qualitative and ethnographic enquiries. For example:

1. Is my work believable?
2. Is it authentic?
3. And is the work credible?
Bochner continues by saying that a fixed and formal ‘criteria’ is an unhelpful way to start the debate. He believes that it separates:

Modernists from post modernists

Foundationalists from anti Foundationalists

Empiricists from Interpretivists

And

Scientists from artists (Bochner 2000; page 266)

Coffey (1999) calls for a re-examination of assumptions which have underpinned research and its social outcomes. As she says:

‘These are the established (assumptions) about the dichotomies of masculinity/femininity, male/female, objectivity/subjectivity, mind/body, reason/emotionality and so on’ (Coffey 1999, Page 11)

It is not that one side thinks that we have to make judgements and the other side doesn’t. Both agree that they have to make judgements about what is good, what is helpful and what is useful. The difference it seems to me is to do with epistemologies; one view seems to believe that objective methods and procedures can be applied to determine the beliefs and truths that are held and the consequences of these ideas. Another view, and this includes me, suggests that our understandings are inextricably tied to our values and our own subjectivities. Rorty (1992) says these issues are not issues to be settled but differences to be lived with. In addition I think that a continuing use of ‘binaries’, for example subjective versus objective, in describing autoethnography is an unhelpful concept.
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In *The Location of Culture* (2004), Bhabha's argument contributes to this by discussing the west’s production and implementation of certain binary oppositions. The oppositions targeted by Bhabha include centre/margin, civilized/savage, and enlightened/ignorant. Bhabha continues by weakening the binaries insofar as the first term of the binary is allowed to unthinkingly dominate the second. Once the binaries are unsettled, Bhabha argues that cultures can be understood to interact, transgress, and transform each other in a much more complex manner than the traditional binary oppositions can allow. According to Bhabha (2004) this disruption offers many new possibilities. I would agree and would welcome new engaging and compassionate discourses.

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This writing may not necessarily flow in a way that always feels comfortable for the reader or me. My mind goes off at many different tangents through the day and I will, try and represent this within the presentation. I will be paying attention to evocative experiences; in doing this I may notice strong images, strong feelings, strong memories or situations that in some way challenge my constructions of meanings and realities or when the meaning I have constructed for myself ‘doesn’t feel right’. For example I may hear a conversation at work that changes how I am feeling, I may hear something on the radio that recalls an earlier experience or I may be looking at a painting and experience evocative feelings.

**************************

My own experiences become the subject of the research. As a research process and product my autoethnographic research constitutes a form of critique, enabling me to resist dominant representations of myself as a person and importantly here as a psychotherapist by others.
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It is a story that is based on experiences of me, with others, within a context. I think that by showing me in the text, this approach will help me to become more self aware, more reflective and more reflexive (Short 2007a; Short 2007b and Short, Grant & Clarke 2007, Short & Grant 2009) and contribute towards my ever-developing role as a psychotherapist. I anticipate that continuously making improvements will improve the interactions I have with people that I see clinically as well as work colleagues. As I am developing my story telling, it also provides an opportunity for therapeutic healing (Frank 1995) within an ideological context where to be human is to be damaged by life experiences (Grant, Mulhern, Mills and Short 2004).

Clockwise from left to right. Alison Poyner, (Commissioning Editor Sage Publications) Nigel P Short, Ronan Mulhern, Jem Mills and Alec Grant. 12th March 2004; my 50th birthday. Brick Lane, London
As I have written I have noticed another aim for the study; to raise further questions, promote ongoing and evolving conversations as opposed to finding an ‘answer’ which has the potential of closing conversations. Hearing my tales is helping me understand my tales and sharing my tales will possibly help other people understand their tales. I find it difficult to put my subjective experiences to one side. How do people do that?

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‘Concerns about the situatedness of the knower, the context of the discovery and the relation of the knower to the subjects of her inquiry are demons at the door of positivist science. The production of what has always been considered ‘legitimate’ knowledge begins by slamming the door shut’ (McCorkel & Myers 2003; page 2000)

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Does the organisation I work for want me to think and experience the same organisation in my head as everyone else? If we all follow the same policies then we will all begin to think the same way. Maybe this is what is wanted. How does this square up with very different clients I see? Is it possible to apply the same CBT principles to such a diverse range of clients with a variety of presenting difficulties? Maybe it is the principles that keep it all together and manageable. It’s the creativity that ensures individual idiosyncratic interventions surely. If I am not my thoughts who am I? Thoughts become entangling. People behave differently, perhaps annoyingly and in contradictory ways in different contexts. In cognitive behavioural therapy terms, core belief related rules for living are constantly being violated by other people. The issue here is about not only letting go of our value based contextual thinking but allowing others, just to be.

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Unconscious incompetence
Conscious incompetence
Conscious competence
Unconscious competence

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Chapter one

Summary
In these early writings I have begun to set out some of the personal experiences that have influenced this thesis. In addition I have included the aims of the study and have discussed the philosophical, methodological and theoretical positions that I have used in this developing and continuous evolving work. I have drawn on the autoethnographic literature to begin to try and make some sense of the early disturbances and to help guide me with my aims. What has strongly contributed to this chapter is an understanding that this thesis is not about change or conversion but recognition that this work will be the outcome of many complex negotiations that enable a constant transformation of the different Nigels’ being presented.

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In the months leading up to my hospital admission I had been living in a one room flat. It was near the old house. I could continue to see my children. I was also spending most evenings in a local public house; The Clown. It was usually full up with people like me; people who were disenfranchised for some reason or other. The juke box contained many of my favourites and the Guinness was good. I often think of the irony of the pubs name. Perhaps all along I was being a clown?

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So how did we get here?
Chapter two

Historical developments

Shifting sands

In this chapter I introduce and discuss Denzin & Lincoln's (1994) ‘moments’; these moments have been used as a means of charting the conceptual and epistemological developments of forms of qualitative research history.

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I have read several texts about these ‘moments’ and I am keen for the reader to appreciate that I offer my time related understandings, rather than a realist account which may suggest that these moments are ‘fixed’ or true. I concur with Krauss (2005) that:

‘Knowledge is context and time dependent’ (Krauss 2005, page 759)

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What is science? Most scientists who are asked reply; Science is what we do. The word science was first recorded or ‘invented’ as late as 1833 (Patricia Fara. Start the week Radio four. 15th March 2010-from her new text:
Many years earlier Isaac Newton was arguably doing science, but there wasn’t a word for it then. Today he may well be called a scientist. So maybe science is what scientists do. Science could be seen as an intellectual and practical development.

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In addition Rolfe & Gardener (2006) drawing on the work of Foucault (1980) and Deleuze & Guattari (1987) suggest that:

‘History is essentially a modernist discourse, and goes hand-in-hand with the Enlightenment endeavour of progress towards a better world through science. History and modernism are thus part of the same project; without a concept of history there can be no concept of the modern and no concept of progress’ (Rolfe & Gardener 2006, page 905)

History, then is often written as a dominant discourse (Foucault 1980) and often written from ‘a sedentary point of view’ (Deleuze & Guattari 1987, page 23). So the ‘official’ history of ‘moments’ as presented by Denzin & Lincoln (1994), which project a rational, linear story of growth is written within a context and is not to be seen as a ‘truth’. To present qualitative developments as progressing rationally is to accept what is and what isn’t and as Deleuze & Parnet (1987) point out: ‘power is always arborescent; [tree like] (Deleuze & Parnet 1987, page 25)

In preference to moments, Coffey (1999) interestingly prefers the idea of ‘vectors’; that is, having a direction, especially when determining the position of one point in space relative to another. I find this a fascinating idea. It suggests to me that each time we consider previous moments or vectors we may look upon them in a similar way. Although I accept these moments or vectors maybe related to each other in the development of qualitative history, my reading of the same historical texts (hermeneutics) may be different depending on how I construct what I am reading and which Nigel might be reading the literature. My approaches, using postmodern principles, that privileges no single authority
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would suggest that hermeneutics and the reading of texts may prejudice and shape interpretive processes.

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During my employment in the National Health Service I have been given many opportunities to work in different places with different responsibilities. When observing this linear career, colleagues often say to me how lucky I have been to be given these different experiences. Interestingly when I look back upon the last twenty years all of the different jobs I have had have seemingly ‘fallen into my lap’. By this I mean that people have rung me, emailed me or written to me and ‘invited’ me to consider new jobs. I have not actively sought out new developments. Some people would see this as being in the right place at the right time. Others may see this differently. My understanding is that people think I can do what they are asking and invited me. I have often been pleasantly surprised and frighteningly amazed with some of the jobs I have been invited to consider. This seems interesting to me.

Let’s look at an example. I have been the external examiner for a cognitive behaviour therapy course at a University in the Midlands for a few years. Me? Surely you have made a mistake. Why would I be invited to do this important and responsible job? Now that I have been doing it I realise I can do it. My contributions have been helpful and validated by the respective course leaders. See below: comments from recent course exam board minutes.

a. NS commented on the productive relationship between himself and the University and his continued commitment to the CBT Programmes as External Examiner. The course leader expressed her thanks to Nigel for his commitment to the course and the informal support he offers alongside his formal work

What has ‘caught’ me out regularly is my own interpretations of Nigel abilities; I have been using steady vectors. I have been looking at me from a particular place, a moment, without paying enough attention to my own transformations, my own developments.

I have recently been invited to be an article reviewer for two peer reviewed mental health nursing journals. In addition I am regularly invited to review books for two mental health nurse journals and one psychology journal.

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In addition to describing and adding my own commentary about Denzin & Lincoln’s (1994) ‘moments’, I have woven some of my ‘moments’; moments that I think have been significant for my ongoing developments and transformations. I
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hope that this approach will tie in some of my concrete experiences into cultures I inhabit with accompanying theory.

Qualitative research literature emerged in the 20th century as a useful framework for conceptualising and then undertaking social science research. Its history however has not seen a steady linear progress along one path, although when written it may appear this way. This unpredictable journey perhaps compliments the complex ever changing characteristics of people who are studied or the people who are doing the studying.

I am fascinated when I hear people’s stories. They often deliver them in ways that sound linear, and of course in some ways they can be represented in this way when people reflect back on the course of their histories (including mine). Histories follow a pattern, but only seem to follow a pattern when we look back. But who is ‘doing’ the looking back? Biley (2009) explores this in his paper:

Biley F (2009) ‘All this happened, more or less: thoughts on ‘truth’, the role of fiction and its potential application in mental health and psychiatric nursing’. Journal of Psychiatric and Mental health Nursing, 16, 919-926

He discusses how there are fundamental differences in the philosophy of history and how these different perspectives will lead to different conclusions. For example traditional historians use primary sources in order to establish ‘truth’ claims about the past where as on the other hand a progressive post modern historian’s constructs ‘truth’ claims rather than discovering them. These two views create different historical discourses.

Our trajectories are regularly unpredictable despite our plans. It is only when we look back that life attracts an incremental and chronological continuum. I think that people are often surprised when, what they might consider is their fixed, stable ‘linear’ life, is changed, amended and influenced by what I, as a therapist might ask them. A co-constructed story perhaps. Stories are influenced by the questions we ask and the questions we are asked.
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I often find myself telling an anecdote and then think that if I ever get invited on to a chat show this anecdote would be good to store up and use. Of course the anecdote is bound by the context that I tell it in; who is there, what time it is. This then made me think about the ‘chat shows’ I have watched and how the interviewers often ask the same types of questions and the interviewees then repeat similar anecdotes. Whilst this may offer entertainment and amusement it suggests that their presentations are well rehearsed and not necessarily bound by the context. This theme often occurs when a news event is presented on different radio shows and the person being interviewed repeats the same story to each interviewer.

Denzin and Lincoln (1994, 2005) divide the history of qualitative research/approaches into the following moments:

The traditional period

The traditional or first moment period appears to range from the early twentieth century to World War II. During this period, qualitative research was interested in the ‘other’, the foreigner or the stranger and in its more or less objective description and interpretation. Foreign cultures were the issue in ethnography and outsiders within one's own society in sociology. The researchers aspired to ‘objective’ accounts of field experiences, concerned only with the ‘other’ and applying rigorous science. The classic ethnographic work involved going into a culture, making field notes of observations and then writing conclusions, often from a distance from the original work, both geographically and metaphorically. The anthropologist, as s/he would have been then, was seeking a way of understanding cultures as they really were and accompanying this goal was the
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cconcern about ensuring ‘validity, reliability and objective interpretations’ (Denzin & Lincoln 1994, page 7).

As I am writing this chapter I am experiencing nausea, a nagging, a feeling that feels familiar, it suggests to me ‘I am troubled’. Why do I want to investigate and ‘unpack’ Denzin and Lincoln’s moments? Am I unpacking them? Am I just describing them? Maybe a mixture. I think I want to try and find something in their work to criticise and reject. As my thinking develops I then find I want to reject the autoethnographic experts and their colonisation of autoethnography.

Am I trying to reject previous qualitative rules? Resist homogeneity and becoming gentrified? Do I want the ‘experts’ to step aside and make room for new autoethnographers?

The modernist period

The modernist or second phase seems to last until the late 1960’ and is marked by attempts to formalise qualitative research. There appears to have been an attempt to put qualitative research on the same footing as quantitative approaches, to try and make qualitative approaches objective and statistically endorsed. This period was typified by various projects to systematise and formalise the procedures of qualitative research. This includes Glaser & Strauss’s (1967) development of grounded theory. Although Denzin & Lincoln would suggest that the high point of qualitative modernity as having passed by the 1970's, this moment continues in the work of writers like Miles and Huberman.
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(1994) who advocate highly procedural and systematic approaches to data collection, analysis and display.

A Nigel moment.

1986.

Brighton Polytechnic (Now the University of Brighton). I was studying for a Nursing degree. I had read in several course board meetings that there was regular objections to the development of a nursing degree. The main antagonists were the representatives from the pure sciences; physics, chemistry; people who may be described philosophically as positivists. The degree course incorporated modules about Biochemistry (Beezer 1980) and Physiology (Green 1969). A clashing of world views.

Every Monday during the first year the Bio-chemistry tutor asked me how my weekends had been. I noticed that he only ever asked me. One Monday he said ‘I see you had a good weekend’. I thought this was interesting. What did he mean? I asked him. He had read in a Sunday broadsheet newspaper that I had won an English Chess competition. It then became clear to me. He thought I was Nigel Short, the British Chess Champion.

He had presumably thought this for months. I told him I was not THAT Nigel Short. He looked disappointed and then verbally became very angry. He said, ‘Why didn’t you tell me?’ I was not who he thought I was. When I reflect upon this, I accept that he may have been embarrassed and this might account for his anger towards me.

Autumn 1991

I am sat in the Brighton Centre. It is the annual Degree Awards Ceremony. An Usher approached me. It’s the Biochemistry tutor.

He looked surprised to see me. He said ‘Fancy you getting through then. How on earth did you get through? I didn’t think you would make it’. My construction of this event left me thinking that his comments were unfriendly and unnecessary.

Spring 2002

I was studying for an MSc in Cognitive Therapy at The Institute of Psychiatry in London. In order to be awarded the Post Graduate degree I had to present a 10,000 word dissertation. I was interested in how Cognitive Therapists felt when they work with people who have a diagnosis of chronic depression. As a complete research novice I used Grounded Theory to try and help me answer the question. I had used a grounded theory approach for my Nursing
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Degree dissertation. At this stage in my research career I knew nothing about ontology and epistemology. The MSc course curriculum did not include any sessions regarding theoretical underpinnings or conceptual frameworks.

I found it difficult to ‘find’ anyone in the Institute who was sympathetic to qualitative approaches. The college was heavily influenced by a positivistic world view and Randomised Control Trials were definitely the gold standard (Rolfe 2006). I eventually found someone and she agreed to meet me to help me with my dissertation proposal and supervision.

Having completed the taped interviews of a group of qualified cognitive behaviour therapists I made transcriptions and then identified categories, described the codes, and used constant comparative analysis. I interacted with the data and became theoretically sensitive and focused on sampling and paid attention to saturation. I reported my findings and finally completed with a discussion. Once completed, I presented my work. I was unsuccessful. The two markers did not like ‘my’ categories and associated themes. Copying verbatim from their evaluation sheet, this is what they suggested. ‘We recommend that the student provides an external supervisor with four interview recordings to see if the same themes are identified’. Their suggestion was disappointing and very interesting. I spoke to a colleague of mine who lectures in Qualitative Research approaches. He laughed at their recommendations. He suggested that their approach was post-positivist (I was unsure what he meant then-I think I am clearer now about this concept). Their suggestion was a redundant exercise. We did what they requested. I re-submitted and was awarded a pass.

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During this thesis development I often think about that experience at the Institute of Psychiatry. It amuses me now. At the time it was very frustrating. I felt bullied. Reminds me of Groucho Marx; he sent the following telegram to a Hollywood club he had joined: “Please accept my resignation. I don’t want to belong to any club that will accept me as a member.” I’m not a particularly gregarious fellow. I am not suggesting that I am in anyways misanthropic but I do like to spend time with people I like spending time with. I’ve tried being a jolly good cognitive behaviour therapy club member, but after many years of cognitive dissonance I decided to join the club on my terms. It reminds me of what I consider to be the lip service that is paid to qualitative research within the generally positivistic domain of cognitive behaviour therapy. Most qualitative research that I have read in Cognitive Behaviour Therapy journals uses Grounded Theory and whilst this might be the appropriate methodology for the question, I think it also maintains the quantitative emphasis of this approach.

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Blurred genres or Third moment

Blurred genres (Geertz 1983) or the third moment characterises the developments up to the mid-1980s.

Denzin and Lincoln’s third moment marks, what they suggest, as the maturing of qualitative research. They credit Clifford Geertz with shaping this moment. Essentially Geertz argues for an approach to social science research that rejects the four foundations of the traditional period; objectivism, imperialism, monumentalism and timelessness. He proposed a social science based on ‘thick’ descriptions (a thick description of a human behaviour is one that explains not just the behaviour, but its context as well, such that the behaviour becomes meaningful to an outsider) and an approach that seeks multiple perspectives. Interestingly, Hammersley (2008) takes issue with Geertz and suggests that the ‘thick description’ has many ambiguities. The tensions, as perceived by Hammersley (2008) are to do with what he sees as endemic conflicts within the history of social sciences. For example, understanding versus explanation and nomethetic versus idiographic orientations.
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Understanding versus explanation.

One tension is between trying to understand the perspectives of those involved in situations or events in their own terms and then the researcher developing their own scientific explanations; explanations which may of course be at odds with the participants' understandings. Hammersley (2008) suggests that participants themselves provide or produce ‘thick descriptions’ and the researcher then provides a description, building a theoretical interpretation on top of these. Who decides what is relevant?

Nomethetic versus Idiographic orientations.

These two orientations have different aims. Nomethetic seeks general types of processes that produce social phenomena on one hand and seeking to capture the uniqueness of a particular situation on the other. As Hammersley (2008) argues:

‘He (Geertz) obviously believes that it is possible to study the general through the particular as well as to use the general to illuminate the particular, but it remains unclear how he believes that this can be done, or how his own work does it’ (Hammersley 2008, page 63)

Whilst Hammersley (2008) recognises the importance of Geertz work, he disagrees; he thinks that the concept of ‘thick description’ does not provide an adequate rationale for how social inquiry should be pursued.

I have spent some time thinking about the implications of Hammersley (2008) arguments and how these may be relevant to an autoethnographic approach.
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Whilst I acknowledge that ethnographic researchers document the world as it appears to them, **this is all I can do**. What will influence the documentation is the way I represent these descriptions. I have used different styles of ‘structure’ and accept that possibly the best I can do is to continuously allude to something that will always be beyond complete accurate representations.

Various theoretical models and understandings of the objects and methods stand side by side. Researchers can then choose: they can weigh up against each other or combine: symbolic interactionism, ethnomethodology, phenomenology, semiotics or feminism are some of these "alternative paradigms", this sounds to me like the opening up of Triangulation (Bergman 2008) approaches.

**Crisis of representation or fourth moment**

From the mid 1980s this phase gave way to the crisis of representation or fourth moment contained various critiques within the sociology of science and ethnography began to challenge the presumption that the researcher's account of events had a privileged relationship to an external reality, or that the author could escape the subjectivity of their own biography and cultural assumptions. This makes the process of displaying knowledge and findings a substantial part of the research process. And this process of displaying knowledge and findings as a part of the findings per se seems to attract more attention. Qualitative research provides opportunities for the continuous process of constructing versions of reality.
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Another Nigel moment.

When I offer a person a clinical assessment I believe that the version people present does not necessarily correspond to the version they would have formulated at the moment when the reported event happened. It does not necessarily correspond to the version they would have given to a different assessor with different assessment questions. Different readers of the assessment interpret the assessment differently. This means that further versions of the event may emerge. Specific interests brought to the reading by the reader play a central part. In this context, the evaluation of assessment findings becomes a central topic in further discussions. There is no fixed data.

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Representational examples.

Recognizing that research can lose its freshness when it is ‘written up’ some researchers tell their research stories using new forms. Richardson (1994) for example refers to these new methods as evocative representations, in which author's

"deploy literary devices to re-create lived experience and evoke emotional responses" (Richardson 1994, page 521)

Some of the representational devices Richardson includes in this category are narratives of the self, ethnographic fiction and drama, poetic representation, polyvocal texts and mixed genres, which draw from literary, artistic and scientific traditions.

Richardson (1994) suggests that this kind of representation is becoming more common because "we are fortunate to be living in a postmodern climate" (Richardson 1994, page 517). Bateson (2001) adds to this by saying:

"At the centre of any tradition, it is easy to become blind to alternatives. At the edges, where lines are blurred, it is easier to imagine that the world
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might be different. Vision sometimes arises from confusion" (Bateson 2001, page 73)

I have read such representations. For example Margery Wolf's (1992) work, A Thrice-Told Tale, tells an ethnographic story in three different ways: as a traditional ethnography, as a set of field notes, and as a work of fiction. Wolf declares that each kind of representation should have a place:

‘Fiction can evoke a setting, a social context, an involvement of all senses in ways that enhance understanding’ (Wolf 1992, page 12).

When reading the Richardson (2004) chapter, writing: A Method of Enquiry in Denzin & Lincoln’s Handbook of Qualitative Research (2204) I made the following note for myself:

A note for myself. When writing show the reader how the context and environment I am writing in influences and shapes what I am writing. That is, my mood, my surroundings etc. If appropriate, if I want to I will let them know if I am listening to the radio, watching the rain as it bashes against the window. Am I paying attention to the gum tree in the garden? (Gum tree removed from the garden on the 21st January 2010) The one I brought for my son. What music am I listening to? Squeeze, Play compact disc

The pigmy gum tree that I brought in 2001 for my son had unfortunately become TOO BIG for the garden. I was very sad when it was cut down. I have saved some of the logs and have found a space for them in the house. I didn’t think I would become so attached to a tree.

This period highlights the struggles qualitative researchers (Clifford 1988; Clifford & Marcus 1986; Geertz 1988; Marcus & Fischer 1986; Turner & Bruner 1986) experience with knowing how and when and where to locate themselves and their ‘subjects’ in increasingly reflexive texts. This moment illuminated issues of gender, class and race, and sought new models of truth, method and representation (Rosaldo 1989). During this representational crisis, the belief that
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qualitative researchers can directly capture lived experience was disputed; experience came to be viewed as being created within the social text written by the researcher. The legitimation crisis involved a rethinking of traditional criteria for evaluating and interpreting qualitative research, re-theorising terms such as validity, generalisability, and reliability. The crisis of praxis explored the question of whether it is possible to bring about change, if society is only, and always, a text.

I am hoping to join up a divergent series of small ideas and concepts into a larger non linear storyline. As Gergen & Gergen (2002) say:

‘In using oneself as an ethnographic exemplar, the researcher is freed from the traditional conventions of writing. One’s unique voicing-complete with colloquialisms, reverberations from multiple relationships, and emotional expressiveness-is honoured’ (Gergen & Gergen 2002, page 14)

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I am reminded of a book review that my external supervisor had written. The book was Line Dancing: An Atlas of Geography Curriculum and Poetic possibilities by Wanda Hurren. I quote:

‘The inclusion of Hurren’s ‘travel notes’ (which take the form of shopping lists, reflective notes, poetry and maps), then take on a significant proportions as the subtext becomes text. Hurren speaks of the deconstruction as the process of looking up from the reading. As I reflect on my experience of reading the current text I am aware that I was caused to look up and rewrite myself in relation to the text with enormous frequency. However, there is also a significant parallel process here, that is, that the act of ‘looking up’ is exactly what Hurren and others, myself included, set out to achieve in their particular approach to teaching and learning. That the student/reader might look up and notice how they are engaged in the writing and rewriting of the world, and ‘dancing between the lines’ is one of the main purposes of poststructuralist postmodern writings (Rolfe 2000)’ (Freshwater 2002, pages 107-116)

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Influenced by Derrida (1967) whose writings ‘operate’ on different metaphoric levels, the reader of this thesis text may often be left wondering what relationships there may be between different texts? I have on occasions deliberately given very few cues. My rationale being that too many explanations may limit the reader’s imagination.

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Another moment

1965

I went swimming once with a group of friends to the King Alfred Swimming Pool in Hove. I was a good swimmer and enjoyed diving. I dived in the shallow end. My mouth hit the floor of the pool. I knocked out a triangular shape of enamel from my beautiful front two teeth. It looked like I had developed fangs. The lifeguard was very gentle and told me that he would empty the pool to try and locate the lost triangle. Over the next five or six years and many different braces I eventually ended up with two crowns. There is a gap between these crowns. The gap has become part of me and influences how I speak, how I eat and importantly how I look.

Summer 2007

My dentist told me that my crowns are gradually becoming loose and will not last much longer. She said. ‘If I make you some new crowns would you like to keep the ‘gap’? A crisis of representation perhaps? It is becoming clearer to me that that the world can only be captured from individuals unique perspective. Perhaps there is still a crisis of representation and perhaps there always will be. I think I am best situated to describe my experiences. This new approach helps to remove the risks inherent in the representation of others and allows for the production of new knowledge (Denzin & Lincoln 1994). I think that my new knowledge, for example connections with people, knowledge about the function of stories, knowledge about selves which helps me to speak from different positions.

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The above example when I was asked to give my recordings to a colleague for their interpretations, at the Institute of Psychiatry was challenging traditional ideas of science and in this instance nursing and nurse psychotherapy. I see many nursing texts and
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listen to many nursing representatives taking a privileged position that maintains a distance and objectivity at the expense of engagements and subjectivity.

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The fifth or postmodern moment

The situation in the 1990s is seen by Denzin & Lincoln (1994, 2005) as the fifth moment: narratives replaced theories, or theories are read as narratives. This moment indicates the influence of postmodernist ideas about the deconstruction of grand theories (Freshwater & Rolfe 2004) and the recasting of research as a series of narratives producing local, provisional accounts. Qualitative researchers were trying to deal with the crisis of representation, legitimation and praxis. Researchers reported their ‘findings’ in different ways; this began to include the writings of members of groups that were traditionally silenced or marginalised, for example Church (1995). There was also a move toward collaboration and cooperation and a ‘throwing out’ of the researcher as an aloof privileged person who decided what was ‘true’. The search for grand narratives was being replaced by more local small scale theories fitted to specific situations. Here the concept of narrative moves from the more literal meaning of storytelling towards an argument that research theories are forms of rhetoric or storytelling. This is where Flick (1998) has argued that:

‘narratives have replaced theories or theories are read as narratives’ (Flick 1998, page 10)
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with writers struggling to find new ways to represent the 'other'. A new form of ethnographic writing and inquiry emerged, *autoethnography* (Ellis & Bochner 1996), an autobiographical genre of writing and research that advocates an interpretative, emotional and evocative form of social science writing (Reed-Danahay 2006)

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1986

Brighton Polytechnic again. The nursing degree course continues. I attend modules about Nursing Models. (See for example Riehl & Roy 1980; Kershaw & Salvage 1986). Whilst interested in nursing theories, accompanying models and their application, my enthusiasm for learning about them at that time was limited. Many models did not seem to have much application in mental health. In order to motivate myself I wrote a case study about a Veterinary surgeon who was frightened of horses (Equinophobia). [Interestingly I found an article in the History of Psychiatry by Papakostas et al (2005): Horse Madness (hippomania and hippophobia] Anyway I digress. I combined two models; Martha Rogers (1970) Unitary Model and Calista Roy's (1984; 2009) Adaptation Model. I called the integrated model The Roy Rogers Model. At the time I thought this was funny. I still think it's funny. Whilst awarded a pass mark the tutor’s comments said that I was being facetious and not taking my studies seriously enough. What was an attempt to use grand narratives to produce a more local small scale theory to fit a specific situation clearly didn’t work on this occasion.

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The sixth moment

This stage is characterised by post-experimental writing, linking issues of qualitative research to democratic policies, often referred to as the Narrative linguistic turn. There was encouragement to think of new ways of communication; an attempt to shrink the gap between social sciences and the humanities. Researchers presented their work using poetry, drama, performance and visual and conversational models.
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January 2000 - Hospital

By the time I got to hospital I had used up all my narratives. I had run out of things to say and as far as I was concerned had so far been unsuccessful in trying to explain what I was thinking and feeling. I had resorted to self damaging ways of communicating. My difficulties had separated me from people; people I knew and loved. Now I was in a hospital about 60 miles from home; even further separation. The friends who visited me would have seen a very quiet withdrawn person. I wanted to see them but felt ashamed. I thought I had a personality disorder and this perception was confirmed by my clinical nursing notes (I was shown my nursing notes by a nurse). In spite of what seemed like reasonable internal dialogues I felt like a failure. Like Church (1995) I knew that I did not want:

‘to psychologize my breakdown but’ wanted ‘to socialize it’ (Church 1995, page 53)

I knew other people who had experienced clinical depression and had ‘come through it’. Why couldn’t I? Why didn’t I?

I was unable to help Nigel in 1999 and early 2000. I needed help.

Aaron Becks (1983) theoretical cognitive model suggests that sociotropy and autonomy are possible predisposing factors in the development of depression. These two cognitive styles are inherent to the cognitive theory of depression (Beck, Rush, Shaw & Emery 1979).

Sociotropy is characterized by a high investment in interpersonal relationships, a desire to please others to avoid disapproval in order to secure attachments and build relationships and a fear of separation and abandonment. If someone's cognitive style is particularly sociotropic, they are going to be more vulnerable to an adverse event that is interpersonal in nature, such as loss of a loved one.

In contrast autonomy focuses on a need for independence, control, achievement of personal goals, being able to act without the need of others and personal freedom to reduce the possibility of failure. I had grown up as someone who valued highly my independence and control over my destiny.
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The seventh or methodologically contested moment

The seventh moment is a term used to describe the trend to open doors to new ways of studying and looking at human behaviour, attitudes and conditions. It is a period of ‘ferment and explosion’ (Denzin & Lincoln 2000, page 2-12) that is defined by breaks from the past, a focus on previously silent voices and a concern with moral discourse, with critical conversations about democracy, race, gender, class, nation, freedom and community (Lincoln & Denzin 2000, page 1048).

In this ‘moment’ researchers use a variety of qualitative approaches to understand and improve practice. There is an intermingling of literary, poetic, journalistic, factual and ethnographic writing and representation. No one form is privileged over another (Denzin 2001, page 7). It is described as a ‘methodologically contested present’ (Denzin & Lincoln 2005, page 20) and is characterised by an appearance of chaos and multiplicity that had led to the abandoning of older simplistic means of classifying research approaches and paradigms in the shadow of the rise of ‘conjugated and complex new perspectives’ (Denzin & Lincoln 2005, page 1115). All types of inquiry are concerned to some degree with ‘what is’ and the different ways it can be shown. It has been described as being a period of much anxiety and conflict as the field developed institutions and thus needed ways of achieving consensus on topics such as how to decide which articles to publish.
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The eighth moment; Methodological backlash

‘We are not saying that the cutting edge is located in the present. We are saying that the present is politically charged space. Complex pressures both within and outside of the qualitative community are working to erase the positive developments of the past 30 years’ (Denzin & Lincoln 2005, page 20).

They describe the eighth moment as comprising of four strands: the reconnection of social science to social purpose, the rise of indigenous social sciences(s) crafted for the local needs of indigenous peoples, the decolonization of the academy, and the return “home” of Western social scientists as they work in their own settings using approaches that are vastly different from those employed by their predecessors.

The ninth moment; fractured future

This is one of a ‘fractured future’ of a strong methodological, and status, divide between qualitative and quantitative approaches. Thus, it would seem from Denzin and Lincoln’s observations, how we bridge the gaps of purpose, focus, rationale and understanding that continue to separate qualitative and quantitative researchers remains as significant an issue for researchers in the 21st century as it has been for our predecessors. Their hope is that others may come forward with similar enterprises. Denzin & Lincoln (2005) call this “the methodologically contested present” (Denzin & Lincoln 2005, page 1116) of the Eighth and Ninth moments in contemporary research. Denzin & Lincoln’s (2005) “new interpretive community” (Denzin & Lincoln 2005, page 1118) is characterised by participation, caring and reciprocity. Situated in the borderlands, this moment
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provides a space; a space where new and innovative solutions to problems that individual subjectivities have failed to remedy may emerge. This moment is marked by researchers concerned with social justice, liberation methodology and moral purpose.

According to Denzin and Lincolns (2005) accounts the future for qualitative researchers appears fraught with struggles surrounding ethics and funding and around the ongoing concern of representation. Denzin & Lincoln (2005) argue on the one hand, creating open-ended, problematic, critical, polyphonic texts, given the linearity of written formats and the post structural problem of the distance between representation and the realities being represented, grows more difficult, whilst on the other hand, engaging performative forms of social science can be difficult in many venues. Traditional texts are far more portable, albeit far less emotionally compelling. Performing social justice, examining ways in which our work can serve social justice, may be the teleological framework for a reimagined social science (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, page 1124)

Discussion

Lincoln and Denzins' (2005) chronology is I believe not without its problems. Not least I think it is an American centric view of the research literature and in particular under-represents developments outside of the United States. For example non-English language is under represented. Denzin and Lincolns
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framework also suffers from problems with such taxonomies by being over schematic and the further back their perspectives go the more homogenised and over generalised it becomes. Sparkes (2002) points out though this arbitrary history relates well to the American literature but does not parallel the experiences of British Ethnographies. I would add to this by suggesting that these moments would not parallel moments within different disciplines either. I think the framework of ‘moments’, whilst offering some guidance, is not necessarily that collaborative. Though I acknowledge ‘moments’ can be interpreted quite liberally and differently, I perceive ‘moment’ not as just being an epiphany (Denzins terminology) but also as those moments, events, happenings phases or stages in our lives that initiate some type of crystallising process or having personal significance to us as individuals.

March 2000

One of the nurses on the ward tells me that I am going to be given some time off of the ward unaccompanied. I make my way up to Soho in the west end of London. There is a take away cafe in Charing Cross Road that sells what I think are the best Falafels in the city. (A falafel is a fried ball or patty made from ground chick peas and or fava beans). I first tried Falafels on a visit to Jerusalem in 1976. I brought a Falafel and some pita bread and made my way to Tower records in Piccadilly. On the walk I munched my way thought my snack. For a short period all seemed well. I was anonymous and content. At Tower records I brought myself two compact discs.

1. Pieces in a Modern Style (2000) by William Orbit
2. Painted From Memory (1998) by Elvis Costello and Burt Bacharach

I also brought a small personal compact disc player. Interesting how songs seemed to fit into where we are at that time. A crystallising. One of the songs on the Costello and Bacharach compact disc ‘This house is empty now’ was particularly poignant and painful. It is a song about a couple breaking up. The protagonist is sat in their empty house. The partner has taken their belongings. I interpreted this song literally and metaphorically. My house was
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empty now. Where did I belong? I also thought that my life, my brain, my whole being was ‘empty now’.

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My ‘moments’ vary in magnitude to the outsider listening to my stories, but to me, they are all rich seconds, maybe hours or sometimes days in my life. The linking of actual real people’s experiences with the discourses surrounding them is, to me, what Denzin and Lincolns ‘moments’ might mean. I am interested in the embedding of theoretical concerns within peoples own personal narratives.

It seems to me that qualitative approaches and its ‘moments’ is a contextual product. The situatedness of knowledge and recognition that academic and other knowledge are always situated, always produced by positioned people working in/between all kinds of locations working up/on/through all kinds of research (Cook 2005). In recent years there have been many developments (moments) that have thrown the approach into a ‘messiness’ which Denzin and Lincoln (2005) suggest is the result of ‘the intense desire of a growing number of people to explore the multiple unexplored places of a global society in transition (Denzin & Lincoln 2005, page 1116)

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Objectivity    Exhibitionist
Keeping a distance    Going native
Self indulgent    Self knowing
One truth    Multiple truths
Discover    Construct
Discover self    Inventing self
Realist tales    Confessional tales
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Each time I read this passage I am reminded how my thinking has developed. I am trying to move away from binaries.
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I have been able to test out my thinking in the public domain in the course of this inquiry. I have been invited several times to present my work to date. This representation of self to others has included for example a poster presentation at the Sussex Partnership NHS Trust Inaugural Research and Development conference. This opportunity was an interesting one for me and seemingly the organisers. See below:

Dear Nigel,

The Marketing Department who are responsible for producing your poster have asked me whether you could rearrange your poster so it is more consistent with the layout of the others, i.e. to have headings as follows:

Rationale, Aims & Objectives, Methodology, and Implications.

I know that the methodological approach you are employing, Autoethnography, is different from the others but is there still some scope for restructuring your material?

Regards,

**********************
This ‘poster’ experience felt like another problem that people were experiencing with autoethnography and me? The posters seem to me to represent the trust as a homogenous group of employers who may think differently but needed to be seen to present the same. I understood and appreciated that wall space would be limited at the conference. However I had an idea that had all the poster presenters been given the dimensions of their respective wall space, then ‘we’ could have used that space in our own creative ways. As Richardson writes (2000):

‘There is no single way—much less one “right” way—of staging a text' (Richardson 2000, page 936)
I have also been invited each academic term to present to Post Graduate Qualitative Module students. These have been invaluable experiences; exposing my selves to 2—30 new people for a couple of hours.

I have taken as many opportunities as possible to present my study to work mates (as my Dad would have called them—embodied language?). These performative presentations have been during our monthly ‘education’ meetings. These offerings have co-opted an audience of critical colleagues, who have been invited regularly to provide feedback on the robustness of my work. These dialectical experiences have been important for reflection and associated reflexivity. Such feedback has helped me grapple with issues in my inquiry and to appreciate living autoethnographic theory. To develop the reflective and reflexive skills of the judging spectator requires what Arendt (2002) calls a ‘two in one dialogue with the self’, a process which I locate in reflection as a:

‘dialogue of myself with myself…… in which I am both the one who asks and the one who answers’ (Arendt, cited in Coulter & Weins 2002, page 19)

Early 2000

I was keen to try and resolve any difficulties with the young nurse who had called me a ‘cunt’. I wanted my stay in this hospital to offer me a helpful and productive therapeutic experience. Having spent many years as a charge nurse in a busy in patient unit I did not want to become, however innocently, ‘The Unpopular Patient’ (Stockwell 1984). Staff morale and service user’s dissatisfaction is evidenced in literature (See for example Clarke and Wilson 2009) and I did not want to be treated unfairly or become what the Medical Historian Roy Porter (1987) describes as a being a ‘non-identity or non
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person’ (Porter 1987, page 25). Stockwell’s (1984) text describes how some nurses could perhaps unknowingly, becomes prejudiced towards some patients. She suggests that an unpopular patient is one who is seen for example as being non compliant, resisting the treatment being offered or one who the staff think should not be on the ward. I was trying very hard to improve my distress.

I often think about this incident, particularly when I visit London and see the hospital. It is not so upsetting now. Maybe this young nurse was stressed, maybe he had been told to ‘get me out of my room’. What I do know is that I do not know why. I could spend a long time trying to understand this or move on. I have taken many opportunities to talk with student Nurses, clinical Doctoral students and qualified in patient staff about my experiences of being an inpatient. I talk with them about what it is like to be in receipt of care. I think trying ideas at a local level may be more productive that trying to ‘change’ a wider audience. I have also written some work about my experiences; in a reflective and reflexive journal and also contributed to books (Short N 2007a & Short N 2007b) and a journal (Short N, Grant A & Clarke L 2007). I think this way of personal writing and dissemination tells me something about me and my gently ‘trying things from the quiet often unnoticed corner’ approach. I think this may also be representative of what Pennebaker (2004) discusses in his book ‘Writing to Heal: A Guided Journal for Recovering from the Trauma & Emotional Upheaval’. He suggests that:

‘expressive writing may be a potentially effective method for you to deal with a trauma or another emotional upheaval’ (Pennebaker 2004, page 3)

***************

4th December 2009
I am invited to present a Keynote speech at a ‘Recovery showcase’ conference organised by Berkshire NHS Trust

I talk about storytelling and how my stories have helped me on my recovering journey. I suggest that our individual stories aren’t fixed and offer opportunities for transformation.

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Traditionally, knowledge has been passed from generation to generation through storytelling, myths and legends. We have valued local stories and the lived experience. By placing ourselves within the text, by actively deconstructing dominant discourses and the taken for granted assumptions of routine custom
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and practice (Derrida 1981) and by refusing to privilege one ‘story’ over another
and by allowing new stories to develop we have come to a ‘narrative turn’.

As well as gathering local stories, autoethnographic research actively includes and
welcomes the researcher’s story, thus making transparent the values and
transforming psychoepistemology that I hold. These constructs ‘must’ influence
the research process and its outcomes. This is what I am referring to as
researching reflexivity. It is by this means that I hope to co-create many layered
stories that honour the messiness and complexity of human life (Geertz 1973,
1983; Speedy 2001, cited in Etherington 2004) and enable me to create meanings

In reviewing this chapter I have become aware of the limitations of linear
chronological descriptions. In trying to add to the history of qualitative research
there is the complicated issue of who is doing the describing? I began to wonder
about the dominant discourses that a lone enthusiastic ethnographer may have
been met with on their return from an exotic culture during different ‘moments’.
I am also aware of Foucault’s (2002) ideas that we are all constructed within
discourses. If I accept this view then this writing is within another discourse, is this
a dominant discourse? I have experienced some autoethnographers who seem to
be granted more dominance than others. Being positioned again?

Lincoln and Guba (2000) state that narrative texts:
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‘...seek to break the binary between science and literature to portray the contradiction and truth of human experience, to break the rules [to show] how real humans cope with both the eternal varieties of human existence and the daily irritations and tragedies of living that existence. Postmodern representations search out and experiment with narratives that expand the range of understanding, voice and the storied variations in human experience’ (Lincoln and Guba 2000, page 184).

17th April 2009

It’s a Friday. It’s the fourth time I have been invited to talk about my research to a group of Qualitative Research students at the University of Brighton. As we introduce ourselves I note that each group has some Geographers amongst them. I have found some Autoethnographies written by Geographers, for example:

Butz and Besio (2004) The value of autoethnography for field Research in transcultural settings. The Professional Geographer 56(3): 350-360. I then have a conversation with two Geography students. They are both enrolled on a Doctoral programme. They tell me how they have used the autoethnographic approach with their undergraduate students on their recent field trips to Northern Africa. They tell me they are very enthusiastic about autoethnography. They tell me that this approach is new to Geography and is being met with some opposition from within the discipline of Geography. I then find more experimental work in Geography journals.


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An idea. A light bulb moment!

Auto geography???

As these 'moments' are not like geological seams that are mined to extinction, but overlap and are often working simultaneously, I particularly advocate the eighth moment, and this promotes an appreciation and recognition of various methods and perspectives of qualitative research. Through my own experiences, research has not yet come close to the eighth moment and that the positivist research paradigm is still very much favoured, particularly within certain institutional power-knowledge-discourse confinements. I argue that poly-represented data has a valid place in the development and strengthening of qualitative research and that it has a resonating methodology and theoretical base. It strengthens personal reflective narrative writing and promotes an epistemology for consciousness.

As I read and tried to understand the moments I wondered. Let's suppose for a moment that the standards by which we judged these moments were simply a made-up set of expectations-- conventions of a particular culture, from a particular time in history. What then determines that others who are outside the group that determined such conventions (for example, people "from another culture") would know what those conventions are, believe in them, or adopt them fully and in the way the convention originators
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intended? What in fact determines that such conventions are necessarily appropriate (or the best prescriptions) for people of the "other" culture?

My text, though messy, is not without order. Nor does it exist in a vacuum, apart from a history an academic legacy— of messy textuality. Messy texts, like messy children, may come from very clean and traditional ancestors. Messy adolescents, rebelling and then settling down or not.

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Summary

In this chapter I have discussed Denzin and Lincoln's Moments as they record them. I have offered my understandings of these moments and have used some experiences to demonstrate moments that I have had. The moments that Denzin and Lincoln talk about have problems of representation for me. Their descriptions are unable to account for all the confounding variables that have occurred during the making of this history. This chapter has been a useful and productive vehicle for me to try and understand the impact of ethnography and in particular autoethnography. What is ‘it’ trying to achieve? I often feel caught between what I am able to portray the world in all its diversity and complexity whilst presenting it into a coherent and stable representation.
This chapter addresses some of the philosophical principles that have influenced
me in the development of this thesis. I introduce how themes emerged for me at
the early stages of the Doctoral journey and in addition how these developments
have continued. It is important to emphasise however, that this thesis is an ever
developing work and like Nigel, this thesis is a work in progress or as Giddens
(1991) suggests ‘a reflexive project’ (Giddens 1991, page 5). Whilst I initially liked
the sound of this ‘reflexive project’, I then read the work of Adams (2003; 2006;
2007) who takes Giddens (1991) reflexive project further by suggesting that the
‘reflexive project ‘concept; which exercises a voluntary relationship from a neutral
and separate cultural landscape (Giddens 1994) is unhelpful and redundant.
Adams (2003) argues for a self that is aware of the social and rational but that this
position is not privileged over the utility of the unconscious, the irrational and the
emotional. He continues by discussing the existential self and the ambiguous self.
Further to this Grant (2010) suggests:

‘Given the acceptance of socially constructed selves who are ‘messy’ and
non-rational, a prism is arguably a more appropriate metaphor than a mirror
in capturing the cultural refraction of individuals involved in day-
to-day identity work’. (Grant 2010, page 111)

It would seem then from Adams (2003) post modern position that reflexivity is
not intended to remove individuals from the many cultures they inhabit; we are
always culturally embedded. Thus, self-reflexivity is not a fixed reflective project,
more a future-directed project. Our reflexive self’s are embedded in cultures and
It means what? Blimey
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cultural symbols and this positioning may be liberating, emancipating or perhaps restricting.

I continue by taking you through my discoveries, my understandings, my applications and my utility of flexible relativist multiple realities ontology and subjectivist social constructionism epistemological positions where people co-create understandings.

February 2006.

Imagine. I am standing in the University of Brighton library at Queenwood, Darley Road, Eastbourne, BN20 7UN, staring at rows and rows of books about ontology and epistemology.

There are so many books about these subjects that I have absolutely no idea where to commence my search. I was unsure where to start. Who do I read first? What do I read first? How do I know how to discover philosophy? Do I have an
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embodied philosophy (Spinelli & Marshall 2001)? I felt lost, disheartened and I left the building.

I should never have made it to college, let alone made it on to a Professional Doctorate course. Who was I kidding, an unproductive product of the English secondary modern school system, where the teacher’s role seemed to be one of keeping us all under control.

The formal research approaches I have been introduced to on the course (and previously) seemed pre-existing. The philosophies, methodologies and methods had already been constructed for me, they were there. I felt, but certainly was not being forced, to fit into an existing ontology and epistemology; a passive recipient. This seemed contradictory to the idea that we need to find an approach that best suited the question that we wanted to try and answer. The methodology chosen depends on what one is trying to answer rather than a commitment to a particular paradigm (Cavaye 1996). I couldn’t find a philosophy that ‘fitted’. I decided to play around and deconstruct; I found this a helpful way of teasing ideas, methodologies and methods; mentally and physically. I wanted to see if there were any hidden connections, hidden relationships before trying to undertake the construction of research.

It seems to me that many epistemological questions; those questions concerned with sources of knowledge, nature and the validity given to the different ways of using knowledge (Rolfe 2000) had largely been constrained to philosophical enquiry. I was interested if psychological and philosophical understandings could be woven together. During my BSc in nursing (1986-1990) I read many texts
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purporting to be philosophical; drawing on theoretical frameworks and models.

They often didn’t mean anything to me. They rarely seemed applicable. For example:


Who do you think you are, doing a Doctorate? I find I am regularly asking myself this question. I think my epistemological positions are ones of uncertainty; uncertain epistemology.

On my way home from the library I had been thinking about psychology and epistemology. Why not Google these words? When I got home I googled psychology and epistemology

What would I find on the computer? Much to my surprise I found many sites about a conceptual framework called *psychoepistemology* (Rand 1971). I liked what I began to read. It resonated and like a pair of well worn Doc Marten boots or shoes it seemed to ‘feel’ ok.

I started to question my knowledge. What did I know? What were the implications of this knowledge, if any?
There seemed to be many parallels between the Doctorate and cognitive behaviour therapy. We as students had come along with beliefs and world views, some perhaps unknown. People come along to therapy with their beliefs and world views, perhaps unknown.

One difficulty that some people experience is the realisation that as they make their transformations that they may have invested in a belief or world view that has not been helpful perhaps based on limited information or is inaccurate.

As I started to talk to colleagues at work and college about my readings and accompanying writing, I started to notice an articulation. I was able, much to my surprise, to express myself, to describe what I was thinking about, much the same way that the self is produced through articulation. It became clear to me that this study had its origins in my psycho-epistemology. I became fascinated with how this epistemology contributes to the different ways I am in the world, and that my different ways of being have been formed with perhaps little or limited knowledge or limited opportunities to thoroughly investigate how I had been produced. What was maintaining me?

1966.

Class 2b. Our history teacher ‘The Flycatcher’ has just thrown my written work book across the classroom. ‘This is pathetic’ he shouts I can hear some laughter behind me. I think the class are laughing at The Flycatcher. ‘You’re writing is appalling’. He was correct. My written work was appalling. The presentation on the paper was often unclear; a scribbling mess. He throws my paper across the room. The sheets of paper slowly find their way to the floor. (I thought this was amusing as well). More laughter. ‘Put out your hand’ he shouts. The leather strap came down on my out stretched palm six times. Ouch, ouch, ouch, ouch, ouch and ouch.

My friends and I spoke in our break time about the Flycatchers appalling conduct and his poor teaching skills. We laughed again.

I asked my older sister that evening what she would do. I had seen her handwriting. I knew she had a pleasant style of writing; writing that could be read. All the different letters were written individually in straight horizontal
and vertical lines. It was easy to read. I spent that night attempting to copy her style.

The following day, with some trepidation, I presented ‘The Flycatcher’ with my homework.

‘Put your hand out’. The leather strap came down on my outstretched palm. ‘How dare you change your handwriting without asking me first’?

My Psycho-epistemology is interested in how I comprehend and process information and how I deal with abstract concepts. My Psycho-epistemology is interested in the interrelationship between my mind, my body, and my spirit. By mind, I mean both the reasoning, volitional mind and the subconscious mind. By body, I mean the particulars of my body and also the kinds of motions my body performs, that is, motor control and involuntary actions (Shilling 1994). By spirit, I mean my emotional experiences of life; this includes a broad range of particular emotional responses that I can identify in the different situations I find myself in. The concerns I have with my reflections and reflexivity and the relationships I have with my ever evolving selves and the organisation I am employed within, warrants exploration and accompanying theoretical discussions. I think this will be a way of connecting the personal to the cultural. (See earlier aims)

As a result of my Psycho-epistemological enquiries I discovered a particular theoretical framework associated with Royce & Mos (1980) called epistemic styles. Royce (1964) developed a theory of knowledge, which is founded on the principle that there are three fundamental ways of knowing or epistemic styles: empiricism, rationalism and metaphorism (Royce & Powell 1983).

- **Empiricism:** (Observing) Testing ideas by making reliable and valid observations of the real world (focusing on the senses and external experiences)
It means what? Blimey
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- **Rationalism**: (Thinking) Thinking clearly and logically about ideas and looking for logical inconsistency (Using cognitive processes)

- **Metaphorism**: (Using Imagination) Using imagination and creativity to look for artistic consistency and analogies with other ideas. (Focusing on symbols and metaphoric experience and how knowledge fits with meanings in life)

These epistemic styles reflect differences in the way people evaluate and test the validity of their beliefs. According to Royce and Powell (1983) each epistemic style is a function of a different core criterion for truth. I spent much time thinking more about epistemic styles. I began to disagree with their values. The three different styles feel regressive and fixed. The construct seem to suggest that in each style people return to or utilise a fixed fundamental value. As Margolis (1991) questions:

> ‘What reason do we ever have for supposing that there are discernable criteria, timeless suitable, for matching truth, claims to truth and falsity tout court, or for reliably approximating them?' (Margolis 1991, page 4)

Social constructionist arguments generally stand opposed to fixed and rigid formulations, even those of our own making. I remain attracted however to an epistemic assumption that:

> ‘All theories of psychological change are fundamentally theories of learning and all theories of learning ultimately entail a theory of knowing’ (Mahoney 1991, page 26)

Where was my knowing? What was my knowing and where did it come from?

As a consequence of further reading and my accompanying experiences, I began thinking about how had I constructed myself, and how I had been constructed, who had been involved and how did these constructions use my multiple voices and me. What developed was an interest in constructivism (individual) and
constructionism (relational), with an emphasis on social construction ideas, particularly with its attendant subjectivity and reflexivity. What emerged was the challenge to ‘tell reflexivity in a reflexive way’ (Roth 2002, page 4). Is it possible to ever achieve ‘knowledge’ about ourselves; a thorough uncompromising epistemology. The knowledge we have about ourselves is time bound. It is influenced by the different discourses we are embodied within; our multiple relational beings.

Psycho-epistemology and Constructivism/constructionism.

There is no meaning without a mind (Crotty 2005) and embodiment. So different meanings are not necessarily discovered but constructed and these meanings are constructed by my psychoepistemology. Easy! If only it was this easy.

The role of meaning is important (Frankl 1963) and as humans we have a natural desire to try and understand and make meanings out of our experiences. As Dewey (1933) writes:

‘Only when things about us have meaning for us, only when they signify consequences that can be reached by using them in certain ways, is any such thing intentional, deliberate control of them possible’ (Dewey 1933, page 19)

Meaning assists us to construct our realities. Whilst I am suggesting that we all have our own psychoepistemology, can this approach offer people opportunities to move away from traditional modernist ideas maybe. I believe that mental health professionals and in particular psychotherapists think they already do this. I
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am not so sure. I think we are all encouraged to reflect but with little emphasis put on reflexivity however. In this way experiences often remain the same.

I reflect on family conversations. I particularly started paying attention to the stories we tell each other about events that we had all been at; those day trips to the Isle of Wight, the Donkey Derby at Wiversfield, east Sussex. Why were our accounts often so very different? It seems that history proceeds and follows us and that ‘we are always embedded in a story that is not of our making’ (Greenberg 1995, page 273)

In The Film Programme on BBC Radio four (23rd January 2009) Peter Morgan, the award-winning writer of The Queen, The Last King Of Scotland and The Deal explains how he adapted his own stage play for the screen in his film, Frost/Nixon, a dramatic retelling of the post-Watergate television interviews between British talk show host David Frost and former American president Richard Nixon. Morgan discusses how he met many people who had witnessed the interviews. He tells us how surprised he was by the many and varied interpretations of the same event.

For most of my early life I have accepted other people’s accounts of a situation. If I didn’t agree with their account then there must have been something that I missed!” They must be correct. They must have got it right. As O’Connor and Hallam (2000) suggest:

‘The problem remains of how to account for a particular embodied person, including the power of the person to influence the conversation’ (O’Connor and Hallam (2000, page 242)

My experience suggests to me that that power relations are reproduced through discourses; people and institutions are structured around power and reproduce power relations. As Foucault (1980) reports, power is associated with knowledge and knowledge is associated with power.

How can I explain this? I began to read texts about realism and relativism.
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Realism.

My understanding is that realism means that reality is independent of the observer. It is an ontology that is prevalent in natural sciences; it is ontology of positivism which arguably is the prevalent research paradigm. Human beings describe their worlds through their paradigmatic lenses. This seems to suggest that realist ideas produce self fulfilling prophecies, that people collude and perhaps invent the very things that they pretend to be measuring.

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It’s hard to be politically conscious and upwardly mobile at the same time. (Lily Tomlins character Edie, a 1970’s radical feminist). Like Edie’s character I have found and continue to find it difficult to come from a working class background (and remain politically conscious of it) and be an apparent academic (with its associated implications of moving on up). It often feels like I don’t belong to either culture. I often sit in college thinking of my Doctoral colleagues as ‘them’. They are the bright witty clever ones. I began to think about what contributions I would be making for ‘my class?’ I was receiving an education BUT what did that have to do for my siblings? As Hurst (2008) points out:

‘What was the point of higher education for those of us from the working class if it just made us leave everyone behind?’ (Hurst 2008, page 335)

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Relativism

So what other ontologies and epistemologies do we have? One example of non realist ontology is the constructionist position. This position is rooted in the notion that ‘realities’ are co-constructed by relational participants. This view acknowledges the legitimacy and reality of different perspectives on social phenomena.
It means what? Blimey
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The world exists out there independently of our being conscious of its existence.

In addition:

‘It becomes a world of meaning only when meaning-making beings make sense of it’ (Crotty 1998, page 10)

Therefore reality is not given but is the result of human action of perception which then constitutes the phenomena under investigation. My understanding of Constructionism would suggest that clinical practice for example, cannot be seen objectively. It is rather created, invented and constituted during the process. Gergen (1994) proposes that constructionism is ‘ontologically mute’ (Gergen 1994, page 72). He continues by saying that once we try to articulate what is out there then we enter the world of discourse. At this moment construction commences. This framework of ideas supports my personal ontology! My ontology is personal and is in the moment of all my different and varied experiences.

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‘Field workers, unlike literary critics, historians or linguists, face the problem that their texts (on behaviour, belief, ritual etc) taken from the field must be constructed, since they do not come pre-packaged’ (Van Maanen 1988, page 76)

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Gergen’s (1993) discussions of the socially constituted self introduced me to the concept of the self as relational; a relational self and transformed the notion of the self as a relationship. In this way I believe that social constructionism offers a compassionate route to multiple worlds and a standpoint for many different orientations. To be socially constituted seemed to relate to a relocation of my selves within a social arena. So this new and liberating perspective helped me
begin to understand how my attempts to be a stable consistent single self operating independently of this social arena may be impossible.

The ‘relational’ self is in contrast to the ‘individual social self’ and traditional accounts of the self as ontology of the interior. This is not to be confused with the idea of a self in relationship; rather, Gergen (1995) is suggesting a self that is produced through relationships.

‘That is not what I meant Sir’
‘Well you need to make yourself clearer Nigel’.

I began to think about the following cycle

Do I like being obscure? Do I like being pedantic? Is it possible to know oneself and other people to know the unknowable me?

As I reflect on this reflection I experience a contradiction in my mind. I think the more we get to ‘know’ someone the richer the relationship may become. Yet I am equally attracted to the
mystery of people. I don’t like being ‘pinned down’. Do other people?

I am reminded as I write this, of a situation.

I met up with a woman whom I had a lived with in Brighton during the early 80’s. She and her husband, who I also know, visited me for a cup of tea and some cakes. I hadn’t seen her for about four years. I asked them what they would like to drink. She says tea.

‘How do you take your tea? I ask
‘Don’t you remember?’ she says.
I was allowing for change.

Social Construction

The following vignettes are examples from a couple of interactions from work. I use these to illustrate and try to understand what is meant by social construction.

As this is a new ‘idea’ to me I am trying to develop an early understanding; to synthesise these experiences and acknowledge that I am made up of different stories.

Conversation with psychology colleague:

‘Nigel would you be able to see Betty (name changed)? I think you may be more appropriate than me’

‘I would be happy to see her. I’m interested in what you think I might be able to offer her?’

‘Your gentle approach’. She says with a genuine smile.

A few weeks after I have seen Betty I receive a phone call from Wendy (name changed) a Community Mental Health Nurse:

‘Hello Nigel’, Wendy here. I have had a phone call from Betty’s Mum. She and Betty were concerned about your last session. They would like you to be more sensitive and gentle’
It means what? Blimey  
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The examples above, give two different accounts of how I am appraised by three different people. So which is true?

February 2000-St Thomas’s hospital London

Thoughts drop in unannounced
My awareness is grabbed
I have to attend
   Dialogues percolating through and
   Then the sparks begin to fly
   The tinder is crisp and vulnerable
   It’s destroying me again
   Their continuous streams
   Their continuous screams
Blue linen trousers
   Take away the edge
   Ease the burden
   Bringing smiles all round
   Temporal tyrants attack every core
   Sacred, secular sources
   Invade my very being
   Press the escape button
The gala melon changes shape
   Bananas begin to spread and shed
   Their skin
   Innocent oranges change and
   Turn mouldy
   Neglected in their burial bowl
   Arab songs keep me entertained
   White clouds have lifted my soul
   A phone call interrupted
   A mundane evening tape after tape after tape
Would I lie to you?

   Tomorrow will find me peeling of the label
   Another gift
   Another token
   Rubber plants
   Growing more dark shiny leaves

**My life needs re-potting.**

‘The human bundle of exposed nerve endings stands alone in the culture supposedly perceiving and registering the various happenings around him’

(Van Maanen 1988, page 76)
Reflexivity

My children have lived in Hastings for most of their lives. We moved here when they were 2 years three months old and three months old respectively. Their Grandparents, Aunts, Uncles and Cousins live in different places, some in Brighton, some in London, some in Chichester, some in Neckerhausen, Germany and for a while their Mums father lived in Alcalali, Spain. The consequence of this geographic positioning was the infrequent family ‘get togethers’.

I noticed that when we did meet the parental conversations would be peppered with the following:

Hasn’t he grown?
She has more teeth than last time.
His hair is much longer now.

As a parent, people were making observations about my children that had clearly taken place (I have photographic evidence as well), but often without me noticing; incremental developments. The transformations and evolutions we all make are often very subtle and unnoticeable. This process of ‘becoming’ implies movement and continuity as opposed to a striving towards a state where we ‘arrive’.

Etherington (2004) reminds me that we are constantly developing our identities; identities are never fixed, even if we may not always be aware of the subtle ways we are evolving. I think that reflection and accompanying reflexivity is of central importance for the social researcher, where we and the research setting, that is the social world, are clearly very close. The products of research are affected by the personal and the process of doing research. This has relevance for me as a psychotherapist, a teacher and as a person. If I don’t evolve, if the clients I see don’t evolve, if the students I work with don’t evolve then surely something is amiss! Mental Health professionals are encouraged to use the self; the therapeutic self (Peplau 1952, Freshwater 2002 and Williams & Davis 2004). How can we do this without at least trying to get to know our multipleselves?
Autoethnography has begun to appear in nursing journals and I would welcome increased representation.

The social club at the large county hospital where I did my Registered Mental Nurse training was an integral part of my nurse education. It is where we reflected on our shifts, where we received informal supervision and where plans were made (reflexivity) based on our reflections. We didn’t call it reflective practice, clinical supervision or reflexivity, but I would suggest that this is what was happening. The hospital began to close. The wards and staff moved to the towns where the ‘patients’ were from and the informal systems of meeting were transferred to a pub in the town where we had all moved to. As we all slowly began to embody ourselves in our new accommodations; bedsits, houses and shared flats, we met less and less in the new social club.

It seemed to me that once the above structures were made formal that staff started to object. Attendances at ‘reflective practice’ meetings evaporated. Clinical supervision was often seen as scrutiny rather than productive learning and plans generated through reflexivity were often met with cynicism and obstacles.

‘Life is ‘lived through the subject’s eye, and that the eye, like a camera’s, is always reflexive, non linear, subjective, filled with flashbacks, after images,
dream sequences, faces merging into one another, masks dropping and new mask being put on’ (Denzin 1992, page 27)

I think that in order to develop reflexivity a total commitment to an uncompromising self reference is needed. It has been suggested that no process of knowing is completely reflexive until the known is explicitly turned on the knower, who then becomes self reflexive or self conscious of the process of knowing. Woolgar (1988) refers to this as ‘radical constitutive reflexivity’ (Woolgar 1988, page 22). This supports my developing ideas about the nature of knowledge and how it is produced. My attraction towards the social situated nature of knowledge is strengthened by process ontologies and social constructionist epistemologies. I think that the inclusion of the author can be incorporated without any loss of commitment to developing an understanding of the relational ‘social’.

Steirer (1995) discusses two forms of reflexivity. The first being a reflex knee jerk action that is spontaneity. The second meaning is acting in a contemplative way. A further development comes from Freshwater & Rolfe (2001) they provide three types of reflexivity:

- **Type 1: Reflection on the process of reflection (meta-reflection)**

- **Type 11: Reflexivity goes beyond the above and considers the social and political context in which experiences takes place; prompting us to consider further the ways in which these might be overcome.**

- **Type 111: Practical reflection or reflection in action; in which our experiences are reflected on and modified as it is happening.**
Whilst these descriptions ‘feel’ familiar I wish to pursue reflexivity further by looking at two writers; Giddens (1991) and Adams (2003). Giddens (1991) discusses another type of reflexivity; he calls upon us to be revising ourselves within the multiple choices we are offered in the multiple situations we find ourselves involved. One feature that I often think has been neglected by much of the social construction literature and Giddens (1991) work in particular, is the theme of power and empowerment. Giddens reflexivity thesis has been challenged on a number of key points and runs counter to other, more critical readings of contemporary experience. The implications of Giddens (1991) thesis is that one can write, erase and then re-write identities from a wide variety of possible modes of being is, I believe, only true for some in the contemporary world. Adams (2007) develops Giddens (1991) work and argues that like many rationalist theories of action, Giddens underestimates the role of traditional established structures and cultural patterns on self-definition. He continues by saying that Giddens overestimates the rational at the expense of habitual,
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rational, unconscious, ambiguous, and emotional dimensions of self and our self’s embodiment. This resonates with my earlier concerns. Do people have as many choices as Giddens suggests? I think not.

Adams continues by drawing on the work of Foucault. Foucault (1980) argued that social change has shifted regulation from external and authoritarian forms to more subtle and invisible ones that demand high levels of a constant self-surveillance:

‘a gaze which each individual under its weight will end by interiorizing’
(Foucault 1989; page 155)

In his view, the notion of self-reflexivity as individualized empowerment is a fiction that masks the increasing administration of individual lives and psyches by all manner of experts and tutelary systems; that is systems that offer protection or authority. Adams (2003) maintains we need theories that better captures the dynamic and relational embodiment of the self as well as its embeddedness in complex, differentiating social structures. We need, in short, a better understanding of reflexivity, and in the end he proposes a multidimensional reconfiguration.

The enlightened and experimental ‘self’ can also produce differences, social exclusion and marginalised selves. To engage with other people involves engaging with their sense of reality within their respective cultures. When we are involved in relationships we employ a wide range of possibilities. In his book, The

Saturated Self, Gergen (1991) suggests that the boundaries that separate self from others seem to be increasingly challenged. As individuals we continue to be exposed to pluralism, different cultures, and more diverse ideas. In this way he says that self becomes more complex. Along with the many different roles and identities that we find ourselves in, the exposure to the multiplicity of ideas challenges the view of a core or essential self. Increasingly I find my selves talking more about the different roles I am asked to fulfil.

Gergen (1991) theorises this ‘saturated self’ is result of the shift from romantic and modernist perspectives to a postmodernist perspective.

He argued that the radical changes in socialization allowed by new technologies have altered the way people perceive their identity and their relationships with others. When people in modern society experience this sense of having multiple selves, our relationships such may seem more difficult to sustain.

‘Entering a relationship with a multiplicity of potentials, each a possible invalidation of the other, makes it enormously difficult to locate steady forms of relatedness’ (Gergen 1991, page 176).

The use of face book (Face book is a global social networking website that is operated and privately owned by face book, Inc) on the internet is an example where multiple selves and identities are regularly ‘tested out’. Who are we? A person can be involved in many different types of communication with different people at the same time. Is it possible to be a stable identity?

Augoustinos and Walker (2004) support the view of the self being ‘reflexive’; a self that only has meaning in a social sense; a thinking self, a writing self and being
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a self in relation to others. Meaning for them is through relationships and contexts:

‘When we say that the distinction between personal and social is forced and fictional, we mean that the social is forever and always reproduced within the individual’ (Augoustinos & Walker 2004, page 98)

They continue with the following illustration:

To say, for example, that ‘I am bored’ is to say something about me as an individual, to be sure. But the statement only makes sense through the implicit comparison between my state of mental alertness just now and at the very least, my mental alertness at some prior or imagined other time’ (Augoustinos & Walker 2004, page 99)

Holmes (2010) describes reflexivity as’...the practices of altering one’s life as a response to knowledge about one’s circumstances (Holmes 2010, page 139). She continues by suggesting that:

‘reflexivity is an emotional, embodied and cognitive process in which social actors have feelings about and try to understand and alter their lives in relation to their social and natural environment and to others. Emotions are understood not in terms of some that may retard reflection and some that may enhance it; rather reflexivity is thought to be more than reflection and to include bodies, practices and emotions’ (Holmes 2010, page 140).

Reflexivity can be seen as an achievement that describes the mediatory process via which we react to the situations we find ourselves in. Through this process we attempt to find ways through the world and our place in it. We hope that within this place we may be able to exercise some control and be the kind of person that we want to be, within the roles that are available to us.
Summary

No intellectual development arrives as an ‘immaculate conception’. This chapter has been a marriage of many different intellectual pedigrees. I would suggest that most therapists work from a perspective that a ‘real world’ exists outside of human consciousness, I am however much more interested in the nuances of our constructions of the world. Kant ‘emphasised the transformative character of the mind, which necessarily imposes a spatial and temporal phenomena of experience’ (Neimeyer 2009, page 4). This idea launched a model of knowledge rather than a passive or receptive assimilation of ‘things in themselves’. In this chapter I have identified philosophical ideas I have been considering which contribute towards answering the aims of this thesis. The continual emergences of new epistemologies arise in part from both within and outside qualitative approaches. Kelly (1991) places importance on our personal construct system; this provides an idiosyncratic ‘map’ of the world and our place within it. Our constructs, our individualism and diversity provide our strengths and frustrations.
Theoretical perspectives

In this chapter I discuss theoretical perspectives that have influenced and encouraged my developments. I have introduced postmodern constructs and discuss how these ideas have encouraged a break with tradition to arguably more progressive presentations. In addition I discuss how I have used these ideas to develop ideas about ethics, in particular contrasting, what I refer to as traditional prescriptive ethics with relational ethics.

As I read texts about research, for example John Van Maanen 1988; Renate Rosaldo 1989 and Margery Wolf 1992, philosophy for example Rorty 1999 and Hacking 1999 and history books for example Roy Adkins 2004 book about the Battle of Trafalgar, Juliet Barker’s 2006 The Battle of Agincourt and
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Paul Preston’s 2006 book The Spanish Civil War: Reaction, Revolution and Revenge I became aware that I was able to think and feel differently about what I thought constitutes knowledge. History seems to be regularly written by the victors; victors of war or victors of dominant discourses (Foucault 1989). I had thought for many years that different people’s views, which may be contra to mine, were more valuable to listen to than mine. It ‘felt’ and ‘feels’ different now. It feels occasionally much more equitable. I was then interested in why I hadn’t thought that my opinions was as valuable as others, before. Perhaps I had thought about it and had forgotten. I became attracted to ideas of grand narratives and the concept that there are many ways of knowing and inquiring. That different ways of knowing are legitimate and that no one way should be privileged.

January 2009.

I started reading ‘Trafalgar: The Biography of a Battle’ by Roy Adkins (2004). He begins the text by informing us that:

‘As in all battles, the eyewitnesses at Trafalgar did not record minute by minute details during the fighting, but set down what they remembered afterwards. Together with the confusion of the battle and the fact that no one could see more than a small part of the action, this led to large differences between individual accounts. The greatest discrepancies are in the precise times of various incidents, where records may differ not just by minutes but by hours’ (Roy Adkins 2004, page 3)
This resonated with what I consider to be ‘social constructionist accounts’ (Gergen 1999). Different accounts of the same event. It also brings emphasis to the difficulties that people have with their memories and how difficult it can be to see an overall picture from just one vantage point, one dominant discourse; our individual interpretations. This is similar to trying to deliver and disseminate National guidelines to local contexts.

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Narratives are particular stories that explain a point of view. Meta narratives justify the story about itself. They are true because they say they are; they claim to be true. So, disciplines have a set of propositions that simply have to be accepted, because they say so and they are ‘true’.

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Lyotard (1984) offers the following:

‘simplifying to the extreme, I define postmodern as incredulity towards metanarratives’ (Lyotard 1984, page 26)

I began to question ‘evidence’ that I had relied on or been encouraged to rely on. This evidence is personal empiricism as well as more traditional ways of disseminating at school and college and influential significant others, for example my parents, my teachers and colleagues. It seemed to me that all one can ever do is describe; with all descriptions being equally valid. I can do no more than describe my experiences. Our attempts to understand realities are shaped by the discourses which we use. I think of knowledge as being a construction of dialogue; in this way understanding requires engagement with people’s subjectivity (Williams et al 1999)

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If nurse’s discourses and autoethnographers discourses are placed at the bottom of the hierarchy then we will have little influence over the shaping of our discourses.

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As Lyotard (1988) says:

‘a differend occurs, which is a case of conflict between two parties that cannot be equitably resolved for lack of rule applicable to both arguments. (Lyotard 1988, page 56)

Rolfe (2001) adds to this statement by saying:

‘The usual resolution of a differend is that the more powerful discourse asserts itself over the less powerful: ....all experiential knowledge claims by practitioners (nurses) will be judged according to the criteria of the randomised control trial and will inevitably be found lacking’ (Rolfe 2001, page 42)

Many texts within cognitive behaviour therapy for example, often construct one simple interpretation, one way of perceiving the world and that seems to be consistent with the discipline’s reliance for example on numerical data analysis (see for example: Craske 1999; Mace et al 2001) This type of therapy can appear to suggest that all see the world in the same way.

The objectivity of traditional scientific modernist worldview with its emphasis on facts, replication and generally applicable rules easily ignores the specific and localised meanings for individual people.

************************************************************************

This text has no single coherent voice. Like TS Elliot's 'The Waste Land' the writing is fractured and fragmented with multiple voices. It can feel destabilising and may disrupt your thinking. It might be incoherent and in the same way that my life is messy, this text is messy. It makes me wonder if humans need coherence. Is coherence built on a realistic ontology? Is therapy coherent?

************************************************************************

The approach of some postmodernism writings and its views that all is equal and none more dominant than another, whilst helpful, is not always necessarily
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emancipatory for people. For example Fascism is an ideology that offers little in
the way of empowerment and emancipation. Whilst many Dictators started their
political careers offering emancipation and liberation, for example Hitler, Franco
and latterly Mugabe, they developed their own specific ideologies into One world
views; views that required adherence by its supporters. Of course some
supporters of these regimes were successful and experienced privileged lives.
Some post modern ideas however, for example the breakdown of grand
narratives, liberated me and lent support to approaches that are interested in
subjectivity. Postmodernism creates doubt and is messy and unconventional.

Postmodern methodologies and accompanying methods are subject to much
critique however. For example are postmodernist approaches valid, are they
reliable and are they generalisable? I would suggest that the ‘goal’ of
postmodernism principles, if it has a goal, is not necessarily to eliminate
traditional positivistic views but to question their dominance (Gergen 2009) and
to demonstrate that it is possible to gain and share knowledge in many ways. As I
accept multiple discourses then I also accept many different endings and would
suggest that post modernism has no ‘end’ or ‘goal’.

From a postmodern viewpoint, whether knowing is partial, local, or historical, it is
still knowing (Richardson 2000). I found this view encouraging, different types of
knowing offer opportunities to feel more confident in questioning and when
necessary, abandoning well established theories and perspectives that I was
being taught.
Whilst writing this thesis I was involved in co-authoring an article. The article is an autoethnographic account of my experiences of clinical depression. My written vulnerable account was sent to friends and colleagues for their commentaries. We (the authors) had encouraging correspondence from an Editor of a journal. She wanted to publish the piece. I was both excited by this and anxious. What would my family and friends have to say about reading this for the first time? I approached my friends who contributed and also the members of my family who have are included. The three members of my immediate family were happy and have given their consent for this to happen, two of them wished to read the article before publication. The third family member gave consent for them to be included but did not wish to read anything.

Many writers now advocate for research that starts with one’s own experience (Ellis, 2004). In contrast to the dominant, objective, competitive, logical male point of view, feminist researchers for example emphasize the subjective, empathetic, process-oriented, and inclusive sides of social life. These emancipatory approaches offer opportunities to address power imbalances associated with race and class. These ideas sound exciting and more importantly for me, felt like it fitted. Critics of scientific traditions have argued for the abandonment of rationality, objectivity, and truth to move social science beyond a focus on method, toward the power of social research to have a moral effect (Bochner 2001).

I have become fascinated with new ways of trying to articulate the world and in particular the way I experience the world and the cultures I inhabit. I have always liked wandering up new alleyways, visiting places I haven’t been before. Alternative progressive approaches provide a philosophical new alleyway, an open door; a door into which autoethnography can peep and if attractive, crawl through. Taking risks and crossing borders (Rosaldo 1989).

In his book ‘Untold Stories’ Alan Bennett reminds us how overgrown twittens can become if we don’t use them frequently. We need to
use twittens regularly to keep them open and accessible.

When I reflect on my Alan Bennett analogy, it may seem contradictory. I seem to be suggesting that I like new experiences, new alleyways, and unchartered territory and yet I also like repeating some journeys. However each time I walk along a familiar alleyway I see different things and experience the situation differently. So ‘new’ and ‘old’ can provide ‘new’ information.

I have tried to manoeuvre myself towards alternative ideas rather than concentrating on deconstructing traditional ideas. I am constantly trying to avoid comparing and using binary frameworks. This is a new way of looking at knowledge for me. Life does not have to be either this or that. It can be more than this. I want to make room for other ways of knowing, creating spaces for the sharing of unique, subjective, and evocative stories of experience; stories that will contribute to our understanding of the social world and allow us to reflect on what could be different because of what we have learned.

The philosopher William James said that the world is not made up of one kind of stuff, it’s a world that like a mosaic, hangs together by its edges (Richardson 2006, page 25)

I find that the ongoing pushing of my autoethnographic stories against the world of traditional science holds encouraging and liberating emancipatory promise. It is telling me that what I know matters; not that it is more important than others or
that my view on the world is the only one, but it merely offers another view. How much more promise could it hold for people far more marginalized than I? I am warming up and feel more confident.

******************************

I am backstage. Not always knowing what to say—yet I seem to say things that seem ok. I am in the eye of a storm; sometimes drumming against the quiet. I am slowly learning to play the electric bass guitar. I like bass players who are tucked away on the stage. They play a significant role but don’t necessarily need to be seen.

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In developing alternative ideas, new ways of knowing I have told many stories. The stories I have shared are account(s) from my different perspective(s). My credibility as a storyteller and documenter will depend on how well I have developed a relationship with myself and with you the reader; this is largely determined by the character(s) I have revealed on the pages. As Geertz says (1988) ethnographers must:

‘Persuade readers that what they are reading is an authentic account by someone personally acquainted with how life proceeds in some place, at some time.’ (Geertz 1988, page 143)

Participants

‘...the constructive process is inspired by partial happenings, fragmented memories, echoes of conversations, whispers in corridors, fleeting glimpses
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of myriad reflections seen through broken glass and multiple layers of fiction and narrative imaginings' (Sparkes 2007, page 52)

As there are no other active reciprocators in the study I will be the sole author, but not the sole participant. My experiences are made up of many different stories; stories I may have heard or perhaps stories I may have been involved in constructing.

November 2008

A story

Some people seem to me to be good at promoting themselves. The different selves I know tend to shy away from the glare of publicity. I prefer the quite dark corners. I try and resist being in the spotlight. I get caught between:

- Wanting to make a difference but
- Not wanting to be that significant, to anyone.

I began to read the ideas of Thomas Kuhn. He suggested that traditional scientists were not objective or independent in their thinking. He maintained that they tried to solve problems with the knowledge they had been taught. Rather than being problem solvers he described them as puzzle solvers. Aiming to discover what they already know and designing experiments to confirm their existing knowledge.

Kuhn’s ideas helped me to accept that the way I try and overcome some problems is not only ok but can be successful. Let me give you an example of what I thought after reading his work. According to Kuhn, when scientists encounter anomalies that cannot be explained by accepted theories then a crisis occurs. During this period of crisis new ideas emerge. Eventually new ideas are formed, a new paradigm. Intellectual battles then take place between the disciples of the new paradigm and the old paradigm guard.

I don’t like battles.

I have recently joined a new team of people at work. I want to integrate. I want to be a useful team player. How have I achieved this before? I have noticed other colleagues try traditional ways of ‘telling people’ what they do. Self promotion. I have noticed that some of these efforts have been unsuccessful. How can I join this team and tell people about what I do without:

- Having a battle with them? or
- Promoting myself?
Many years ago I was involved in behavioural experiment (Bennett-Levy et al 2004) with someone I was working in the clinic with. We wanted to see what would happen to some fruit if we just left them on a shelf. We brought three apples and two Satsuma’s to the office. After several weeks they all began to change shape, change colour and curiously and unexpectedly became hard. The apples now look like wrinkled prunes and the Satsuma’s look like pieces of coral and sea anemones.

Now an interesting situation has emerged. Many of my colleagues are coming to the office I sit in to look at these pieces of fruit. I overheard one say:

‘Go into Nigel’s room and have a look at those weird shapes on the bookshelf’.

Conversations then develop. I am able to tell people the story about the fruit. This has been a useful vehicle for me to tell people about what I do. I like this. I do not set out to achieve this but when it happens it ‘feels’ good. So what has this got to do with Kuhn? I accept that what I have described is not necessarily what he said, but I have been influenced by what I think he might have said. I have built up my own repertoire of work and this has attracted people towards my work without any battles. I have encouraged people to come and listen to me without asking them. This approach is clearly ‘hit and misses’. This ‘hit and miss’ epistemology fits with my constructionist enterprise. Kuhn reasoned that it is not facts that produce paradigms but the paradigm that determines what counts as facts. Whilst I am not interested in ‘facts’ I am interested in the paradigm shifts that Kuhn refers to as being akin to shifts in perception.

Ethics

Research ethics and governance

I see ethical tensions as part of the everyday practice of doing research—all kinds of research. So how do researchers deal with ethical problems that arise in the practice of their research, and are there conceptual frameworks that they can draw on to assist them? As a framework for this section through these issues, I will discuss two different dimensions of ethics in research, which I have called ‘procedural ethics’ and "relational ethics." The relationship between them and the impact that each has on the actual doing of research are examined. I will draw
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upon the concept of ‘reflexivity’ as a helpful way of understanding both the nature of ethics in qualitative research and how ethical practice in research can be achieved. The term reflexivity is often used in a rather loose way to mean ‘being’ reflective or ‘doing’ reflection; something that people do when they attend a reflective practice group for example. The full meaning in ethnography and in this text, autoethnography, refers to the:

‘ineluctable fact that ethnographers are thoroughly implicated in the phenomena that he or she documents, that there can be no disengaged observation of a social scene that exists in a ‘state of nature’ independent of the observers presence, that ethnographic texts have their own conventions of representations’ (Atkinson 2006, page 403)

Ethics is complex and interesting. Flexibility is missing from many procedural ethics guidelines. Bochner (2007) has said that good autoethnography is consistently ethically self-conscious. One could argue that sticking rigidly to procedural ethics is profoundly unethical self-consciousness. Attention is given to the potential harm that sharing our stories may do to people involved in our stories. These considerations influence what and how much to tell. Chalmers, Enkin & Kierse (1989) reminds us that our emphasis is on avoiding harm during the process rather than considering the benefits of the outcome. Intolerance to ambiguity possibly; a need to know how to do things all the time. How do we always know what to do at any given moment?

As discussed earlier Autoethnography constitutes the use of the ‘me’ and this has the potential to be a significant transformational experience for me.
Ellis (2007) discusses two dimensions to ethics. The first being procedural, the kind required by Ethics committees. This type deals with information sheets and informed consent, confidentiality and participant protection. The second is ethics in practice; the ethics that deals with the unpredictableness of research. What we do if someone discloses something harmful for example? Ellis adds a third dimension; relational ethics. This dimension is interested in the different values that people bring to the research; themes of mutual respect, dignity and collaboration between the researchers and the participants involved in the study and the wider community. Central to relational ethics is the question ‘What should I do now?’ rather than the statement ‘This is what you should do now’ (Bergum 1998). This speaks directly to ethical self-consciousness and the need to demonstrate RETROSPECTIVELY rather than from the position of prospective rhetorical reliance solely on procedural ethics.

One of the difficulties with procedural ethics is that the procedures adhere to the ‘letter’ of the guidance offered, thereby getting in the way of the spirit of
research by setting out procedures by which implicit moral obligations can be discharged and satisfied.

My story is told through the mind and experiences of someone who has experienced mental health difficulties. And as Frank (1995) says ‘Even messages in a bottle imply a potential reader’ (Frank 1995, page 16)

Many years ago a friend of mine was walking along the beach on the south coast of England. He noticed something bobbing in the water about twenty feet out to sea. As the object got closer to the shore he recognised it as a green wine bottle. He stood and waited for the bottle to hit the soft sand. He picked up the bottle and saw a rolled up piece of paper inside. Fortunately half of the cork was exposed and he was able to pull the cork out of the bottle.

He read the note. It was a message from someone who was contemplating taking their life. The message writer reported that they were sad, depressed and were unable to go on any longer. They were seriously considering taking their own lives. They had signed the note with a name and the name of the village where they lived. As it turned out, coincidently, the person who had written the note was the butcher in the village where my friend lived.

An ethical dilemma. The butcher lived for many years. It left my friend with an ethical question. Should he say anything about the note in the bottle?

If however as I have be arguing, we use stories and narratives as tools for living, or as has been described by Burke (1973) as equipment for living then a discussion about narrative ethics is important. In dealing and negotiating with stories we learn how to think and feel and interact with people ethically, what is an appropriate and ‘correct’ way to be with people and their stories. Kuhse & Singer (1998) suggest that ethics:

‘is not the development of, or adherence to a code or set of precepts but a better understanding of the issues' they argue that ‘it is the value of life, what it is to be a person, the significance of being human' (Kuhse & Singer 1988, page 4)

Adding weight to this approach Zylinska (2005) advocates that we need to engage in:
Interestingly for nurses Parker (1990) criticises nurse for attempting to develop a theory of nursing ethics. I think this theory development can reduce creativity and becomes a truth that nurses then bow down to. Relational ethics asserts that standards and in particular narrative ethics are not fixed and immutable but in the process of being continually renewed and reshaped within the given cultures.

Ellis (2007) agrees with these observations by noting that there are:

‘no definitive rules or universal principles that can tell you precisely what to do in every situation or relationship you may encounter, other than the vague generic ‘does no harm’ (Ellis 2007, page 5)

Ellis (2007) addresses this ethical question by embracing a ‘relational-dialogue ethic of care.’ Relational ethics is based on the assumption that ethical practice is situated in the relationship. Relational Ethics allows our caring nature to guide the decisions we make that will benefit those whom we have relationships with. It emphasizes actual, personal relationships as the most important thing when analyzing our actions. A person who does the “right” thing according to this theory treats people in a caring and humane way. This way of thinking takes the emphasis away from “duty” and “abstract principles” of right and wrong, which is enshrined in the assumptions of the sufficiency of procedural ethics, and highlights the importance of the lived values of care; and the value of accompanying subjective reflexivity. For example, a parent picks up a crying baby not because they rationally think, “My duty is to be a committed parent” but
because there is something within parents that compels them to care for loved ones. Relational ethics requires us to act from our hearts and minds, acknowledge our interpersonal bonds to others, and take responsibility for actions and their consequences.

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My friend who found the wine bottle and the note decided to not mention the note to the butcher. He thought this would be a caring and humane way of approaching the issue. What would be gained by talking to the butcher about it? This, I believe is an example of what I suggested above ‘What should I do now?’ rather than the statement ‘This is what you should do now’ (Bergum 1998, page 18).
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Relational ethics.

Supporting this relational ethical idea, Frank (1997) requests that readers of autoethnographic testimonial stories think with the stories rather than about them, he describes this as the sociology of witness. In this way the thinking of stories encourages narrative ethics; a joining in with stories, a collective ethics. Frank also argues that the moral imperative of narrative ethics is continual self-reflection on the sort of person that one’s story is shaping one into.

As I am the Chief Investigator, I have collected personal data from the experiences I have of the world. Because my evocative experiences may harm me I made arrangements for a psychotherapy colleague to be available for me if I should need to discuss any concerns in a confidential and discrete environment. In this way I have ensured that I ethically look after me. This striking of a chord, a collective being, is for some people what makes life worth living. Of course that's
just part of the story. Another side is our narratives. Our narratives are how we make sense of the striking of the chord.

The more we make sense of our different narratives the better our world may be. In order to keep other people’s contributions anonymous I have fictionalised the characters or do some shielding (for example changing names and locations). Whilst I accept there is a thin line between everyday conversation and formal interviews, I also know that my life is messy, uncontrolled and risky. That is what makes life so interesting and fascinating.

There are clearly ethical dimensions to any relationships and ‘helping’ relationships are recognised as being of paramount to helpful transformations for the people involved (Gabriel and Casemore 2009).

The ethics or morals underpinning my relational ethics are informed by my fluid socially constructed philosophies and world views. This type of reasoning immediately brings me into conflict with prescribed ethical codes. I believe my relational ethics are guided by the moment to moment relationships I have with people. Viewing ethical relationships through multidimensional lenses offers I believe a deeper and richer view of the complexities involved. The following figure illustrates the multidimensional nature of this approach. I have been influenced here by the work of Gabriel and Casemore (2009)
In order to develop relational ethics with people I try and make my selves transparent, showing the reader my values and beliefs that lie behind my ideas and experiences; to let slip the ‘cloak of authorship’ (Etherington 2009, page 58), reducing gaps between researcher and researcher. In this way I have lowered the barriers between me and my selves by using reflexivity. As Hertz (1997) says, reflexivity:

‘...permeates every aspect of the research process, challenging us to be more fully conscious of the ideology, culture, and politics of those we study and those we select as our audience’ (Hertz 1997, page viii)

Stories

‘Given the distortions of memory and the mediation of language, narrative is always a story about the past and not the past itself’ (Ellis & Bochner 2000: page 745)

Following a visit from an external Lecturer I became interested in Barthes’s (1967) ideas about the ‘Death of the Author. Roland Barthes' landmark essay,
"The Death of Author," demonstrates that an author is not simply a "person" but a socially and historically constituted subject. In his essay he argues that an author presents their texts and the reader attaches meaning to it. He talks of two different texts, readerly and writerly. The readerly text states a particular point of view and invited the reader to adopt the text. The writerly text invites the reader to interpret the writing through their worldviews. In another text Barthes violated traditional ways of representing a life story by avoiding chronology, identifying himself in the third person and randomly inserting opinions on various topics. He was trying to demonstrate, like I am trying to do with this work, that what we take to be ‘a life story’ is a product of linguistic artifice.

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Brighton festival 2007

I go and listen to Simon Armitage & Robert Macfarlane at the Pavilion Theatre. They are discussing their new books Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and The Wild Places.

We are introduced to the two authors by a chairperson. They invite the writers to describe their respective books. The conversation develops between them and the chair person leaves the stage, quietly.

As they are talking I begin to think that this format might be an interesting way of telling my colleagues at work about my Doctorate. I have been asked to present my work on two occasions previously and my ‘turn’ to present again was fast approaching. I ask a work colleague to read my work to date and then ask me questions whilst an audience of other work colleagues sat and watched. The group were then invited to ask questions. With the groups consent I taped the meeting and then reflected upon our conversations. I have also emailed some colleagues with my work to date and have then taken opportunities to reflect upon their responses.

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In this way reflexivity is a means of recognising ‘other worldview’ realities. This then gives voice to ongoing relationships. From a constructionist perspective I have been continuously reflexive about my own thesis. Thus I will be suggesting a social construction, a communal construction; inviting other voices into
further conversations. Constructionism does not attempt to reproduce a ‘whole cloth’ or completeness. Relevant works are re-woven continuously in varied ways. Reflexivity and accompanying writing itself then becomes a new way of enquiring (Richardson 2000).


‘That’s not what she told the Psychiatrist. She must be lying’

‘How come she told me something different last week. Her memory is appalling’

‘Watch her. She is always telling different stories, depending on who she meets’.

I anticipate that my stories may serve as a conduit to wider audiences; audiences that are often denied access to other people’s first person accounts of personal experience. In one published article I have brought attention to a couple of people that I worked with in a clinical setting. They wished to remain anonymous. The three of us wrote an article about our experiences of cognitive behaviour therapy; as a provider and as two receivers. We sent it back and forth between ourselves several times until we were all satisfied and then sent it to the Journal of Psychiatric and Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing for their consideration. It was published. See below:

Short N (2005) Vocal heroes: the views of two people who experienced a cognitive behavioural approach for their difficulties. Their narratives are accompanied by a commentary from the therapist, Journal of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing, Volume 12, Issue 5, Pages 574-581

‘All of us are products not just of our immediate upbringing but also the past that our parents and grandparents transmit. This is why class is never a matter of money alone’ (Charlip 1995, page 27).
Chapter four

According to Murray (1999):

‘Narratives do not, as it were, spring from the minds of individuals but are social creations. We are born into a culture which has a ready stock of narratives which we appropriate and apply in our everyday social interaction’ (Murray 1999, page 53)

Through listening to stories I feel joined together with other people. Stories have become the vehicles for opening up new places, people and ideas. I hear people’s stories and then these tales become part of my own story. My misfortunes and errors are shared with the reader and other people’s errors and misfortunes have been shared with me.

As someone who has used mental health services and continues to provide mental health services I think am in a unique position to share these dual experiences. It is hoped that my study will contribute to the developing literature on user involvement in mental health curriculum, nursing practice development and psychological therapy practice development. Whilst writing about my vulnerabilities, others, who see my work, may find it evocative and be exposed to their vulnerabilities, either privately or in public. The work may also be experienced in a negative way by readers. It may confirm people’s views about autoethnography and encourage further entrenchment. But like releasing a Genie from a bottle, however, it is difficult to put peoples experiences back inside. It raises interesting ethical questions about what my responsibility is towards those whose feelings may be evoked by my work. Whilst
I have been mindful of how my work will be read, in the same way that I am unable to think of all the ways it will be interpreted. I am unable to pay attention to all the ways it may be interpreted, I also think that if I make too many amendments, which may be based on anticipated hypothetical interpretations, then I will not be authentic to my autoethnography. This also suggests to me that the role of autoethnography is not to deliberately be evocative.

When we write about ourselves and our experiences we are also writing about the world of other people and the world(s) that they inhabit. An individual’s subjectivity is filled with the voices, experiences and memories of other people. Bakhtin (1994) argues that the power of writing originates in the coexistence of, and conflict between, different types of speech: the speech of characters, the speech of narrators, and even the speech of the author. He termed the word Heteroglossia, which represents multiple voices. Heteroglossia:

‘is also accompanied by polysemy, the proliferation of socially uncontrolled meanings for these voices’ (Gagnon 1992, page 231)

Autoethnography not only requires the researcher to be the tool of the approach it encompasses but also requires the principle that the researchers use their own particular location as a resource. Reflexivity is about seeing ones social location as a useful resource for advancing knowledge.

Rorty (1989) discusses the limitations of science and in particular research based practice. He calls for ‘solidarity’; an attempt to feel the feelings of others.
Solidarity for Rorty is not brought about by theories or research but by reading. He reports that the findings of research cannot be justified or validated solely by an appeal to ‘grand narratives’. He sees quantitative-experimental science as merely one little narrative among many which has no greater claim to truth than any other little narrative. He continues by saying that we can never prove to the person who uses a different language that something is true; all we can do is offer a description of the world and how it works to the other person that they might recognise as authentic or real. Rolfe (2002) takes what I think to be an attractive idea further by saying that:

‘An appeal to truth is therefore an appeal to authenticity, which in turn is an appeal to recognition. Thus a statement is considered to be true not when it is supported by scientific research (or, indeed, by any other form of rational argument) but when it ‘rings true’, that is, when it resonates with our own experiences’ (Rolfe 2002, page 91).

Reading, in particular fiction can connect us with the feelings and lives of others in a way that research reports often are unable to provide. I would take this view further by suggesting that ‘faction’, a combination of facts and fiction, can be used successfully to engage readers and help to bring about solidarity.

By its very nature, autoethnography celebrates the frank description of the lived experiences of the researcher. The written notes, which include ‘post its’, notebooks and diary entries have been kept in a safe and secure place. This provided confidentiality and ensured that the data is secure from any unauthorised access. If any notes refer to people I have anonymised them or used different names to ensure their identities have remained confidential. I have used
my personal home computer. This machine is password protected and has been kept in a secure environment.

I often experience myself being the writer and the narrator as though I am not the same person. Roth (1992) discusses the struggle to find out who the creator is and who is the impostor? This sounds and feels familiar to me.

20th April 2008

Have just heard the following quote from Roger Waters, one of the founder members of the band Pink Floyd

_I don't have a choice about what I write about. If it moves me I write about it._ (Roger Waters 2007)


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During the early 1990’s there were a series of portrait photos at the local general hospital. I was attracted to one of the pictures. A close up of Karl Popper. His face is rugged and his cheeks looked like a dry river bed. The photos had been taken by Steve Pyke. He lived near me. I rang him and he invited me to visit his studio. Unfortunately I was unable to afford the original photo and made do with a book of photos. [Thanks to Steve Pyke for permission to use these two photos]
His portraits of philosophers first published as a book in 1993, has become the definitive visual record of the post-war generation of (mostly Anglo-American) philosophers, as they approached the ends of their careers. The vast majority are shot with the camera just inches from the subject's face, resulting in a sometimes harsh, uncompromising. What makes these snaps different is that his focus – quite literally – is not on what is going on inside their craniums, but on the outside of those heads.

I have a copy of Karl Popper pinned to a board at work.

Many people at work think that it is a photograph of my Father.

This observation often develops into conversations about Popper and his ideas about the history of science. He, for example, suggests that a theory is scientific only if it is refutable by a conceivable event. Every genuine test of a scientific theory, then, is logically an attempt to refute or to falsify it. Whilst our individual developments are constantly constructed I would suggest, unlike Kuhn, that we are not necessarily starting from a Foundationalists position. The conversations I have with people about Popper provide an example of knowledge being constructed through these dialogues.

As Gergen (1994) suggests:

‘...constructionism offers no foundation, no ineluctable rationality, and no means of establishing its basic superiority to all competing views of knowledge. It is rather, a form of intelligibility-an array of propositioned, arguments, metaphors, narratives and the like-that welcome inhabitation’ (Gergen 1994, page 78)
Summary

In this chapter I discussed theoretical perspectives that have influenced my thinking in relation to post modern literature and the associated thinking that paralleled developing ideas about ethics; procedural and relational.

I firstly argue that there are many ways of looking at knowledge development and how these different ways of seeking knowledge and who decides who owns this knowledge. I continue by exploring how my new understandings influenced how I approached ethics associated with the thesis. I discuss the differences, as I see them, between what I have called traditional procedural ethics associated with guidelines and procedures and what I consider to be more progressive ethics, that are heavily influenced by what I have termed ‘relational ethics’. I have taken the position that that the development of ‘relational ethics’ is necessary, not only for an autoethnographic approach but to be used more readily in a multiple realities that we inhabit.
My Evocative Autoethnographic approach doesn't readily 'fit' traditional qualitative research (Ellis & Bochner 1986). For example I have used skills usually associated with fiction to provide different representations. The thesis approach is self-narrative. I have critiqued the situatedness of me and others in social contexts. Within my interpretive-constructionist position I am producing a situated, specific, constructionist and an ever developing knowing. This development has 'shaken' what I would now consider being old foundational belief systems and from anecdotal experiences, has shaken other peoples as well.

Cottle (2002) developed this idea further by suggesting that in forming our responses and making our interpretations, we constantly run the risk, one that I have been prepared to take, of pushing my stories against the stories of others; thereby demanding that others re-think their stories in light of my stories and of course this process of re-thinking happens when I hear other peoples stories as well.
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Ellis (1997, 1999) sees autoethnography as one way of bridging the apparent unresolvable ‘gap’ (Bochner 2000) between traditional and progressive experimental approaches and the different ways people are able to represent different ‘realities. My autoethnographic approach is a way of knowing that began with my subjective personal lives as I pay particular attention to my physical feelings, my thoughts and the accompanying feelings.

Ellis (2009) uses her emotional reflections to try to understand her experiences. In her new text ‘Revision: autoethnographic reflections on life and work’ (Ellis 2009) she uses meta-autoethnography and seeks to provide frameworks that mark and hold scenes in place. She then writes about these experiences objectively using a variety of methods-photos, fiction, and fragmented and layered writings.

Tillmann-Healy (1996) for example explores bulimia through systematic
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introspection, treating her own lived experiences as the primary data. Tillmann-Healy moves through her experiences. In this way she shows the reader via her story how:

’in the midst of an otherwise “normal” life, I experience how a bulimic lives and feels’ (Tillmann-Healy 1996, page 80).

She continues:

‘physicians and therapists keep readers at a distance. I invite you to come close and experience this world yourself’ (Tillmann-Healy 1996, Page 80)

This is the whole point of Evocative Autoethnography. The approach encourages dialogue. Experiential knowledge can be transformative as it forces us to re-evaluate what we know, how we know and when we know (Chambers, Glenister, and Kelly & Parkes 2005). In this dialogue style we have to be openly present and available in texts and make our values clear. I would also suggest that this thesis needs a committed reader; someone who is available and present and someone who is prepared to ethically hear my testament and ethically witness my experiences. The approach speaks to the relationship between my private difficulties and the social contextual responses to these troubles and works outward from the autobiography of me to the broader culture (Denzin & Lincoln 2000).

We have opportunities for learning a
great deal from stories, re-telling stories and creating new meanings and
deepening existing stories; a way of opening up conversations and stories that
evoke emotional responses. In this way evocative autoethnography differs from
analytical autoethnography. What are the other differences between analytical
and evocative autoethnographies?

Anderson (2006) answers this question by suggesting that analytical
autoethnography represents a more traditional scientific approach, with
evocative autoethnography a more free-form style (Ellis & Bochner 2000).
Anderson’s analytical autoethnography aligns itself with post positivism, using
objective writing and analysis. In addition analytical autoethnography focuses on
developing theoretical explanations of broader social phenomena. In contrast
evocative autoethnographies focuses on narrative presentations that open up
conversations and evoke emotional responses (Hunt and Junco 2006), prompt
empathy and resonance with the readers. I chose the evocative approach, with
theoretical analysis, as this ‘felt’ readily applicable and suits a personal reality and
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my lived experiences; my subjectivity within relative contexts.
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Can you tell me what the differences are, as you see them please?

I am in at least two minds about analytical and evocative autoethnography. I think I have understood the differences and then I think I am perhaps representing a combination. I am troubled by getting into an ‘either or’ question. I am reluctant to be drawn in to the emotional/rational, personal/scholarly or descriptive/theoretical debates. They seem redundant and often close down conversation.

Ok. So how does this compare with evocative autoethnography?

Well Anderson (2006a) describes analytical autoethnography by saying that it should include 1) complete member researcher status, 2) analytical reflexivity, 3) narrative visibility of the researchers self, 4) dialogue with informants beyond the self and finally 5) commitment to theoretical analysis.

I wonder if there are internal, yet very public battles going on within ethnography? It seems to me that Anderson (2006) suggests that evocative autoethnographers enter situations in order to ‘find’ evocative moments. My understanding is that evocative experiences are NOT planned. They happen!

Well, I have read many descriptions. I like Sprys (2001) account. She says that Autoethnography is a self narrative that critiques the situatedness of self and others in social context. I do not think however that the Ellis and Bochner (2000) description of evocative autoethnography is helpful either. I do not set out to be evocative nor do I enter situations thinking that I will find the experience evocative. That’s not the goal, as I see it.

Having read your work, you do seem to be applying analysis to your experiences. Is this ok?

Whilst I agree that both approaches require the researcher to be visible, active and to reflexively engage in the text (Anderson 2006). I do not subscribe to his view that autoethnography be seen as a form of theory building, where specific facts are used to create a theory that allows for prediction. 'I remain committed to pursuing theoretically informed, inductively orientated realist ethnography' (Anderson 2006b, page 452)
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Have you read that paper by Burnier (2006)? I agree with her when she says that she drew on both evocative and analytical approaches. ‘Autoethnography provided the methodological justification for embedding the personal within the a scholarly article, allowing me to write both ‘evocatively’ and ‘analytically’ about gender. (Burnier 2006, page 414)

This seems to raise questions about what epistemology one is influenced by?

So what we can learn from these writings? I think it would be unfortunate if the two approaches are divided. People will go to the two different approaches for different insights. I would be concerned if analytical autoethnography, which is containing and limiting, were to silence the ‘self’ and the ‘personal’. This I fear would encourage the ‘either or’ categories to remain. Interestingly Reed-Danahay (1997) sees autoethnography as an attempt to sidestep these binaries, to provide opportunities to traverse the multiple, shifting boundaries between the self and the cultural, social and political (Reed-Danahay 1997, page 3)

I think what I am doing is ok. I am using scholarly texts to help me to analyse what I am experiencing. I do not think that I am drawing any generalisations however. In addition I do not think that autoethnography, as described by Ellis & Bochner (2000) should be exclusive to their criteria.

I think I am also drawing on theoretical insights from different theories to try and contextualise and make sense of my own experiences within the cultures I inhabit.

Anderson (2006) makes his realist position quite clear. He sees the purpose of analysis as not simply to write about personal experiences, or to provide an ‘insider’s perspective’ or to evoke an emotional response with the reader. It is ‘to use empirical data to gain insight into some broader set of social phenomena than those provided by the data themselves’ (Anderson 2006, page 387)
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Autoethnography is both a credible and rigorous methodology and method. Banks and Banks (2000) referred to the legitimacy of Autoethnography and states that:

‘We have no grounds for invalidating an author’s own experience if it is rendered as believable’ (Banks & Banks 2000, page 1)

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) contribute further by saying that:

‘The province of qualitative research, accordingly, is the world of lived experience, for this is where individual belief and action intersect with culture’ (Denzin & Lincoln 2000, page 8)

During the development of this thesis I have roamed across many different disciplines boundaries, hung around on the margins of psychology, philosophy, history, art, physics and poetry (mine included) in order to explore the edges and dark alleyways of me to try to learn the art of soul making, self soothing and self compassion. I became interested in the idea of ‘time geography’ Sunnqvist et al (2007). Their work uses the model put forward by Hágerstrand (1991). They characterise time geography as:

‘....an approach especially pertaining to social studies aimed at analysing the interaction of processes in time and space and to connect knowledge from different fields’ (Sunnqvist et al 2007, page 250)

The time geography approach sets time and space in focus and applies a conceptual apparatus elucidating people’s lives (Kjellman 2003).

I have noticed the development of an ethical epistemology, which keeps relational ethics in mind and acknowledges the shadow elements in our philosophical ways of knowing the world and being in it. The journey has often very been crowded, sleep disturbing and the route has had many detours
Autoethnographies bring forward conversations through stories about personal and emotional experiences. It is distinguished from autobiographies by the intent to write about the self (multiple selves) in the context of culture and to bring the conversation of others into the enquiry. In what I call the ‘Sociology of Emotion’ this thesis argues that we should study how private and social experiences are fused. This is what Ellis (2009) calls introspection: a systematic sociological technique which allows researchers to examine emotions as a product of the individual processing of meaning as well as socially shared cognitions.

‘The truth is that we can never capture experience. Narrative is always a story about the past...and that's all field notes are-one selective story about what happened written from a particular point of view for a particular purpose. But if representation is your goal, it's best to have as many sources and levels of story recorded at different times as possible. Every story is partial and situated’ (Ellis & Bochner 2000, page 745)

Historically, autoethnography originated as a marginal methodology in relation to dominant research paradigms, methodologies and methods. The text has meaning within the historical context, with different readers and different historical periods. One of my aims is to speak of cross-field similarities rather than suggesting that people have to relinquish disciplinary borders. I am proposing that opinions, and cultural beliefs, that maybe considered as knowledge, are socially situated. I anticipate that this approach will offer people an opportunity to accurately describe richer accounts than more conventional research approaches.
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Writing and reading stories has long been a means of collecting ourselves, of seeking order and meaning in a world that often compromises against continuity and of actively confronting vague empty spaces of modern life. Berman (1982) describes this as making ourselves at home in a constantly changing world.

Triple crisis

Contextually Denzin and Lincoln (2000) described (what they call) the triple crisis.

1. The first crisis has to do with representation. They say that postmodern researchers question whether lived experiences of someone else can be captured. Can such socially situated experiences, be accurately reported.

2. The second crisis is to do with evaluation. What makes a study valid and reliable if traditional qualitative criteria are inadequate? Because postmodern research is so experimental and each study unique, there are few if any guidelines about how to do this type of study, or how to assess its trustworthiness.

3. The third crisis has to do with social action. “If society is only and always a text” how can research bring about change?

Acquiring a different type of knowledge

I will spend a few paragraphs considering the work of Rolfe (2002) and Rorty (1984). In particular I will tease out what they propose knowledge is and where it might come from, who owns knowledge and who decides what is truthful.
argues that knowledge gathered from the qualitative approaches is insufficient to provide what Rorty (1987) refers to as ‘solidarity’. So what does Rorty (1989) mean by solidarity? Rorty (1989) suggests that to undertake research requires the scientist to participate in a particular language game. He called these the vocabularies of language games as ‘final vocabularies’. This is the set of words which people use to justify their actions, their beliefs and their lives. Rorty argues that the findings of any research cannot be justified or indeed validated solely by an appeal to what Lyotard (1984) calls ‘grand narrative. As Rolfe (2003) says:

‘The bottom line then is that there is not a grand narrative which supports and underpins any language game; we choose a particular final vocabulary either because it feels right at the time or for reasons of expediency and convenience’ (Rolfe 2002, page 90-91)

Rorty (1989) says that we need to show solidarity with people by participating in their language games and by using their ‘final vocabularies’. Rolfe (2002) argues that traditional quantitative and qualitative research methodologies are unable to provide this type of knowledge. He continues by saying that:

‘What is required is a kind of knowledge which enables practitioners to engage fully with their clients in a way which goes beyond the detached explanation...of the quantitative paradigm and even beyond the empathic understanding of the qualitative paradigm. What they require is (more intimate) knowledge which comes from not from the little narrative of research, but from other little narratives, knowledge which is recognised and
I found Rolfe's use of the words ‘their clients’ above, to be unfortunate. It sounds like the people he describes are ‘objectified’ and ‘othered’; a narrative that could arguably be coming from a privileged position. Does this show ‘solidarity’?

So how might researchers acquire intimate knowledge?

In Rolfe’s (2002) terms what is needed in addition to this is sympathetic understanding is affective understandings of what it feels like, which he suggests can be best gained from works of fiction than from scholarly research.

This would seem a suitable opportunity for autoethnography to be introduced into the debate. Rolfe (2002) draws our attention to a false dichotomy; fact and fiction. I challenge his perspective. Fictional skills have been used successfully in autoethnographic accounts (for example Ellis’s Heartfelt Autoethnography 1999). I have used fictional skills to enhance this thesis to gain some understandings of what it is like being Nigel and there is a strong possibility that readers of this text may recognise some of my experiences.

Finally in this conversation, Rorty (1989) says that we can never convince the other ‘final vocabulary’ that something is true, all we can offer is a description of a world that the other person might recognise as real or authentic.

‘To accept the truth claims of another is therefore to show solidarity with them by adopting their ‘final vocabulary’ (Rolfe 2002, page 91)
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Doing and being Autoethnography

‘……it is a report from that tense border-zone where private, written thought meets its immediate public response. It is a comment dispatched from that human fault line where writer meets reader. Because, let’s face it, ladies and gentleman, the performance of literature offers almost endless opportunities for embarrassment and humiliation’ (Armitage 2006)

I am performing from the position of someone who often feels marginalised; however this felt sense seems to be different now since the deconstruction and reconstruction of this work. I have experienced many situations since commencing this Doctorate where it feels like I am now responding differently. Whilst personal harmony is a direction, there is clearly more work to be done. I don’t feel marginalised so regularly. Although some others seem to continue to see the contributions from the marginalised as being unimportant (See for example the difficulties Nick Holt had in getting his autoethnography published)

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Another hospital inspired entry
Who are the critics?

Another dull hot liquid drink test?
Push the button, pull the lever. Press the top?
Is this live Anthropology?
Spying! Testing the naïve native

Talking about cultures
When we are one,
Sitting here talking about…. 
Geertz thick description

Finding a social position
When we are one
Being an insider
When we are one
Photographic fragments

Angolan man with Adidas T shirt
What does Trope mean?
Language used to keep people away
Reminds me of a XTC song
Exclusion and feeling warm

His shirt and tie
Are uncoordinated
And his handshake was weak, distant

It just seemed to pop out
Why? Did we need to know?
His mannerisms then became
 Noticeably feminine and
I could hear him saying the word ‘bitch’
To his lover or ex lover

People who consider themselves to be marginalised can offer a different perspective from the mainstream. Our perceptions of power and cultures are not necessarily from a conventional position. One difficulty of feeling and being marginalised in an academic world is to find publishers who may be sympathetic to the work. Most players in the ‘realist’ and ‘alternative ethnographies’ hold
particular power and influence, they often seem to remain dispassionate, and their voices seem to privilege a powerful elite and marginalise others voices (Gergen 1999) which can further marginalise those of us that experience being marginalised. I approached an editor of a cognitive behaviour therapy journal about the possibility of having an autoethnographic article considered for publication. Below is an email dialogue.

22nd July 2008
Hi
How are you?
I am writing as agreed following our conversation on the Friday of the BABCP conference re: Qualitative approaches. I have attached some ideas and would value your comments.
Good to meet you last week and I appreciate you giving me an opportunity to write to you. A context. I am a novice third year part time Professional Doctorate student at the University of Brighton. Hence me attending the symposium you were chairing. The study I am undertaking is qualitative and I am using a much-marginalised approach at that: Autoethnography. I have thought for many years now that the CBT community pays scant regard to qualitative approaches, which is unfortunate as there is a wealth of ‘data’ that is not represented. There is an assumption in much of our communities’ research literature that points to a positivistic paradigm; hence they’re being very little to underpin an article philosophically. It’s like we all think the same way. My understanding of qualitative work, and I have some experience now, that the first few chapters address the philosophy underpinning our approaches to give the reader a context. My concern however is that it is often dated and sometimes misses the underlying epistemology of the different methodologies and accompanying methods. All the best for now
Nigel

28th July 2008
Dear Nigel,
Good to meet you at BABCP. I am currently on holiday, and so will reply properly on my return. Best wishes,

30th July 2008
Another contributor
I think I’ve already replied to this Nigel. I think a major paradigm shift is needed, so even if …….agrees he’s still a relatively small fish in a big pool of sharks. I told you that ….. And I had a paper accepted and rejected for the new tCBT electronic journal. The rejection was partly due to the reviewers not being able to understand the language of progressive interpretive paradigm research. They blamed us for that, not themselves for being inadequately educated in the philosophy of science. This response is typical - everything that cannot be understood (in their familiar language) is gobbledygook.

19th August 2008
Dear Nigel, hope you are well.

I agree with you regarding the general neglect of qualitative research, and sometimes find myself turning somersaults to make the data appear more acceptable. However, I think things are changing - Other journals are also becoming more accepting - see attachment. It is my view that the key aspect with submissions is the 'nature of the topic'. Thus if the topic is interesting, the reviewers are more accepting.

I then wondered who decides what is interesting or not and on what grounds? It raises important questions about the gatekeeping roles of the Editors of Journals.

Hope these documents are helpful - the attachment is the proof version, and not the published article, which is in Age and Ageing, Oxford Un. Press

Best wishes

19th August 2008

Hi
I am well thanks. Trust you had a good holiday.

So how do we write about our marginalised experiences when having our work published may remove us from this marginalised position? The Big Issue and Open Mind, middle class contributions maybe. Users and ex users of mental health services use their power to escape their marginalised world and may accomplish this by marginalising the people they are supporting. Can you be marginalised and write about being marginalised? One way of being and feeling marginalised and having this representation presented is Autoethnography. Who gives the vulnerable their voice?
Like me Autoethnography doesn't seem to easily fit into any particular place. I use an interpretive/humanistic approach as a guide (Ellis & Bochner 2000; Denzin & Lincoln 1997). My stories come from a position of subjectivity, emotionality, relationships and trauma. Subjectivity, emotionality, and relationships are all important concepts in beginning to examine and make sense of the experiences of using and providing and mental health services under the auspices of the psychological therapies service.

March 2000—Hospital

I am lying flat in my bed. I am feeling anxious again. Seems like a permanent experience. I think I am improving however. For weeks I haven’t cared about my feelings. I want to relax. I am tired of feeling agitated. I am usually a relaxed type of person. I remember the Jacobson (1938) progressive muscle (PMR) relaxation method. Progressive relaxation involves alternately tensing and relaxing the muscles. PMR may start by sitting or lying down in a comfortable position. With the eyes closed, the muscles are tensed (10 seconds) and relaxed (20 seconds) in sequence. I try it. I start at my toes and slowly working my way up to my head, I relax the major muscle groups in my body. It works. I am just left with my mind. I hold this experience for what seems like just a few seconds. The clock tells me is has been several minutes. I become very frightened. I cannot feel my body. I have to move my hands. How else do I know I exist? I gingerly touch my left thigh with my left hand. I have to, I need to. What a wonderful sense of relief. I am still here. Who can I tell? I go the nurses’ office. I tell one of the two nurses what I have just experienced. The nurse I have spoken to looks towards the other nurse. She looks bored. The more I try to explain my experience
Chapter five

This exploration has required a critical perspective, as well as an element of interpretation (for the reader and writer), and some degree of social construction of the emotions and the experience from a holistic perspective. First-person accounts of our own emotionality become simultaneously critical, humanistic, interpretive, interactional and social constructionist (Ellis & Bochner 2000).

This research represents an interpretive-interactional-critical approach (Denzin 1992). This approach:

"endeavours to capture and represent the voices, emotions, and actions of those studied and focuses on those life experiences that radically alter and shape meanings persons give to themselves and their experiences" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, page 19).

Spry (2001) talks about ‘migratory identity’ (Spry 2001, page 706) and how our personal, professional, and political selves can be emancipated by autoethnographic methods of enquiry. It is a way of expressing more fully the interactions that occur between the self, others and the inevitable contexts that I
find myself in. Autoethnography offers an opportunity for people, for example
the readers of this text, to be involved a world that they might otherwise know
nothing about. A further goal of autoethnography is to move my dialogue
forward through stories about personal emotional experiences.

What distinguishes autoethnography from other types of narrative is the intent to
write about self or multiple selves in the context of culture (Ellis 2004) and to
bring the conversations of others into the inquiry. Sparkes (2000) describes
autoethnographies as being:

‘highly personalised accounts that draw upon the experiences of the
author/researcher for the purposes of extending sociological understanding’
(Sparkes 2000, page 21).

Hunt’s (1989) idea of ‘Beginning with ourselves’, further supports my choice to
‘experience autoethnography as an autobiographical genre of writing and
research (Ellis & Bochner 2000). It is my hope that with reflection, associated
reflexivity and multiple interpretations the resulting conversations can move the
field of human relationships forward. This for me represents relational ethics on a
grand macro level. I want to use my voice as a resource for others.
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This narrative in all its forms is considered a mode of inquiry that creates meanings, evokes, inspires, or even provokes the inquirer as well as the viewer as reported by Bochner and Ellis (2004) suggests that:

‘The product of research, whether an article, a graph, a poem, a story, a play, a dance or a painting was not something to be received but something to be used; not a conclusion but a turn in conversation; not a closed statement but an open question; not a way of declaring ‘this is how it is’ but a means of inviting others to consider what it (or they) could become. As a result art as an inquiry became a transgressive activity’ (Bochner & Ellis 2004, page 507)

The text tries to draw out the continuing process of me integrating the ‘doing’ of autoethnography as well as trying to explain and be critical as I reflect upon my experiences of trying this approach. In short, the large body of qualitative/interpretive/narrative research and scholarship with which I engage in scholarly conversation is coming at knowledge from a different perspective than that of orthodox/traditional social science paradigm. So the idea that it should generate data, test predictions or lead to explanations misses the point of the research. This research practice examines data, though some would take issue with this (see Coffey & Atkinson (1997) (Thanks to Department of Social Sciences at Cardiff University for permission to use these photos from their departments website) I believe this expands our body of embodied lived practical knowing, and is the ethical duty of the autoethnographer, rather than explaining phenomena from a privileged stance. I see this expansion as the ethical duty of the autoethnographer. It seeks to engage a broader audience, including not just
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the discipline within which it is written, but also other disciplines and even communities outside of nursing and/or psychotherapy. It seeks to be accessible, engaging, clarifying and open minded; rather than seeking closure or conclusions; it seeks implications, insights, questions and openings to further studies.

March 2000-Hospital
Following my unsuccessful relaxation explanation to the two nurses I am now laying in my room, alone, again. The nurse I wasn't speaking to knocks on my side room door. She slowly, quietly and sensitively opens the door and asks if she can come in.
I nod.
She comes closer and sits on the floor; her back against the wall. She draws her legs up towards her chest and rests her arms on her knees.
She says: ‘That sounds like an interesting and frightening experience you just had, you know, when you were relaxing’
I reply with a ‘Yes’
She then says: ‘Can you tell me more about it?’
I tell her that I had found the experience very worrying and yet strangely comforting. I have spent many months not really paying any attention to my feelings and now I was.

I had begun to transform from the detached, externally influenced Nigel to an internally, personal and reflexive Nigel. I was beginning to feel like someone I knew. Whilst resisting the unproductive binaries of external versus internal I was pleased to be experiencing both again. I was also pleased that nurse had come to visit. Perhaps the ‘social construction’ of the office made it difficult for her to say what she really wanted to in front of the more senior nurse in the office.

This kind of insight attempts to be more about suggestions than conclusions, seeking to open up conversations and analysis rather than closing down with truths. The tradition of qualitative inquiry of this sort has a long history and its parameters and conventions are broadly accepted in this approach, even
celebrated. The new narrative turn is simply an extension of this long history: the next moment in our evolution.

Ellis (2004) reminds us that ‘autoethnography does not proceed linearly’ (Ellis 2004, page 119) it is complex; it is not conducted according to a special formula and can be likened to being sent ‘into the woods without a compass’ (Ellis 2004, page 120). She does encourage novice autoethnographers to deal with their uncertainty of the process so that adequate time is taken to ‘wander around a bit and get the lay of the land’ (Ellis 2004, page 120).

The new narrative methodologies do not proceed via traditional social scientific approach (hypothesis-test-conclusion), a linear-causal predictive view of reality, or a positivistic or neo-positivistic paradigm grounded in prediction and control. My understanding of Autoethnographic approaches does not seek to be work that generates data, test predictions, or lead to explanations, though it clearly accomplishes goals (see discussion earlier) that other methodologies cannot.
Autoethnography can also be defined as a self narrative that critiques the 'me' within the many social contexts I found myself in and in this way I hope to understand more about me and how I socially and contextually 'fit' in.

As Reed-Danahay (1997) suggests:

‘Autoethnography is both a method and a text of diverse interdisciplinary praxes and opens up new ways of writing about social life’ (Reed-Danahay 1997, page 23)

Autoethnographic writing resists Grand Theorising and the ideas of objective research that decontextualises the participants in its search for a singular truth (Ellis & Bochner 1996). A reader of autoethnographic texts must be moved emotionally and critically.
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Goodall (1998) says that 'good' autoethnography:

‘completely dissolves any ideas of distance, doesn’t produce findings, isn’t generalisable and only has credibility when richly vulnerable... When it is done well, we can learn previously unspoken, unknown things about culture and communication from it’ (Goodall 1998, page 2)

He adds to this in his text, A Need to Know (Goodall 2006) by also suggesting that:

‘You can never really know the whole truth, no matter how much you think you are entitled to know it or feel you need to know it’ (Goodall 1998, page 10)

Early February 2007. Autoethnography is autoethnography. One important theme is acknowledging and documenting what happens to the autoethnographer (me) whilst ‘doing’ autoethnography.

As I write, I am conversing with me and I STOP. At times I think about what I have just written; to see what I have done. I would ask you to consider this work as a part of an ongoing conversation, which may not always be consistent and clear.

The autoethnographic approach strives for self-expression in qualitative methodologies where academic focus has often hindered subjective experiences. It’s a journey away from the normal, predictable and the familiar towards the unpredictable and the unknown; a way of expressing more fully the interactions that occur between myself, others and the inevitable contexts that I find myself in. Using my experiences as data, the autoethnographic ‘gaze’ is conducted
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through my different lenses. A wide angled lens focuses outward on social and cultural aspects of my experiences. By contrast a narrow angled lens exposes my vulnerable selves, which are moved by and may move through cultural interpretations. One of the principal uses of autoethnography is to allow another person’s world of experience to inspire critical reflection of one’s own.

In Neumann’s (1996) terms autoethnographies represent the stories of people trying to find a stable place in an often-fragmented world. I have been told anecdotally that sometimes when I tell different stories to different people these are often interpreted as me being inconsistent, mercurial and enigmatic.

Historically autoethnography originated as a marginal methodology in relation to more dominant research paradigms. Its aim is to engage with the material, political and transformational dimensions of representational politics. As a research process and product autoethnography constitutes a form of critique and resistance to dominant representations of self (Neumann 1999). In this autoethnographic journey I wish to tell my stories and endeavour to be truthful, if not true. I think it is impossible to provide an objective account of reality. Instead, as Goodall (1999) suggests, we experience multiple co-present realities. The goal then of autoethnographers becomes the extraction of meaning from experience rather than to depict experience exactly as it was lived. The imaginative application of the narrative mode leads to good stories, gripping dramas and
believable, *though not necessarily true* historical accounts. Medford (2006) continues this theme by discussing *slippage*, this is the difference between Truths (or our experience of reality) and truthfulness because sometimes it may be appropriate—even necessary—to abbreviate, edit or otherwise modify our life stories. Maybe we do not remember the exact words that are said. As Sandelowski (1991) points out ‘*all interpretation, even scientific explanation, involves human fabrication*’ (Sandelowski 1991, page 165).

***************

It wasn’t until the summer of 2005 that it occurred to me that I could get a Doctorate myself. I had just been accepted onto a Professional Doctorate. I rang many of my friends. They were all pleased for me and were surprised that I doubted my ability. And like Etherington (2004):

‘I don’t believe I am doing this. At some stage very soon someone’s going to tell me it’s all been a joke’ (Etherington 2004, page 97)

When I meet new people I often think that they are more likely to be making an assessment of me, intellectually, I don’t do that with them. I accept people. It doesn’t occur to me to be judging them, although I guess I am.

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Summary

Whilst the ‘rules’ of autoethnography seemed to have been governed by a small clique of academics during its conception, there is now evidence from other people (For example Hemmingson 2008; Jewett 2008) of movement; possibly rebelling against the constraints and expanding their directions. Of course autoethnography once rebelled against conservative practices. Many autoethnographic works are now presented using images, podcasts and as performances. These works, including this one, seem to
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me to be at the heart of what Wright Mills (1959) meant when he stated:

Every [wo] man his [her] own methodologist! (Wright Mills 1959, page 148)

I find myself becoming irritated with the autoethnographic jiscmail list. Some of the contributions seem to confirm some of the criticism aimed at autoethnography that is the claims that this approach is self indulgent and narcissistic. Here is an example

Hello all,
Left Coast will be displaying at the AERA conference next week in San Diego. We will be in booth 344, sharing with Paradigm Publishers. Our exhibit will highlight our qualitative research titles, including the new International Review of Qualitative Research and new books from Carolyn Ellis, Janice Morse, Norm Denzin, Bud Goodall and others. Please stop by if you will be attending. The list can be viewed here:

A reply
While you’re there, don’t forget to buy my book (I have removed the name of the contributor)

I thought about why this reply troubled me so much. Maybe it’s because I would not self promote me in this way. Maybe it’s because it represents the continuing cabal of autoethnographers.

‘Postmodernity, perhaps more than anything else is a state of mind. More precisely, a state of those minds who have the habit (or is it a compulsion?) to reflect upon themselves, to search their own contents and report what they found’ (Bauman 2001, page 117)

In this chapter I have argued that autoethnography, experimentation with narrative, storytelling and ‘techniques usually associated with fiction, is an appropriate and scholarly way of reporting research. I anticipate that it will be seen as a creditable, authentic ad believable account. I have contrasted analytical and evocative approaches and suggested that there we do not
need to choose between the two approaches. Both are useful and the strengths of one may be the weakness of the other. What seems important is the question that the research is trying to answer. I would argue for nurse researchers to conceive of their research endeavours as journeys; journeys that help to increase understandings of human beings and to use a narrative format to report their travels. I would however draw caution if researchers attempt to draw generalisations from the personal autoethnographers individual exploration.
What is the difficulty with autoethnography?

Ethnographic hostilities

‘Sometimes when I’m driving along in the rain, I’ll notice how the music coming from the car radio is almost in time with the windscreen wipers: indeed, for two or three bars it will appear to be exactly in time with them; and that gives me a great sense of harmony so intense that I have to smile with pleasure. But then either the music will outstrip the wipers or vice versa, and I feel irritated, and I switch the radio off. Human relationships, too, are happy when-for even the briefest spells-they happen to fall into sync between two people’ (Walker 1985, page 86)

The ideas that underpin this chapter have been developing over the past few years and remain ‘mercurial’. I examine some of the criticisms aimed at autoethnography. In addition I present some of the leading academics that have championed this approach and then offer my own understandings.

Autoethnography as a research approach has its advocates see, for example,

Denzin & Lincoln (1994) and Sparkes (2000, 2002)  
(Thanks to Professor
Marginalised again: misrepresented within cultures
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Sparkes for permission to use his University website photo) it also has its critics; see for example

Delamont (2007) (Thanks to Sara Delamont for permission to use her photo)

Amongst the criticisms made against the autoethnographic approach is that it cannot be assessed by traditional qualitative criteria, that which is used to judge qualitative inquiries. Is it a criticism of autoethnography or is it that the traditional ways of evaluating are redundant for this approach? Measuring apples using oranges? Sparkes (2000) suggests that autoethnography is at the boundaries of academic research because such stories do not sit comfortably with traditional criteria. Indeed traditional criteria used to judge and evaluate qualitative research may not be appropriate or useful for Autoethnography (Garratt & Hodkinson 1999). Duncan (2004) however, says that the quality of Autoethnographic studies can be judged by the same criteria of legitimacy and representation that any research must address; criteria “related to study boundaries, construct validity, external validity, reliability, and scholarship” (Duncan 2004; page 24)

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At least once a year my daughter and I make a ferry trip from Dover, Kent to Calais, France. On or last trip we travelled on the A16/E40 motorway to Brugge, Belgium. This journey hugs the French-Belgium coast. Our route takes in several languages, French, Flemish and Dutch. Although Brugge is not in the Netherlands it is close enough for the Brugge townsfolk to speak both languages. My daughter and I would not consider ourselves to be fluent in any of these languages. What does work however is gesturing, smiles, pointing, listening to other people in queues and then copying? What doesn’t work is when we are using English and the shop keeper for example using Dutch.

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Explaining autoethnography can often feel like it does when I am in a confectionery shop in Brugge trying to buy some of their wonderful chocolates. When the shop keeper is speaking Flemish and I am speaking English. What is helpful is when we come to some agreements about how we will communicate; common ground, some solidarity. Then we can all laugh!

********************

In addition Autoethnography is often tainted with accusations of narcissism (Coffey 1999) and a ‘romantic construction of the self’ Atkinson (1997). Burnard (2007) agrees with Coffey (1999) that the process is self-indulgent and narcissistic.

I found his support for her position to be very weak and unconvincing:

‘This may be because, as a researcher, I am more used to looking into other peoples affairs than my own and may also demonstrate a certain cultural hesitancy to talk about myself’ (Burnard 2007, page 812)

He continues:

‘It is possible to imagine a long-term researcher’s life becoming something of a play rather than an authentic, moment-to-moment spontaneous existence’ (Burnard 2007, page 812)

Because the use of self is at the forefront of this approach it is perhaps understandable that people make these unfortunate charges. Take further the comments of Howell (1979/1980) who, focusing on solo work, proposes that it:

‘is often an ego show as a revelation; the virus of the ‘I did it my way/I gottta be me’ strain... (Howell 1979/1980, page 158)

I would suggest that these observations are stereotypes which we may be stuck with until a shift in understanding is dislodged and its utility acknowledged. I very much hope that this thesis may make a small contribution to this ‘dislodging’.
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My engagement with this approach was NOT motivated by any excessive need to be noticed, or to construct a romantic self; I find Delamonts comments offensive, on the contrary I would describe myself as being shy and quiet, preferring the shadows to the light, the unnoticed yet important bass guitar player in the band, insignificant yet empowering. I have experienced thus far, a process where my accounts have emerged as self-revelations and of therapeutic value to others and possibly me. Rather than the quest for discovery of how and why, I am hoping through subjective reflexivity and relational ethics to discover new ways of understanding the cultures I inhabit. My understanding is that autoethnographers need to be authentic; more robust. I would insist that to be autoethnographic requires us to pay attention to our moment-to-moment experiences and use our spontaneity to feel, to experience our evocative feelings. As Ellis (2004) says, autoethnographers:

‘Seek to tell stories that show bodily, cognitive, emotional, and spiritual experience. The goal is to practice an artful, poetic, and empathic social science in which readers can keep in their minds and feel in their bodies the complexities of concrete moments of lived experience……Their goals include: ‘one, evoking emotional experience in readers; two, giving voice to stories and groups of people traditionally left out of social scientific inquiry; three producing writing of high literary/artistic quality; and four, improving readers’, participants and authors’ lives. (Ellis 2004, 30)"
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One difficulty for me as the autoethnographer has been the question of knowing what to share with the reader. How much does the reader need to know about me in order to understand the research and how do I determine what is relevant and what is not? I have written about what felt appropriate and supportive of this work, at the time. Whilst I have been mindful about the text, it is impossible to think about all the people who may or may not read the text.

In addition I think my accounts have been relativist and dynamic and not a romantic reconstruction of some idyllic past. In addition the journey has been a quest for construction; a co-construction of the how and why. I am hoping to find new ways of understanding me and the cultures I inhabit. And as a consequence be a developing person and an ever-improving psychotherapist. Autoethnography has provided opportunities for doing something personally meaningful that others might find meaningful as well.

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Winter 2008-2009

I began to think more about American and European Autoethnographies. I found myself getting irritated with the rules of autoethnography which seemed to have been governed by a small cabal of academics during its early growth. I want to perform my autoethnographic texts in a way that break away to a local culture, freeing itself from colonial rule. I do not want to be a slave to autoethnographic rules.

********************

Buzzard (2003) also ponders why autoethnography has been met with such criticism and thinks that as an approach it is limited by what he calls ‘three embarrassments’. The first involves what Buzzard (2003, page 61) refers to as ‘identity politics’; this suggests the way the autoethnographer is positioned politically by their place, their roles, their place in their cultures. Secondly that
Autoethnography lacks a process that allows ‘some individual participant in a culture (to go) about securing the authority to represent or ‘speak on behalf of’ the culture to which he or she belongs. He suggests that this tension is maintained by a persistent idea that one doesn't really need to explain how one acquires authoritative knowledge of "one's own culture" (Buzzard 2003, page 71) and finally the third point is that Autoethnography allows the examination of one’s place in a culture at the same time as one tries to escape from it, a problem of identification and one’s place and movement within the culture. This resonates with the issue raised by Adams (2003) with reference to what Giddens (1991) calls ‘disembedded’. This last Buzzard suggestion does not appeal to me and does not ‘fit’ with the post modern analysis of the self as suggested by Adams (2003, 2007).

My dad worked on the original construction of Churchill Square shopping centre in Brighton. One of his responsibilities was lighting the night lights; hurricane lamps that alerted pedestrians and car drivers of the building site. I would walk to Cannon Place, Brighton, most evenings to help him ‘light up’. He didn’t receive any payment for this ‘extra’ work. He saw this as part of his job and he enjoyed the responsibility. He knew his place. I often wonder if he felt liberated and emancipated by ‘knowing’ his place.

Consistent with my constructionist approach, Mertens (1998) refers to multiple realities and how our perspectives are shaped by social, political, cultural and economic influences. Schaef (1998) reinforces this cultural and contextual relationship to perspective formation and stated that:

‘As human beings we have to acknowledge that we do not exist in isolation. Unfortunately, we so easily forget that we exist in context and that there is no way to understand ourselves in isolation. We are connectedness (my italics). We are unique. And we exist in context’ (Schaef 1998, page 228)

In contrast Coffey (1999) continues by describing Autoethnography as being self-indulgent. She develops this criticism by arguing that the approach limits human
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enquiry to what ‘I’ speak about my subject and subjectivity or solipsistic soap
operas about ‘me’, ‘myself’ and ‘I’. Sparkes (2002) is concerned that this
development ‘is a dangerous and threatening move’ (Sparkes 2002, page 213). He
asks why not use terms such as ‘self-knowing, self-respectful, self sacrificing or
self-luminous? (Sparkes 2002, page 210) Further criticisms of this approach see it
as a ‘blind alley’ (Atkinson 1997), without rigour and limited criteria (Ellis 2004).

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Interestingly I think that autoethnography has a democracy about it; a
coming together of ideas. I think a goal of this approach is to present
work that is not stories about just me, but, instead, to use details from my
own experiences to illuminate, explore and expose something more
universal about cultures. To provide the reader with a ‘window’ to view
some of the worlds I inhabit.

********************

If we think about stories and narratives as being cyclic (Smith & Sparkes 2008)
one suggestion is that stories are a resource and many stories contribute to
stories. This theme reminds’ me of Bohm (1998) again. Unlike discussions, which
according to Bohm are:

‘almost like a ping pong game, where people are batting the ideas back and
forth..to win or to get points for yourself’ (Bohm 1998, page 7).

Dialogue he suggests speaks to wholeness and is about emptying a space in order
to create room for co-creation of new knowledge and understanding. Bohm talks
about the importance of space creation:

‘So we have here a kind of empty space where anything may come in-and
after we finish, we just empty it. We are not trying to accumulate anything.
That’s one of the points of dialogue. As Krishnamurti use to say, “the cup has
to be empty to hold something’ (Bohm 1998, page 17)
Sarah Delamont (2007) sees the increase in Autoethnography as ‘pernicious’ and she describes the approach as lazy and in particular, intellectually lazy. She lists the following objections;

1. The approach cannot fight familiarity,
2. It is almost impossible to write and publish ethically,
3. Is lacking in analytical outcomes,
4. It focuses on the powerful and not the powerless, whom she thinks should be in the ‘sociological gaze’ (Delamont 2007, page 2)
5. It abrogates our duty to go out and collect data and finally that
6. We are not interesting enough to write about in journals.

She completes her objections by saying that:

‘Autoethnography is an abuse of privilege... our duty is to go out and research....and not sit in our homes focusing on ourselves’ (Delamont 2007, page 4).

There are many different ways of interpreting Delamont (2007). One is that she is ‘being’ autoethnographic by telling us about her experiences of presumably reading autoethnographic works. Secondly she seems to be paying very little attention to how her readers will ‘feel’ about reading her criticisms. She seems to be paying little attention to relational ethics. Whilst I accept that her opinions are as valuable as others the way she has delivered her message is unfortunate and is
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only one opinion amongst others. I will offer more evaluations of Delamonts work below. Whilst not accepting Delamonts rigid criticisms, I have read some autoethnographies:


that have not ‘worked’ for me because I thought they were self-indulgent and narcissistic and not evocative. This is how I have interpreted them and constructed my experiences. In contrast I have read some autoethnographies that have ‘worked’ for me for example:


The reading of these materials has been influenced by how included or excluded I have felt when I have read them. The more included I have felt the more likely I have wanted to continue reading the texts. I think this is ok. But the universal charge by Delamont (2007) against this approach is a result of misunderstanding and misapprehensions of the genre due to mistrust of the work of the self (Sparkes 2002). Even if people do not ‘trust’ the use of self it would be unfortunate if the Autoethnographic approach were dismissed unanimously.
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I experience autoethnography as a very powerful vehicle. What I have discovered through the writing is not that my story deserved any particular importance. What has been significance is how my lived experiences have been influenced and shaped when intertwined with other people stories. This approach has connected me to a larger narrative and in this way I experienced a sense of ones.

February 2010

I am talking to a colleague about my thesis. They ask me how near I am to completing. ‘Early summer’ I say. They tell me that they are very proud of me. I tell them that this thesis is for all of us. Many people have contributed to it. Peoples names may not be seen but they are there, woven in the text.

In short, Delamonts position is that doing autoethnography is a gross abuse of the social scientist’s privilege.

Atkinson's objections to autoethnography as a research methodology

In a similar vein, Atkinson (2006) argues that autoethnography privileges narrative description at the expense of analysis. He further asserts that transposing the methodological onto the plane of personal experience turns sociological and anthropological fieldwork into a quest for personal fulfilment on the part of the researcher.

Further, he argues that the fact that personalised, experiential accounts are sometimes justified in terms of social criticism, does not excuse their essentially
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self-absorbed nature: in his terms, the personal is political, but the personal does not subsume or exhaust all aspects of the political.

Finally, as with Delamont, ‘others’ remain infinitely more interesting and sociologically significant than the majority of sociologists who document their own experience rather than analysing social action and social organisation.

I will now discuss Delamont’s objections

- **Autoethnography cannot fight familiarity:** Is familiarity necessarily a bad thing? Surely the point is not that it is, but how you handle familiarity. The researcher as her or his own data collection tool is an oft-cited maxim in both realist and alternative ethnographic forms. Familiarity in this context can be a valuable resource rather than an irritant. I think autoethnography provides a position to extend our understanding to know more about the ‘familiar’.

- **Autoethnography is essentially lazy: literally lazy and intellectually lazy:** Delamont makes a global dismissal here, without providing evidence to back up her claims. I have contributed to an article (Short, Grant and Clarke 2007), that took many months of planning. This included data collection, dealing with relational ethics in terms of achieving informed consent and thinking about the format of the presentation of the autoethnography with reference to other scholars both inside and outside the methodological field. Does she define lazy? I don’t think so and anyway this statement is based on the assumption that laziness is wrong? Lazy in what context?
Autoethnography is almost impossible to write and publish ethically. In the examples Delamont uses to illustrate her point, she clearly reduces ‘ethics’ to mean the achievement of informed consent. It has been argued trenchantly in chapter three that this is a one-dimensional view of ethics and the autoethnographer must keep in mind. Is any research really written or published ethically, why particularly autoethnography?

Autoethnography privileges narrative description at the expense of analysis: Bochner, for one, has argued consistently that theory is implicit in the narrative of autoethnography. And, it’s certainly not true that all autoethnographies privilege description and ignore analysis – a point recently discussed by Ellis and Bochner (2006).

Autoethnography focuses on the powerful not the powerless, to which we should be directing our sociological gaze: Many autoethnographers are on the powerless side of the fence (for example when Short and Grant document their experiences of mental health difficulties and negotiating the state mental health system). There is many more autoethnography to call upon here.

It abrogates our (social scientists) duty to go out and collect data. Sociology is an empirical discipline and we are supposed to study the social, not obsess about ourselves in our offices: Delamonts caricature of armchair theorising about relatively unimportant issues does not sit well with the evidence. This anthology of living with mental health problems renders her remarks offensive.
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in the extreme. It is a rather lazy view of autoethnography; here she falls foul of her own criticisms.

- Finally and, in her terms, most importantly, autoethnographers are not interesting enough to write about in journals, or to teach about, or to expect attention from others. We are simply not interesting enough to be the subject matter of sociology. Delamont here confuses a personal point of view with a global statement of truth. My interest to use autoethnography came about precisely because of my excitement about alternative autoethnographic forms, and relative boredom with realist accounts. I believe we are all interesting and we all have our stories to tell.

According to Delamont, in these four ways autoethnography is antithetical to the progress of social science, because it violates its two basic principles, which are:

- **To study the social world:** As has been argued above, leaders in the field of autoethnography, such as Bochner and Ellis, constantly remind us that the personal flows through the social and vice versa. This point is also cogent for social constructionist writers (See Gergen 1999).

- **To move the discipline forward and change society:** Again, as has been argued, the whole point of autoethnography is to make the world a better place. Also, the provision of alternatives to traditional realist ethnography is, surely, moving the interpretive tradition in social research forward?

- **Transposing the methodological onto the plane of personal experience turns sociological and anthropological fieldwork into a quest for personal**
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**fulfilment on the part of the researcher:** This is a strange objection. Surely all fieldwork is a quest for personal fulfilment, otherwise why would people do it. Also, in ethical terms, personal fulfilment in terms of personal and social development is part of the ethical agenda of narrative (re)storying (Gergen 2009; Mahoney 1991). Indeed, another ethical dimension (mentioned above) is for others to re story themselves as a result of thinking with autoethnography.

- **Autoethnography is essentially self-absorbed nature: the personal is political, but the personal does not subsume or exhaust all aspects of the political:** as far as I can see, autoethnography makes no claim to exhaust all aspects of the political, and that would appear to be an impossible task anyway. That said political (culture) does flow through the personal, and vice versa. One could argue that all activities are self-absorbed, even criticism.

It would seem ironic if Autoethnographic writings were marginalised as they try to reclaim different ways of representing the marginalised. In attempting to gain a balance I have considered how I have been helped to find my voice.

My supervisors, some work colleagues and fellow Doctoral colleagues have regularly told me that I can achieve this thesis, they have had high expectations of me which has improved my expectations and when successful my often marginalised selves will be in the public domain. I have also been encouraged to think about the culture of ‘academia’. Does my work ‘fit’. I have had several publications since starting this Doctorate; this has been important for me to find out. I can get published; I do have something to contribute.
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I have also found out that writing; which includes evocative writings and alternative representations has offered me empowerment. I have been encouraged to use a variety of language forms, academic and personal. I have tried to find a balance between the academic and the personal to provide a style that is both evocative and appropriate for academic study (Cain 2003). To further compliment my often felt marginalised selves I have drawn upon my own stories and back ground to provide the reader with a connections to the text. As Richardson (2000) says:

‘Language is a constitutive force, creating a particular view of reality and the self’ Richardson (2000, page 5)

Richardson (2000) adds further by saying that:

‘Autoethnographers should not be constrained by the habits of somebody else’s mind’ (Richardson 2000, page 254).

As this autoethnography has developed I have become unexpectedly aware that this is more about my experiences of being a researcher than it is about the overall project. It is satisfying, enjoyable and occasionally distressing. Roth (2005) adds to this debate by suggesting that autoethnography could easily become self-congratulatory. As a novice researcher these charges are worrying. I have often been drawn into thinking that maybe I am being self-indulgent. What is this research about? Following discussions with supervisors I have accepted that my concerns are possibly the traditional values of social science evaluation seducing me back. I think that autoethnography is a legitimate form of social research.
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Do we not believe their stories? Some professionals don’t. Their evocative stories are then understood by applying theories, for example, the many cognitive behavioural models or the medical model. I know that when I am working with people that we often know when they know enough. There is always a tension. Whose beliefs or truths are needed in order to understand their difficulties, mine or theirs or a shared understanding? What information is relied upon to create stories? Even suggesting there are memories missing implies a known story. I see therapy for example as starting from a place of ‘not knowing’. The trajectory of the process is that ‘we are always moving towards what is not yet known’ (Anderson and Goolishian 1990, page 159). Like my ever evolving and constructed stories I am suggesting that other people can experience choices rather than ‘settled certainties’ (Bruner 1986)

Further questions posed are ‘to what kind of truth do these stories aspire?’ As Ellis and Bochner (2000) discuss there are difficulties with our memories, they can become distorted and inconsistent. Our stories are therefore about the past and not the past itself. I would suggest that Autoethnographic stories’ primary hope is to achieve reflexivity and that establishing truth and reliability is of secondary importance. I have tried throughout this text to reflect upon events; along with these reflections and accompanying reflexivity comes some inconsistencies. Whilst I have edited the text for grammatical errors and ‘typos’ I have deliberately not ‘edited out’ any inconsistencies as I feel these are more in keeping with the nature of my memory. So what can autoethnographers do about their ‘truths?’
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Richardson (2000) lists five criteria that she uses when reviewing social science papers for publication. These are:

(1) The **Substantive contribution.** The paper makes to understanding social life through a deeply grounded (if embedded) social science perspective

(2) It demonstrates **aesthetic merit.** Meaning, its complexity, its interest, has a satisfying structures and whether it invites interpretive responses

(3) Demonstrates **reflexivity** informed by postmodern epistemologies.

(4) Its emotional and has intellectual **impact**

(5) Is it an **expression of a reality** in other words an honest and credible account of a personal, social and cultural experience?

That is, it is not possible to understand one paradigm through the conceptual framework and terminology of another rival paradigm. Been thinking a bit more about the critics of the autoethnographic approach. I can manage and understand the self indulgent narcissistic claims-Whilst that seems unreasonable, I can see how that might fit-what is puzzling me is the attack on the scholarship or theoretical base for it. We all have different ideas that we draw upon, some are experiential some might be theoretical. Even social constructionists ideas come from a construction don't they? So where do the critics’ ideas come from? And what makes their narratives any more 'true' than anyone else's? One explanation is that Delamont and her anti autoethnography colleagues are informed by foundationalism. Foundationalism is a theoretical epistemological position that holds that beliefs are justified, based on what are often called ‘basic beliefs’, also
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referred to as foundational beliefs. Basic beliefs are beliefs that justify other beliefs.

Proponents of anti foundationalism (for example Rorty 1999) would say there is no solid basis for knowledge. Social constructionists have a historically contingent reality. Their criticisms are purely socially constructed.

What am I learning?

I am finding that autoethnography is happening all the time.

I have noticed that it is easy to drift into writing more about how I will be telling my stories about my stories rather than telling my stories. Am I avoiding telling my stories? Am I avoiding ‘showing off’.

I began to adopt the idea that the story of our lives becomes our lives. Life is a story. Clients who I see for individual psychotherapy come along with their stories. Some of these stories keep them stuck (Mahoney 2003). I often hear people in the clinic say ‘Do I have to go over my story again for you?’ or ‘Do you want to hear my story?’ A difficulty with this approach is that the clients often tell me that they have to tell exactly the same story each time or they may be thought of as being deceitful, manipulative or dishonest. I am suggesting that stories can never be the same. They will be heard differently. Can they ever be the same? The time and the place and circumstances will affect the storyteller and the story listener.

What happens to me as the autoethnographer is important and I have shared some of these happenings within the text? The thesis trajectory has often been
uncertain, which is in contrast to the certainty that is often required of me as a representative of an organisation. Like the story of Plato's Cave I have emerged from the darkness, seen the sunlight and have returned to tell people what I have found. In telling my story some people have found their own sunlight.

I have become more aware of how our identities change depending on the situation and how these different situations help to develop my stories and me; stories that have been exciting and frightening on occasions, but never dull. I have had to re-contextualise some ideas I thought I already knew and hope my autoethnographic story will strike chords with people who read the text.

Similar to Smith (1999) who tells us about his depression and invites us to ‘feel, hear, taste, smell touch and morally embrace’ (Smith 1999, page 268) his world, thereby breaking the traditional view of knowing, I have tried to be evocative rather than simply represent, tried to communicate rather than just describe and have attempted to promote new understandings through recognition, sharing personal experiences and risk taking. Hopefully this will encourage conversations and further dialogue.

I have taken many risks and have exposed my vulnerabilities, not only to me but also to several colleagues and friends. For example:

I am invited to contribute to a book about in patient care in the United Kingdom.
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Apart from close friends and relatives and presumably the Occupational Health Department at work, the amount of people that know I have experienced in patient care is limited. Am I prepared to take the risk of ‘coming out?’ I take the plunge. I then worry about my motives. Why did I do it? The way that clients might feel when they use Mental Health Services often feels like I do. I have a desire to try to improve their experiences. Can I do it from the inside? By somehow changing the ‘othering’ narrative that seems to dominates services. Do I now over identify with clients?

********************

I have paid attention to relational ethics. As Gergen (1982) suggested many years ago:

‘Knowledge is not something people possess in their heads, but rather something people do together’ (Gergen 1982, page 270)

This prompted me to be attentive to words I use when I meeting people; am I having ethical relationships with them? Most of my moments of reflexivity have been prompted by anxiety. I have written many things about work for example and have then worried about what my colleagues would think. How would I feel if I read similar ideas from a colleague? What relational considerations do I have to make? How does one share ‘truths’ and yet remain impartial and emotionless? How would people in my life respond to my work and have looked after myself
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Whilst I have written about my experiences and me. As Ellis and Bochner (2006) point out:

‘Autoethnographies show people in the process of figuring what to do, how to live and what their struggles mean’ (Ellis and Bochner 2006, page 111).

‘It is quite possible - overwhelmingly probable, one might guess - that we will always learn more about human life and human personality from novels than from scientific psychology.’ (Chomsky 2003, page 48)

This started to kindle the idea of anonymity and writing stories.

I have presented Autoethnographic ideas several times now. There is an expectation that all Professional Doctorate students present their work each year. I have also taken an opportunity to present my work to Qualitative Research students and the Centre for Research Faculty. It occurred to me that presenting my work is about how I present the work and not necessarily what I am presenting. So this may fit Delamont’s concerns. Maybe she has heard autoethnographers who have, in her eyes, perhaps misrepresented autoethnography, and been for example over indulgent. Each autoethnography I have read has been understandably, very different. Can we misrepresent ourselves? Autoethnographers are ambassadors of autoethnography. Researchers are ambassadors of their research. I have heard many researchers talk about their work and the emphasis is often about what they are finding out rather than how they have found it out or how they represent their work.

In summary, I have approached the main criticisms that autoethnographic approaches are charged with. I have through introspection attempted to engage with the critics arguments and applied a reflective commentary to their objections. The main thrust of their concerns relate to what they ‘label’ as self indulgence and narcissism and poor sociological inquiry. I think that the critics of autoethnography have been instrumental in generating debate. It is important to discuss legitimacy, continuing conversations demonstrate uncertainty, fragmented selves and different perspectives. I would suggest that Atkinson, Anderson and Delamont’s criticisms are an expression of fear; their fears about
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the demise of what they consider to be the robust, valid, legitimate and traditional received wisdoms.

It would seem reasonable to suggest that any form of enquiry can be self-indulgent (Sparkes 2009). As Richardson (2000) states:

‘It seems foolish at best and narcissistic and wholly self-absorbed at worst, to spend months or years doing research that ends up not being read and not making a difference to anything but the authors career’. (Richardson 2000; page 924)

The writing of this work, to date, has been an extremely emotional project, unknown at the beginning. If this story opens up space for others and myself to draw on then I will be gratified by this experience. As Richardson (1990) suggests, one important point about storytelling is that it offers opportunities for transformative possibilities of a community collective story.

I concur with Smith (1999) who raises the following important points:

‘I run the risk of ostracizing myself from peers, restricting career opportunities, and becoming “emotional naked” (Ellis, 1995) to friends and colleagues. It is not “a way to keep,” as Schwalbe (1995) argues, myself “awake and amused before retirement” (Schwalbe 1995, page 411). As such, this writing experience has been, and will continue to be, a bumpy, agonizing, and humbling ride that, unlike a roller coaster, will not stop. Finally, I invite you to feel and think with this story. Draw on your emotional wealth. Place your family, your friends, and yourself in this text’. (Smith 1999, page 268)
Stories

‘A self is probably the most impressive work of art we ever produce, surely the most intricate. For we create not just one self making story but many of them, rather like TS Eliot’s rhyme:

“\'We prepare a face to meet,  
The faces that we meet.  
The job is to get them all into one identity and get them lined up over time’\) (Bruner 2002, page 14)

What follows is a chapter that discusses and develops ideas about stories. I have always enjoyed stories; both the telling of and the listening to (I do however have a long history of not enjoying reading books, particularly novels). Narrativists, like Bruner (1986; 1990) for example, believe that humans live out their lives through stories. We are told stories and are storytelling beings. Narrative inquiry aims to explore the way in which people understand who they are and how they come to learn who they may be. This type of inquiry is a form of narrative experience that allows the complexities, challenges and ambiguities of our individual and organisational life experiences to be linked to experiential inquiry (Willis 1998). In order to try to ‘play around’ with ideas about stories and narratives I have written a story, which I have included in the appendices. I have changed my mind regularly about the inclusion of the story. When I read the story woven into this chapter, it didn't ‘feel’ right. It is written in \textcolor{blue}{blue} and describes the circumstances
I’m wanna tell you a story
Chapter seven

leading up to a shipwreck and the subsequent stories that develop amongst the surviving crew members. This is my first attempt at deliberately writing a short story. It is a ‘product of imagination’ (Clarke 2009, page 9) yet it may yield ‘innumerable truths about life in all its forms’ (Clarke 2009, page 9).

I decided on January 11th to present the blue story in two ways. Firstly as a standalone chapter which could be read independently of the thesis other chapters and finally I have included a second variation of the story, a translation into Portuguese. This decision was influenced by two ideas.

- Firstly, the story often didn’t seem to flow well when woven into the main text. I often felt irritated when reading the story in this format.
- Secondly, I was introduced to a book by an English author B S Johnson, called The Unfortunates (1969). The book is an experimental text. There are 27 unbound chapters, with only the first and last chapters specified. The remaining chapters are written in such a way that they can be read in any sequence. This device was deployed as a matter of reading as well as the writing. I liked this idea. The reader of this thesis can make a choice about when and how they read ‘my story’.

As a youngster I used to visit the William Booth Bird museum regularly with my Mum. The Museum is one of Brighton's unsung treasures. It is the second largest regional natural history museum in Britain, housing over half a million specimens and boasting an extensive library of natural history literature going back over three centuries. William Booth's passion was ornithology. During his lifetime he assembled a vast collection of stuffed British birds, outstanding examples of Victorian taxidermy displayed in unique dioramas.
Mum and I would spend hours here. The museum’s curator usually provided a written guide for us. I learnt quickly however that this helpful little pamphlet, like other pamphlets I have been given during my life, did not have to restrict my explorations. Mum and I usually agreed that we would head off in different directions then meet every so often for a chat; an opportunity to discuss what we had seen. I didn’t and don’t have to go the way that was suggested. We would wonder off on our own paths.

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There have been many times when I have sat down at the computer. A day ahead of me: a day to get ‘some Doctoral work done’. I Hoover the carpets, iron some shirts; make several cups of tea, clean out the rabbit hutch and then I finally run out of activities to keep me away from the computer. So what shall I write about? I found a wonderful book ‘Writing without Teachers by Peter Elbow (1998). He describes a form of writing called ‘freewriting’. This is a writing technique where the person writes continuously for a set period of time without paying any attention to the spelling, grammar or the subject. It allows a writer to overcome ‘blocks’ and apathy. This approach has helped me considerably to motivate myself.

********************

For me guidebooks and maps are only a representation of the ‘land’. What they are unable to report is the dynamic unexpected changing twists and turns on the journeys we undertake.

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The stories I have reported here will have provided you with a map of my experiences and memories leading into what I believe are common areas of human experiences. How I describe my stories and the detail I choose to include is a function of how I am now, or as I was when I wrote the text. Goleman (1998)
discusses ‘emotional hijacking’; this refers to the brains capacity for responding to different situations by switching between different styles of thinking. As he suggests, we tend to be aware of thinking processes under our conscious control. This strategy is obviously useful when we consider the amount of information available via our senses at any one time, moment to moment. Some types of information are given higher priority, especially when related to safety. Our automatic attention processes scan the environment for information and responds automatically, outside of our conscious awareness, this is an example of ‘emotional hijacking’. In addition Goleman (1998) discusses ‘blind spots’; a natural phenomena that occurs when images seem to disappear. This is because the images are projected exactly onto the blind spot (the area where optic nerve leaves the retina). Blind spot is located on the nasal part of both retina, so the object has to be on the temporal areas of the optic field if we want to project the image onto blind spot (this is due to the crossing light rays in ocular lens), hence, for right eye, the object has to be on the right part of visual field (blind spot is on the left side), whereas for the left eye it has to be on the left part of visual field (blind spot is on the right side).
Blind spot: close your right eye and focus on the cross with the left eye. Move the paper forward-backward until you find the position in which the black circle disappears.

I often use this blind spot test with people at work to illustrate how difficult is to remember everything that is said or felt during our clinical sessions. I suggest that we both go away with different memories and experiences of the same event. So it would seem that we not only have our interpretations of social situations but our memories of them as well. What I have included in this thesis is what I remember of what I have read, heard and seen.

How do we notice and how do we not notice? There may be pieces missing from my awareness; a hole in my attention; a Lacuna. My descriptions are really all I can refer to. There is no authority to confirm what I have to say. I am forced to reach any conclusions based on my current knowledge. This helps to inform my theoretical position that whatever I write about is writing about me and discovering me at the moment. I am on a constant threshold of not knowing.

I think that explaining too much of my writings and performances may influence and potentially undermine your imagination. In limiting explanations I hope to provide you with an opportunity to think what you want to think about this text.
I’m wanna tell you a story
Chapter seven

As Banks & Banks (2000) suggest:

‘the contexts for interpreting and applying an autoethnographic text should be, perhaps can only be, supplied by the readers, not the author’ (Banks & Banks 2000, page 233).

I agree. There is no one true interpretive context for any text. I recognise in my clinical practice that General Practitioners for example, will refer people for psychotherapy with limited information about the person’s difficulties. When the referral letter is read out to the team, different interpretations are offered by different clinicians. Which interpretation is accurate? None I would suggest.

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In supporting this theme Denzin (1997) analyses representation in Ethnography from this perspective:

‘Language and speech do not mirror experience. They create experience and in the process of creation constantly transform and defer that which is being described. The meanings of a subject’s statements are, therefore always in motion. There can never be a final, accurate representation of what was meant or said...only different textual representations of different experiences’ (Denzin 1997, page 5)

Similar to the process of therapy, Anderson & Goolishian (1992) have written about the importance of ‘not knowing’. They see therapy as a process in which ‘we are always moving towards what is not yet known’ (Anderson & Goolishian 1992, page 159). This suggests not asking questions from a position of pre-understanding and not asking questions to which we want particular answers (Freedman and Coombs 1996). However a not knowing position is not the same as ‘I don’t know anything’. All activities make some background assumptions of some kind. However as Hammersley (2008) suggests there can be a variation in how much is assumed and in how what is assumed is treated, for example:

‘whether it is treated as beyond all doubt or as a set of working assumptions open to subsequent revision’ (Hammersley 2008, page 69).
I’m wanna tell you a story
Chapter seven

One way of approaching this is to consider what is ‘fixed’ and what is allowed to change during the reading. I would suggest that our experiences offer us choices rather than settling certainties with regard to the way we understand our realities (Bruner 1986).

This chapter then presents more stories about the endeavour of finding the ‘self’. It is layered with many different accounts. Whilst an event took place in 1954, my birth; the continuing stories are not linear, they have no endings they are evolving. Linear experiences only become apparent when lives are reflected upon. It is a process of becoming. It ‘implies movement, agency and continuity rather than striving to reach a date at which we have “become”’ (Etherington 2004).

Unlike a traditional jigsaw puzzle, there is no overall picture on the front of this thesis to help guide me in its assembling; I use many different, unstable and inconsistent shaped pieces’ of me.

******************************************************
One of the difficulties of writing such a long document is keeping it all in my mind. What have I written and where did I write it? Have I written this before?
******************************************************

My stories are informed by my experiences and like Church (1995) I will assume that ‘my subjectivity is filled with the voices of other people’ (Church 1995, page 5). Though I accept that I am sat at the computer writing this text, no one is here
I’m wanna tell you a story
Chapter seven

physically helping me, I think that it is not necessarily all my own work. The self, as
we shall begin to investigate, is a contested terrain. Shared experiences of
personal significance casts light on the cultural and social contexts that inevitably
shape the stories that are told. King (2003) maintains that:

‘The truth about stories is that’s all we are...we live by stories, we also live in
them. One way or another we are living the stories planted, knowingly or
unknowingly in ourselves. We live stories that either give our lives meaning
or negate it with meaninglessness. If we change the stories we live by, quite
possibly we change our lives’ (King 2003, page 154)

A scene from the David Lean film Lawrence of Arabia

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XSvik9WPigE

Lawrence enters the large drawing room. Three Taylor Ceiling Fans rotate above.
The air is cool. A Brigadier sits behind a large beautifully hand finished Victorian
writing table. Lawrence walks casually towards him. He stops about a foot away
from the desk.

Lawrence:    Good morning Sir
Brigadier:    Salute.
Lawrence salutes floppily
Brigadier:    If you are subordinate of me Lawrence I shall put
Lawrence:    you under arrest
Brigadier:    You’re what?
Lawrence:    My manner Sir. It looks insubordinate, but it isn’t
really.
Brigadier:    You know I can’t make out whether you’re bloody
bad mannered or just half witted
Lawrence:    I have the same problem Sir
Brigadier:    Shut up

***************
Sometimes I can’t make out whether I am bloody bad mannered or just Half
witted.

***************
In order to get to know myself, to gather information into my multiple
meanings and me, I have had to investigate and get to know my own stories.
I have had to begin acknowledging me in all my different developing ways.
Arriving is not somewhere I anticipate being, I am ever evolving and ever
developing.

***************
My stories are constantly being updated and revised. Giddens (1990) says that:
I’m wanna tell you a story
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‘Thought and action are constantly refracted back upon one another. The reflexivity of modern social life consists in the fact that social practices are constantly examined and reformed in the light of incoming information about those very practices thus constitutively altering their character’ (Giddens 1990, page 38-39)

Many of my experiences involve crossing borders. Often these borders are unknown, no customs patrols or social police to alert me. How then do I gain a sense of cohesion? Can we achieve cohesion? Do we need cohesion? Is cohesion possible? These questions are influenced by how we view the world. Many people whom I see in clinical situations seem to think that their world has been constructed for them, on their behalf. They believe and perhaps have always believed what other people have told them about their lives with little opportunities to reflect and be instrumental in their transformations. Examples of this may be represented with:

‘My parents have always told me this, so it must be true’.

‘My partner says that you can give me a tablet to take away this distress’.

‘Do you know the name of a hypnotherapist? They can remove my anxiety for me’

‘If I knew what to do I would have done it by now, stupid’

‘My parents told me to come along to see you. They think I am mad’

***************

My parents had respect for traditional institutions and were extremely polite to their superiors. I think that their traditional values provided them (and us children) with a relatively stable set of rules for life; rules for social interactions and rules for our (limited) available options. Giddens (1994) saw this ‘stasis as largely untouched’ (Giddens 1994, page 56). Being respectable to people was important to them both and it also ‘kept them in their place’. They were interested in my schooling, but due to my Dad’s work commitments it was Mum who would attend the school activities. It was Mum who had a searching enquiring mind and encouraged me to do the same. I learnt about being polite, being punctual, loyalty and ‘knowing my place’.
Social construction ideas can often seem to be neglectful of the power struggles that occur within socially constructed realities. Foucault (1998) contributes to this however by introducing the idea of discourses and how power and knowledge is influenced by powerful dominant discourses. Whilst I accept that whatever the people I see clinically might reflect upon they are ‘involved’ in the construction, I think that the consequences of this co-construction can be disempowering as well as empowering. Information that is shared and co-constructed maybe liberating, people might find out that their ‘panic attacks’ are not that unusual and can be modified; or the information shared and co-constructed may be disempowering, for example ‘there is nothing I can do about the situation that I now know about’ in contrast it may be liberating to know your place. I discuss this further when I draw on the work of Adams (2003; 2007) and Giddens (1991) and self and reflexivity. How can a story (language) from one country cross successfully into another? I usually know afterwards, when I have crossed a border. Sometimes people will tell me or I might have taken note of the signposts on my departure.

‘The most prudent and effective method of dealing with the world around us is to assume that it is a complete fiction’ JG Ballard: The Prophet of Shepperton (2009)

Discovering that I have crossed an unknown invisible border is a different experience. I may be told I have crossed a border and be reprimanded, I may pick up on non-verbal cues; facial expressions, body language or I might be eliminated from some social groups. Presumably the people who do know the invisible
borders know where the borders are? They know the rules and customs of that particular culture (or maybe they don’t either?).

‘Can you remove your shoes please? We don’t wear our outdoor shoes in the house Nigel’

‘You can’t have a red wine with fish Nigel. Red wine is for red meat. With fish, the general rule is that the richer fleshed the specimen and more robust the cooking (think steamed, poached, grilled or fried), the fuller the wine needs to be. So for example with subtly-flavoured Dover Sole aim for a simple white Burgundy or lightly-oaked Chardonnay.’

If we accept that the way we construct the world is influenced by our contributions to each social situation, it would seem reasonable that we use our ever evolving transformations to assist us in ‘making sense’ of our social worlds. One suggestion is that we use schemas concepts; these can be described as mental structures that guide what we attend to and not attend to. It has been suggested (Augoustinos & Walker 2004) that our ideas about the world and other people are learned through our experiences or socialisations. These authors continue:

‘a dominant theme associated with schema models is that people are ‘cognitive misers’, economising as much as they can on the effort they need to expend when processing information’ (Augoustinos & Walker 2004, page 33)

Am I miserly? What do I think in different situations? What do other people think in the same in the same situations? Are these thoughts more or less acceptable? Who chooses?
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A conversation
Nigel: I had friends who were hippies, friends who were mods and friends who were bikers. I liked them all. Yet they wouldn’t want to all be in the same room together. I was crossing borders even then.

Friend: I think you get away with crossing borders that others wouldn’t get away with

Nigel: Go on? That sounds like an interesting observation. Tell me more please?

Friend: I think that people generally have some ideas about what crossing a border would entail. These ideas are probably based on judgments and prejudice and have the danger of becoming self-fulfilling prophecies. I think you have innocence or naivety about you, which lets you stray into all sorts of places without any pre conceived ideas. And when you arrive in a different land people see that in you and might not apply the same rules to you as they do to other people who stay. A clumsy explanation. Does it make sense? You do make some judgments, I’ve heard you but you have that curiosity which takes you across borders and up alleyways and into conversations.

Do I break conventions without knowing what the conventions are? (Goleman 1998) Or do I do it deliberately, like the fool in King Lear?

According to Rosaldo (1989) we are constantly crossing cultural border zones and the accompanying rules of these cultures. We are presented with border zones more often than we care to think about or are able to acknowledge. For me these borders are represented for example by meeting my children, meeting different people I see in a routine clinical week, the different meetings I have to attend, being invited to ‘teach’ student Nurses or students undertaking MScs in qualitative research. The social situations require ‘different’ Nigels: a Dad, a
cognitive behaviour therapist and a teacher. As Speedy (2008) says in the preface to her book ‘Narrative Inquiry and Psychotherapy’

‘A multitude of alternative identity claims…. are tugging away at the edges of my mind’s eye and disrupting my focus and sense of purpose’ (Speedy 2008, page x111)

Rosaldo continues by defining a cultural borderland as the space created when two or more cultures occupy the same psychological space and how these:

‘Borderlands should be regarded as sites of creativity, not as analytically empty transitional zones, but as sites of creative cultural production that require investigation’ (Rosaldo 1989, page 208)

I would suggest that we all inhabit porous cultures; cultures that are influenced by power, inequality and dominance for example. We move from one culture to another and we may of course inhabit many different cultures at the same time.

February 27th 2002.
In the mid 1970’s I worked in Malawi. One day I caught the Mangochi ferry from the west side of Lake Malawi to the east side. The border with Mozambique is not far once you cross the Shire River. After many hours of walking a tall black man approached me. His body was completely covered in wonderful long white cotton kaftan. He wore a belt with a long knife dangling from an attached hook. He spoke to me in Portuguese. I told him, in my poor Spanish, that I was English. He then told me in English that I had crossed the border into Mozambique. He wanted to know why I had come to his country. There was nothing on this road that indicated I was near the border. It was only when he and I spoke that I become aware that I had crossed the geographical and cultural border. He invited me to his village and I sat with him and his family and they gave me food and drink. I then went on my way. For a few moments we had forgotten our cultural borders and joined together.
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Borders in some countries sometimes only become apparent when someone points a gun at you.

The stories people provide themselves with are usually accompanied by rigid conclusions.

For example,

‘I am thick’,
‘I am unlovable’.

How we interpret our stories can keep us ‘stuck’.

Here are some examples of stuckness:

‘Everyone is out to get me’
‘That was bad luck’
‘If they hadn’t have said that I would be ok’

Re writing our stories offers an opportunity to move away from stuckness and develop new ways of being. The following is a story I sometimes tell people I work with in the clinic.

An old man sits atop a large boulder outside a small hamlet; Amos Acero. His sombrero protects his head from the beating sun. The large rock provides him with a commanding view of the track that weaves its way from the south towards the cave casas (house). A youngster approaches. Stops and says ‘Hello’ to the old timer.
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Youngster: ‘What’s it like in the village?’
Old man: ‘What’s it like where you have just been?’
Youngster: ‘It was great. People were very friendly and I felt safe.
Old man: ‘You will find it like that in Amos Acero’

An hour later another youngster approaches the old man:

Second youngster: ‘What’s it like in the village?’
Old man: ‘What’s it like where you have just been?’
Second youngster: ‘It was horrible. People were unfriendly and hostile.
Old man: ‘You will find it like that in Amos Acero’

While I can appear to be a native in an adopted culture I am always haunted
by voices from the other side of the border….come back, where are you
going? These stories can bring conflict-feelings of being out of place and
trying to see in several directions at the same time. For example I often
rehearse what I will say at meetings and then I miss some of what is going on
as I concentrate too much on what is going on in my head, waiting patiently
for my opportunity to talk. I then say my ‘bit’ and can seem to convince
people into thinking that I am one of them, when internally I don’t feel it or
think it.

1965. Summer; Dyke Road Park, Brighton. I had played well all morning. I was
pleased. My trainer was pleased as well, he told me. A decision would be
made at Midday. Twenty-two eleven-year-old boys sat on wooden benches.
The green hut smells of liniment oil and grass cuttings. Mr Wiley, head coach,
reads out names. As he calls out the names he throws Brighton Boys Football
shirts to the chosen ones.

Mr Wiley: Johnson, Goalkeeper
Johnson: Thank you sir
Mr Wiley: Bright. Right back
Bright: Thank you Sir
Mr Wiley: Short. You will play left back. You will have to get
your Mum to sow the badge on son. It has fallen off.
Short: If you want me to play for your football team. You
will have to sow it on yourself Sir.

The hut goes very quiet.
The silence is punctuated with

Mr Wiley: See me afterwards Short

Mr Wiley continues with the remaining names.
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Mr Wiley: Bennet. Centre half

Bennet: Thank you sir

I sit in silence. Where had my rudeness come from? What will Mum and Dad think? Everyone has left. It’s just Mr Wiley and me now.

Mr Wiley: Nigel. You are a very good footballer. I like your style. I will not tolerate being spoken to like you did to me earlier though. You will need to learn what to say and at what time and when. (How do we learn this?) Unfortunately on this occasion you will not be playing for Brighton Boys.

I am finding it difficult to write some of my stories. Do I feel vulnerable or is this another example of me being reluctant to show off? Behar (1996) identifies some charges aimed at vulnerable writing that writers of this type of inquiry are: ‘Self serving and superficial, full of unnecessary guilt or excessive bravado’ (Behar 1996, page 14)

This concerns me. What if the readers think I am like this? I reassure myself that first person narratives are written by people who have been more likely to have been written about and that my disclosures are from a personal perspective yet are social. I have a duty to me and maybe to others, to tell my story, to produce a testimony, a witness.

So how do we construct stories? Stories that influence how we might deal with border crossings; known and unknown.

Bruner (1986, 1990) (Dear Mr. Short: I’m delighted, of course, that my work has been of some help to you. And I’m passing your email on to my secretary, for I think she has a photograph of me that isn't snarled in copyright regulations. You'll hear from her shortly. Best wishes. Jerome Bruner) has described two modes of thought; each mode provides a way of
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ordering our experiences, of constructing our unique realities. He calls one mode the paradigmatic or logico-scientific one; this assists us to make sense of formal systems of description and explanation. This mode deals with topics such as logic, mathematics and sciences. The second mode is the narrative mode. This mode deals with good stories, gripping drama and believable, but not necessarily true, historical stories. Bruner argues that the memory of events and the way we organise those experiences are mediated through the way we tell our stories and that we tell our stories depending on the culture and significant others involved. In that sense they are not scientific constructions, but provide evidence for what people feel and think.

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November 2009.

I am driving home in my car. It occurs to me that one of the difficulties I have been having with this thesis is reflecting about past events. If for example I have been left thinking I have misunderstood again, or misheard or misrepresented, my reflections on the events can often leave me feeling embarrassed or shy. Why did I get so upset, why didn’t I say this or that when I was in the meeting.

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Mykhalovskiy (1997) argues that the use of the self can be productive in the ways we think about the process of writing and reading and that this approach can be a source of insightful analysis. It can provide opportunities for multiple and critical readings. The writing of this thesis has not only involved the construction of the text but the added construction of meaning.

As the American writer Kurt Vonnegut put in his last book ‘I am startled that I became a writer. I don’t think I control my life or my writing…I don’t have that sort of control. I am simply becoming’. My writing is like that. It folds organically and often doesn’t do what I want it to do (kind of like emotion; it
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just comes upon me, startles me; I don’t control it, though I do work to channel it and do spend a lot of time polishing it) but it comes bit by bit, and somehow, through my fingers, magic sometimes happens.

(Chris 7th August 2007-autoethnography@yahoogrup.com)

Chris. Your last point is an interesting one. I recently wrote in my field notes ‘Like a poet or author my study often develops in a direction I hadn’t planned or seen coming’. Like it has/had a life of its own.

(Nigel P Short 8th August 2007- autoethnography@yahoogrup.com).

‘Sometimes songs just arrive and I don’t always know where they have come from-sometimes the meanings come later, maybe weeks months or years later’ (Weller 2007)

A friend asks me. ‘Is the ‘I’ of your work a real or fictional character then?

There is a fictional Nigel that pops up in a lot of the work, even those that seem overtly autobiographical. Writers often complain that when they use the word 'I', readers are very quick to assume that these moments are confessional in some way, and it’s not always the case. But at the same time I think writers are aware that the 'I' word is a useful little barb in a poem to catch hold of a reader's attention (Armitage 2007). I think that there are many versions of me and I’m always playing with these different personas and maybe these characters sort of blur a little bit. I am presenting the belief that there are many different Nigel's. I am many fictions and factions.

I remember sitting on the bus to school and occasionally looking round at my mates wondering what we all be doing in ten and twenty years time. Would any of us leave Brighton? Who would stay? I knew by the age of 16 that I would be leaving. I wanted to be one of those people that got away. I knew there was more to the world than what the careers master at school had told me about; a career in the post office, factory work or social services. I
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wanted to find other things to do. I did leave home at 16 and went to a college in south Wales.

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Now I sit in some meetings at work and wonder who it is amongst us who would really like to say what they are thinking. The things they tell me about in the coffee room before we all go in to the meeting. I feel suspended sometimes. Of course if we were authentic and honest with each other I would of course have to accept that people might tell me to be quite. If I put my toes in too much I might take root.

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I am moving away from what Rorty (1999) refers to as a foundational self. [Do ‘others’ have a foundational Nigel?] By foundational I mean those beliefs that occupy a space in a natural transcultural order. An order, which Rorty (1999) suggests ‘eventually leads the enquirer back to one or another “ultimate source of evidence”’ (Rorty 1999, page 151). In this way Rorty develops the views of Kuhn (1970; 2003) who saw sciences as a process of enquiry in which knowledge is accumulated, with a view to claiming superior knowledge of reality.

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As I grow older it seems important to look back upon my lives, my selves. What metaphorical compass do I use? It raises questions about which self is doing this viewing? This shift in perspective has arisen for many reasons. My children have been travelling abroad; Australia and Thailand. These were places that I had taken them to when they were younger. This has evoked memories for me. I have also been thinking about retirement. These new directions have prompted me to think about my past. This Storying of our lives plays crucial role in our development (Stone 1996).

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What did my Mum think about me being in hospital? I guess her day to day life, like mine, like everybody’s, may never be the same. This part of my life never gets a mention in my family. What do they think about the six months I was away; away from them?

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Story telling is something we all do. By integrating thoughts with feelings we can construct a coherent narrative of our experiences (Pennebaker & Seagal 1999; Pennebaker 2004). It’s familiar, and perhaps telling our stories might help other

Frank (1995) discusses three types of storying telling; these stories have particular shapes and directions.

- The first is the restitution narrative. Its plot line has the basic storyline: ‘Yesterday I was healthy, today I am sick, but tomorrow I’ll be healthy again’. A desire to return to how things used to be. The stories are often reinforced by others who want to generate and sustain a sense of hope; hope towards a desirable outcome.

- The second story, the inverse of the restitution, is the chaos narrative. These stories are chaotic in their absence of any narrative order. They are told as the storyteller experiences their life, without sequence or any discernable causality. The future appears desolate, especially when compared with the past.

- Finally the third story is the quest narrative. This narrative meets suffering ‘head on’, accepts the impairment, disability, illness and seeks to use it in the belief that something is to be gained from the experience.

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I have tried to use the quest story line for my selves. I know that I have been through periods of wanting to get back to how life was. In addition I have experienced many dark moments of chaos, times when I thought I would be stuck for ever. Now however I find my selves using the quest narrative more often. Acknowledging and validating what I have
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experienced, what others have experienced and trying to move on, by using my experiences in a constructive and useful way.

Life moves on, stories change and accompanying experiences change. This might help people to understand why mental health users’ stories change, depending on who is seeing them and who is asking the questions. I have been working in mental health services since 1984 and continue to be puzzled by the idea that people who use mental health services are ‘not allowed to change’ unless they are changing in ways that the services often seem to want them to change. ‘If the client doesn’t tell the right story they get punished’. Curiously in tandem with this is another narrative provided by some staff in which they do NOT seem to change either (Clarke & Flanagan 2003).

‘We have always done it this way’.
‘We try our best and they don’t seem to get any better’.

I think that many mental health workers continue to be influenced by diagnosis, categories, theoretical distinctions and conceptual knowledge. But I agree with Coles (1989) who suggest that:

‘The people who come to see us bring us their stories. They hope they tell them well enough so that we understand the truth of their lives. They hope we know how to interpret their stories correctly. We have to remember that what we hear is their story’ (Coles 1989, page 7)

There is growing evidence that the act of writing about traumatic experience can produce measurable changes in physical and mental health (Pennebaker 2004). I believe that this is happening for me. I am generally happier, feel more confident and am able to celebrate my ‘oddness; and being different. My tales are liberating. I am aware that most of the time I am able to experience situations
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with a developing understanding and context. The ‘personal’ “What have I done wrong? seems to be evaporating. Double messages are seen as creative opportunities and I ‘feel’ more playful’ again more consistently.

These authors Frank 1995; Pennebaker & Seagal 1999; Pennebaker 2004 and Rhys Dent 2007, discuss the idea that there is a balance to be sought between maintaining ‘normality’ with a need to accept that life is about acknowledging developments and accompanying evolution. This evolving includes themes associated with emotions, temperament and sophistication.

Writing for others helps the author clarify personal experiences, find meanings and make a valuable social contribution (Ryan 2006). As someone who has used mental health services I have accepted that my experiences have altered my sense of personal and professional identities and how others perceive and importantly, now communicate with me, and how I communicate with others.

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My experiences of sadness are both typical and untypical of how other people might have experienced sadness. I wasn’t sleeping or eating well and sometimes I had some very strange ideas; some I acted upon. I spent many evenings trying to cut my left thumb off. I thought at the time that this would make me feel better; for short periods it did make me feel better. How could I begin to explain to someone that trying to cut your thumb off made me feel better? How would this action be appraised by people?

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I think the function of trying to cut my thumb off was a way of distracting my mind from my distress, not necessarily to cut my thumb off! I used to look forward to the quite of the evening and the opportunity to cut my skin. I think in some ways it helped me get through the day. I think this appraisal has helped me to understand what it might be like for someone when they are sat opposite me who have also ‘cut’ themselves. I think I might be more able to ‘nearly’ understand their different motives.
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My personal stories sometimes don’t seem to fit anymore and it has been a long continuous journey to reconstruct my senses of ‘self’ and my accompanying stories.

During the Hastings May Day celebrations a storyteller wanders through the crowds and encourages people to stop him so he can tell a story.

Ben is a trained and experienced storyteller, musician, poet, teacher, therapist and workshop leader - in short, a Troubadour.

Stories are especially helpful when they mean more than we can say. I regularly have conversations with friends and colleagues about a film or a piece of music, only to find out that we have read or watched has been understood in different ways. My understanding of stories has developed over the last few years. Stories are about how we write as well as about what we write. Groups have also begun to fascinate me. When groups of people talk about how groups of people behave with each other, little emphasis seems to be given to the roles people adopt in groups when talking about groups. For example what happens to peoples’
identities when sitting in symposiums discussing people’s identities? The observable ‘I’ is often camouflaged, ignored or avoided. Conversations talk about ‘others’. Who are these ‘others?’ I want to try and write in a different way; sometimes as the ‘other’, to write about me whilst I am being me; an experiment.

Sat with three friends talking about books we had read. 

Dave talks about a book he has read

Wendy says ‘I read that book. I don’t remember the passages you are talking about’.

Dave says ‘Oh Ok maybe it was that other book’. He talks about another book.

Wendy says ‘I have read that one as well. I think you have made a mistake. I don’t remember that either’.

Dave then says ‘Well maybe what I thought happened in the book has happened to me?’

Factions within groups disagree and manoeuvre to have their own definition of the group’s function accepted. The function of the group or organisation, then, is decided in political conflict, not given in the nature of the organisation. If this is true, then it is likewise true that the questions of what rules are to be enforced, what behaviour is regarded as deviant and which people labelled as outsiders must also be regarded as political (Becker 1963, page 7)

Social groups’ create deviance by making the rules whose infraction constitutes deviance. From this point of view, deviance is not a quality of the act the person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to be offended (Becker 1963, page 9)

A person may break the rules of one group by the very act of abiding by the rules of another group (Becker 1963, page 8).

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Do I have imagined ‘groups’? Imagined groups that I adhere to? Do other people have imagined groups? For example I like being in groups that actively encourage creativity, groups that are able to tolerate uncertainty; groups who may decide which road to take at a crossroads by tossing a coin. How do these ideas influence me as a parent, a teacher and a therapist?

In his book Vital Lies, Simple Truths: The Psychology of Self Deception, Goleman (1998) discusses the role of self-deception, both in an individual’s mind and in the collective awareness of a group:

‘To belong to a group of any sort, the tacit price of membership is to agree not to notice one’s own feelings of uneasiness and misgivings, and certainly not to question anything that challenges the group’s way of doing things’ (Goleman 1989, page 12)

This reminded me of a book I read in the summer of 2008 about Mother Teresa of Calcutta. The Missionary Position: Mother Teresa in Theory and Practice, by Christopher Hitchens: 1995. The text is potted with stories that illustrate what happens if people opposed Mother Teresa’s views. Hitchens compares her Missionaries of Charity organisations with cults. Many volunteers describe that the order of the Missionaries of Charity is one of total obedience to the dictates of a single woman and is enforced at every level. The questioning of her authority is not an option. The following testaments are taken from a text by Susan Shields (who worked for Mother Teresa for several years) from her unpublished manuscript In Mothers House: Ms Shields became so uncomfortable with deceit, pretence and hypocrisy and her inner discomfort that she eventually left the order.
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‘I was able to keep my complaining conscience quiet because we had been taught that the Holy Spirit was guiding Mother. To doubt her was a sign that we were lacking in trust and, even worse, guilty of the sin of pride. I shelved my objections and hoped that one day I would understand the many things that seemed to be contradictions’ (Hitchens 1995, page 44)

‘The flood of donations was considered to be a sign of God’s approval of Mother Teresa’s congregation. We were told that we received more gifts than other religious congregations because God was pleased with Mother, and because Missionaries of Charity were the sisters who were faithful to the true spirit of religious life. Our bank account was already the size of a great fortune and increased with every postal service delivery. Around $50, million had been collected in one checking account in the Bronx... Those of us who worked in the office regularly understood that we were not to speak about our work. The donations rolled in and were deposited in the bank but they had no effect on our ascetic lives or on the lives of the poor we were trying to help’ (Hitchens 1995, page 47)

I experience this. Often left with feelings of discomfort within the organisation I work in. Requests often conflict with personal psychoepistemologies. Do other people?

I’ve had many new experiences during this Doctorate as well as experiences that I think I am more likely to pay attention to now. For example I was sitting with a friend/colleague and he was talking about some difficulties at work. He looked very old and worn out. He had never exposed his vulnerabilities before. He usually presented as a robust strong character. I felt close to him; closer than before. I felt connected. I believe that when we are with people the existence of this interconnectedness is unavoidable, even if at a primitive a level. Further, to suppose that it is possible for a human researcher to step outside their humanness, for example, by disregarding one's own values, experiences, and constructions, is to believe, as I have argued before, in magic (Guba and Lincoln 1994). This prompted more ideas about people’s identities and how we represent
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ourselves in different ways in different cultural and social settings by using
different narratives; different constructions. As Brockmeier and Carbaugh (2001)
suggest:

‘the self in time-can only exist as a narrative construction’ (Brockmeier and

‘Identities for me are all about the family and upbringing and belonging and
landscape. It’s incredible how the rivers of our past keep flooding through
our veins’ (Armitage 2006).

Writing itself has been identified as a way of learning (Allen, Bowers &
Diekelmann 1989); the process works to develop thinking through active
engagement as opposed to writing for an outcome. This demands multiple texts,
representing multiple Nigel's and others. This representation moves me from the
centre; holding it up for the readers to inspect. Cottle (2002) develops this idea by
suggesting that in forming our responses and making our interpretations we
constantly run the risk of pushing our stories against the stories of others;
demanding that others re-think their stories in light of our stories.

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In the preface to Forbidden Narratives: Critical Autobiography as Social
Science by Kathryn Church (1995) which overlaps layers of voices and stories
which convey the social relations of psychiatric survivor participation within
community mental health services. She says that ‘All of these stories
demonstrate ways in which the knowledge/power relations of community
mental health are significantly disrupted by process which bring forward
surviving knowledge repertoires. When this happens, mental health
professionals and bureaucrats become unsettled’. I also become unsettled,
when I represent my selves. In the same ways that professionals identities
are called into question, so is mine.

I spend a lot of my time being reminded that the world is often fuelled by
positivistic world views. I think this idea then influences what I write and how
I might write it. I have presented me with an obstacle; worrying how people
might interpret my work. It feels like a process of ‘coming out’ (Etherington
2004, page 19). Like Etherington (2004) I often struggle between ideas; but in
addition what she says are her two conflicting ideas; using reflexivity as a
tool for research and concerns about whether her personal experiences are a
legitimate source of knowledge, I have a third concern, which is the most emotionally intense, worries about what family, friends and colleagues might think.

Worrying about my work being a legitimate source of knowledge is the least of my concerns. I do think there is definitely something to be said about writing about ourselves, how this can make us feel, and how revealing, liberating and disturbing it can/might be. It seems that most people who have written autoethnographies or people who have criticised autoethnographies are more concerned about whether the writing is academic enough, does it have rigour, objectivity? Whilst I am attentive to these research issues, (and the up and coming possibility of a viva occupies my time), I think it is more important to share my work as honestly and subjectively as possible. I worry that I may have completely misunderstood all the literature that I have read. Have I missed the point of autoethnography? Rorty (1999) and Ellingson & Ellis (2008) reassure me however when they say respectively ‘philosophers should explicitly and self-consciously confine themselves to justification’ (Rorty 1999, page 32) and ‘we need not have a rigid definition of autoethnography....’ (Ellingson and Ellis 2008, page 460). Freshwater (2005) also helps by suggesting that a researcher’s bias (that is their stories) can never be fully known. We can only report on that which is conscious and this may be both complete and incomplete. In this way I evoke an awareness dimension to my selves. Humans are consistently inconsistent. As the narrator, I may be unreliable, who decides? I am a character in the text and have to rely on my truthfulness (Clarke 2009).

You are invited to experience the different ways I express myself. I anticipate that my reflections will provide opportunities to hear not only my life but also the lives of people I have contact with. My stories are influenced by others stories and so on. It’s cyclic.

‘Personal identity cannot seemed to be fixed...the person experiences himself as many selves, each of which is felt to have a life of its own’ (Miller 1974, cited in Gergen 1991 page 249).

September 1970
I am standing in a stair well at the bottom of three-storey building. It’s midday. The hot sun is high in the sky. My journey to the college started at seven this morning. My Prince of Wales checked trousers feel good. They hang just right on my ox blood Doc Martens shoes. My hair is short. I am being told it is not short enough. I think the college man is making a pun using my surname. I smile. He tells me to stop grinning.

The college man says: What course have you come along for?
Dews and Law (1995) discuss in their edited book ‘This fine place so far away from home’ the importance of making differences visible and encourage people from marginalised groups to become visible, ‘as invisibility is, in the long run, intolerable (Denis & Law 1995, page 5). I have thought of myself as marginalised and invisible for many years. Do I want to move from being invisible? It’s safe here.

I began to wonder what the point of higher education was for those of us from working class backgrounds if it just made us leave everyone behind. How did my family think about what I was doing? My elderly Mother and I often joke about my thesis submission. She wants to be alive to attend the awards ceremony. She has attended my previous award ceremonies. We have had good fun at them; giggling about the preposterousness of the situation; mixing with the elite. ‘What would Dad make of it all?’ we often ask each other. I am unsure what my remaining two sisters think about the Doctorate. I sense they might think I am off doing my own thing, again. As well as adding to the world of academia I also wanted to contribute something to the family and class I came from.

As Marx (1852) put it:

‘Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted form the past’ (In McLellan 1977, page 300)
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I think one reason I am doing this Doctorate is for my Mum; yet I am embarrassed when I am in her company and I hear her tell her friends about my studying. Another tension? I think she is proud of me and yet I find her pride in me difficult to hear and experience.

I have been writing (performing) and then presenting the work to friends and colleagues then requesting feedback. I think that people might think of writing skill as knowledge; something that once you know it, then you can do it. I believe that writing skill is tacit and arises from pure practice and response, a rhetorical operation, not necessarily an intellectual one. I have been using different types of media; images, written records and some of the text may take you by surprise in the same way that our usual intrusions take us by surprise. These can be used not only as data but as ways of representing different field data (Dicks, Soyinka & Coffey 2006). Ruth Behar (1997) also says that what happens within the observer must be made known if the nature of what has been observed is to be understood. In autoethnographic writing the researcher’s own epistemology is at the very heart of the researcher’s tale.

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I ring my Aunt (Lily) and Uncles (Fred) phone number. They work in a school for deaf children in Brighton. One of the male teachers answers the phone.

**Terry:** Hello, who is this?

**Nigel:** It’s Nigel, Lily’s niece. Sorry nephew.

What had I experienced here? I thought he was posh. His study had shelves of books against the wall. Newspaper crosswords were completed in minutes. He
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used words I didn’t understand. He wasn’t unpleasant. He was educated. I think I was experiencing ‘class’ again. I think my anxiety, although painfully obvious to me, would have been invisible to him. I could kick a football though! We are all products not just of our immediate upbringing but also of the past of our parents and grandparents. Our stories, like many people I work with clinically, can keep us in stuck in positions.

First impressions

For me a good book, film or story has to ‘catch me’. Be it ‘Mr Jones, of the Manor Farm, had locked the hen-houses for the night, but was too drunk to remember to shut the pop-holes’ (The opening line of Animal Farm by George Orwell) or Hello Darkness my old friend I've come to talk with you again (the opening lyrics of the film the Graduate-Simon and Garfunkel 1967)

Do I do anything to catch people’s attention? What was it about the above that caught me? Is it always the same sort of theme(s) that catches me? For example I am aware that some people’s accents interest me. People with what I refer to as, cultured accents, influence how I feel. I immediately feel disempowered. They of course may not know this. I am aware at work that I pay particular attention to what a story (referral) sounds like. This ‘feeling’ is similar to the ‘narrative truth’ that Ellis (2007) discusses rather than the ‘historical truth’.
The English comedian Max Bygraves often started his monologues with ‘I wanna tell you a story’ and Peter Hennessey, Attlee Professor of Contemporary British History at Queen Mary, University of London, (Thanks to Professor Hennesey for permission to use this photo) discusses how important it is for academic work to be more accessible. One-way of achieving this is to make academic scholarly texts more like story telling (Hennessey 2007). He expresses concerns that academic work is often written for academics, for research ratings, scholarly journals and not necessarily for wider audiences. He doesn’t consider this approach to research to be particularly attractive and suggests lifting research to ‘somewhere else’; that is to be more accessible by telling each other stories.

Characters in my ‘stories’ might be compelling because of a capacity for identification or because they represent a cast of characters that I carry around, but not necessarily in my consciousness (Bruner 1990). Goleman (1999) adds to this idea by using the metaphor of a cropped photograph. Censorship is obvious to the ‘cropper’ but not the viewer. It is not so easy to see similar editing on our awareness. What enters our attention is within the frame of our awareness; what we crop out vanishes. Bruner suggests that in the constructing of stories and listening to others stories we deal with create our reality; complete and
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incomplete. So what does this say about my ‘first impressions’? There are clearly connections going on for me with my particular first impressions.

********************
Conversation with a person at work who I have been working with clinically for about a month. She reported that 22nd January is the worst day for people with mental health problems; the day when most people are likely to commit suicide. I asked her how she knew this. She told me she had read it in the paper. We then discussed what is fact in newspapers? And how does she know what’s true. Wendy then told me that The Sun is biased and she is more likely to believe what is written in the broad sheets. I then asked her how she knows this. She then told me that because the Sun is regularly taken to court for false allegations they are more likely to be dishonest. She said they make quick judgements and the broad sheets are more reflective. I then asked her if she was a newspaper, which she would be. She said The Sun. She arrived at an idea that she often jumps to conclusions with limited evidence. An illustration of empowerment for her maybe?

********************
If there are many different ways of viewing the world it seems reasonable to suggest that there are many different ways of representing these views. In scientific research a great deal of thinking is in terms of theories. The word theory derives from the Greek word ‘Theoria’, which has the same root as ‘theatre’, in a word meaning ‘to view’ or ‘to make spectacle’. From this it might be said that a theory is primarily a form of insight, which is a way of looking at the world, and not necessarily a form of knowledge of how the world is.

********************
I wrote this one-day at work

16th January 2007

All I know I know at any one time is what I know at that particular moment (an ontology of now, the ‘actual occasion’ of experience (Stenner 2008, page 90), a ‘personal reality’ McIveen 2008, page 3). I know how I feel (although I might not have a name for some sensations) and I know what I am thinking (most of the time although I might not know how to say it) and I know what I am doing (although I might not now be able to explain it fully after the event). I have struggled for years thinking that I am not allowed to change my mind or to have different views, regularly. I have often thought that because my opinions don’t sound fixed that I am weak or mad or unusual. I get these feelings and thoughts less and less now.
Hearing tales will help me understand my tale and maybe hearing my tale will help people understand their tales; a sort of coming out. As I continue to reflect, be reflexive and curious about me and my different selves I believe this will help to improve my psychological empathy and compassion towards others and influence others self soothing and compassion (Gilbert 2007). The trust might get a more rounded and compassionate Nigel.

More about Stories and Narratives

A narrative, as an artistic product, also speaks to our sense of self whether we are the writer or the reader:

‘A case is made that encountering the narrative of another person is one of the ways the self discovers itself……………..The encounter inherent in the narrative therefore gives birth to the devotion of one person to another and makes possible the discovery of what defines us as being human’ (Cottle 2002, page 535)

I believe that what Cottle (2002) suggests compliments the work of Bohm (1996) who also promotes the idea that through narrative and dialogue the world can become relational, even if there is no eye-to-eye contact. Richardson (2000) adds to this by suggesting that:

‘Qualitative research has to be read, not scanned; its meaning is in the reading’ (Richardson 2000, page 925)

David Bohm 1917-1994

David Bohm was one of the foremost theoretical physicists of his generation. He wrote (what I consider to be) two influential books; ‘On Dialogue’ and ‘Wholeness and the Implicate Order. He said, "Our future depends on whether we feel like part of this one whole or whether we feel we’re separate." (Bohm 1980, page 28). Bohm was interested in differences between dialogue and discussion, emphasising the idea of analysis. He continues by suggesting that dialogue does not mean a two sided or even one sided conversation, he argues its meaning is developed through language. His ideas have prompted me to think about language as a means of meaning making. Bohm (1996) says that dialogue ‘Is something more of a common participation, in which we are not playing a game against each other but with each other. Dialogue is ‘to suspend your opinions and to look at the opinions-to listen to everybody’s opinions, to suspend them and to see what it all means’ (Bohm 1996, page 9)
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Bohm (1996) continues by discussing the non-judgemental aspect of dialogue and made reference to the ‘authentic trust and openness that can emerge (Bohm 1996, page x) Bohm maintained that seeking shared meanings through dialogical inquiry carried the potential to transform perspectives and interpersonal relationships and suggested that, through dialogue convictions could be suspended, sensitivities expressed and a authentic listening for the ‘flow of meaning emerged. It is in this way that narratives resonate with the participatory vision and support the use of self and narrative in this enquiry. My enquiry is filled with implicit psychoepistemological assumptions of self and social discovery that can be expressed through the methodology of autoethnographic enquiry.

Academia

Both dialogue and autoethnography are the theoretical foundations of this thesis.

Bohms (1996) distinguished dialogue from what is commonly referred to as ‘conversation’ or ‘discussion’. Bohm (1998) stated ‘I give a meaning to the word ‘dialogue’ that is somewhat different from what is commonly used. Bohm (1998) elaborates:

‘Like a river that has no beginning and no end, there is no single clear definition of dialogue. Where aspects of it have sprung up in the past it has usually led to cultures that honour and respect individuals and the relationships that unite everyone into families and communities. The Greek roots of dialogue are dia (through) and logos (meaning). Although the definition may sound obtuse, it is the meaning that we share that form the very basis for understanding one another at all. It is also the root of our culture-all those ways of doing things, artefacts, symbols and words and language-that tie us into common heritage’ (Bohm 1998, page 19)
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Whilst Bohm (1996) made reference to dialogue having ‘no traceable beginning’ (Bohm 1996, page 3), he referred to dialogue as ‘being as old as civilisation itself’ (Bohm 1996, page vii). He maintained that dialogue involved the constant search for mutual, meaningful understanding rather than the attainment of consensus or truth.

********************

Like many experiences in this thesis I am trying on this story telling as a new idea. A new set of clothes, something new to try on. Brody (2002) describes stories as things we ‘try on’ and ‘wear’. The analogy is useful when we consider how ‘some clothes may look ideally suited to us when they are on the clothes hanger or rack but may look very different when we try them on’ (Brody 2002, page 202). I have sometimes brought clothes whilst I have been on holiday, particularly when abroad. I try them on. They look ok and fell ok. Then when I wear them back at home they don’t look the same and don’t feel the same. Like they belong to where I brought them; to that environment. Stories are often like this. They belong to particular settings and when we tell them somewhere else they don’t ‘fit’.

********************

I have thought that my interest in my work practices may be very different than my colleagues. They may of course NOT wish to reflect and be reflexive. One strand of autoethnography encourages an identification of changes within us. Will my colleagues be able to identify changes in themselves or want to identify changes using my enquiry? For example, ‘How do different peoples epistemic styles influence how they are with each other?’

I think one of the challenges of writing about personal experiences, particularly my painful experiences, is to move beyond telling the story to something else. To use the story to change what happens next? The best reading of a story is its ability to be able to walk away from it transformed in some way. Maruyama (1993) expresses it as a ‘binocular’ approach, where the combined viewpoints of two
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eyes (in this case subjective and objective) provide a third perspective hidden from the view of one or other eye. The third way, the third rail (Amis 2008).

A cycle is emerging from my experiences. The silent and the voice. Some ideas are either not discussed or are undiscussable (Agyris 1990). Organisations like families keep secrets (Goodall 2006). I understand and appreciate that within organisations many discussions do not need to be known by all the members of the institution. However organisation undiscussables need to be addressed if we are to have a critique into routine accepted practices. Open dialogue provides opportunities for different conceptions of truth to be aired and then considered. Although I may recommend and want this development, I am aware that there may be explanations for organisational secrets that are culturally and historically located, that ‘realities’ are inconsistent. There are alternative understandings and I recognise that history precedes us and follows us and that ‘we are always already embedded in a story that is not or our own making’ (Greenberg 1995, page 273). I think this is relevant to stories that organisations create about themselves and how staff can be easily marginalised if they do not adhere to these stories.

Organisations develop their own operating rules and agendas (Fineman 1993, Morgan 1997). Social constructionist views of knowledge and related actions suggest that knowledge is not simply received. It is negotiated and often contested between individuals. These shared and contested discourses are local
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and within a context rather than universal. In addition social construction ideas would suggest that organisations are far from neutral backdrops to practice. They are instead socially negotiated. The rules and agendas shape the identities of organisational members. In the same way that the cognitive approach suggests we all develop core beliefs about ourselves, other and the world as a result of early social and environmental experiences, Pfeffer (1981) argues that in relatively silent and subtle ways members of organisations are to varying degrees socialised (social and environmental experiences and associated beliefs and rules) into what he describes as the ‘procedural rationality’ of the organisation. Fineman (2003) argues that organisational emotions, emotional displays and associated prohibitions are socially constructed and any related behaviours congruent with organisational custom and practice will be actively encouraged. Over the past couple of decades ‘emotion’ has been firmly placed on the organisational agenda. It is now widely recognized that ‘organizations’ have feelings (Fineman (2003) that they are sites of ‘love, hatred and passion’ (Fineman, 1993) and the ‘commercialization of feeling’ (Hochschild, 1979, 1983) is a common feature. Organisations seek to regulate an employee’s emotion management as part of the labour process. Either way, feelings become ‘transmutated’ by the organisation and the ‘smile, ‘mood’, ‘feeling’, or ‘relationship’, ‘belongs more to the organisation and less to the self’ (Hochschild 983, page 198).

My emotions, whilst managed, are driven by the context of the situation. I have attended Trust board meetings where I have been aware of my anxiety, not
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saying what I really want to say; fear of losing my job. Equally I have attended
senior Trust meetings where I have become so exasperated by the un evolving
conversation that I HAVE said something and the fear of losing my job either
seems less probably or I haven’t been as caring about my employment. As
Goffman (1961 states:

‘The image that emerges of the individual is that of a juggler and synthesizer, an
accommodator and appeaser, who fulfils one function while he is apparently
engaged in another; he stands guard at the door of the tent but let’s all his
friends and relatives crawl in under the flap’. Goffman (1961, page 139)

I am known in my family for telling stories. Long stories; stories that contain
details, too many details for some. Some members of my family often urge me to
‘get on with the story’. ‘Too many details they say’. I wondered one day why this
might be. Let’s try and deconstruct one explanation I have developed:

In the nonlinear film Reservoir Dogs, one of the characters, Mr Orange, is an
undercover police detective named Freddy Newandyke. A flashback sequence in
the film reveals how he learns the fake story he tells the robbers to gain status
and their trust. He keeps repeating the story to a police colleague until he gets the
story ‘correct’.

The following is part of the films transcript:

Freddy and Holdaway (His police colleague) at one of their many rendezvous.
Freddy sits on one of the sinks, wearing his high school jacket, looking at pieces of
paper stapled together.

FREDDY
What’s this?
HOLDAWAY
It’s a scene. Memorize it.
FREDDY
What?
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HOLDAWAY
An undercover cop has got to be Marlon Brando. To do this job you got to be a
great actor. You got to be naturalistic. You got to be naturalistic as hell. If
you ain’t a great actor you’re a bad actor, and bad acting is bull sh*t in this
job.
FREDDY (referring to the papers)
But what is this?
HOLDAWAY
It’s an amusing anecdote about a drug deal.
FREDDY
What?
HOLDAWAY
Something funny that happened to you while you were doing a job.
FREDDY
I gotta memorize all this shit?
HOLDAWAY
It’s like a joke. You remember what’s important, and the rest you make your
own. The only way to make it your own is to keep saying it, and saying it, and
saying it, and saying it.
FREDDY
I can do that.
HOLDAWAY
The things you got to remember are the details. It’s the details that sell your
story. Now this story takes place in this men’s room. So you gotta know the
details about this men’s room. You gotta know they got a blower instead of a
towel to dry your hands. You gotta know the stalls ain’t got no doors. You
gotta know whether they got liquid or powdered soap, whether they got hot
water or not, ’cause if you do your job when you tell your story, everybody
should believe it. And if you tell your story to somebody who’s actually taken a
piss in this men’s room, and you get one detail they remember right, they’ll
swear by you.

*******************

This clip reminds me of a situation I was involved in when I was about four years
of age. I may not remember the ‘exact’ details; it may be what Neisser (1981)
refers to as wishful memory. I had been in Hove Park for most of the day with
three friends. These boys were a few years older than I and were known friendly
neighbours. We had a good time and we made our way back to our respective
homes late afternoon. My Mum was very upset when I got home. She had been
worried about me. I apologised. I told her where I had been. Although my Mum
did not say anything to me I ‘felt’ that my story was insufficient. Not enough
details I thought. I then began to tell stories that contained many minutiae. I
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thought that more information would provide a more accurate, and more
importantly for me, a more believable account.

********************
Yes Mum. I have been in the park. There was a tall man with a Dalmatian dog. The man had a raincoat on and some shiny black shoes. He called the dog ‘Percy’. I also saw a young boy on the swings. I saw a number 8 bus going into Brighton. There were some children throwing sticks into the conker tree and I saw a group of adults sitting outside the café. Mrs Johnson was sat outside the café. We waived to each other. David was there as well with his cousin Wendy.

Significantly insignificant

********************
Like Rorty (1999) I grew up ‘knowing that all decent people were if not Trotskyites, at least socialists’ (Rorty 1999, page 6). I have tried to write this thesis as a testimony for my family as well.

********************
I have been using this story to confess some of my multiple selves by sharing some my impressions and reflections of me. Goffman (1959) refers to this as impression management. He uses this term to describe the process which people go through to control the impressions other people may form of them. It is goal directed and may be conscious or unconscious. It is an attempt to influence the perceptions that other people have about people, objects or event. It is achieved by regulating and controlling information in social situations. According to Goffman (1959) it is usually used with self presentation when a person tries to influence the perception of their image. Interestingly whilst I may be in control of my confessions (Lee 2007), in control of my impression management, and the way I choose to communicate, to ‘manage’ the situation, I have little control over how I may be perceived and what people may think of me.

********************
There has been much interest in the British media during the month of March 2010 about a young English man, John Venables. Venables and his friend John Thompson had killed Jamie Bulger a two year old, when they were both ten.

********************
2001: Bulger killers win anonymity for life

The identities and whereabouts of the two boys who murdered toddler James Bulger in 1993 in Liverpool, England are to be kept secret for the rest of their lives, the High Court has ruled. Lawyers for Jon Venables and Robert Thompson - who were both aged 10 when they committed the murder - successfully argued that their anonymity should be protected by law after their release, which could be in a few months’ time.
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The decision was based on fears that the boys would become victims of revenge attacks if information about their new identities became known. In her ruling on the boys’ anonymity, Dame Elizabeth Butler-Sloss said there was "the real possibility of serious physical harm and possibly death from vengeful members of the public and from the Bulger family".

6th March 2010

James Bulger's killer Jon Venables was recalled to prison because of "extremely serious allegations", Justice Secretary Jack Straw has said. He was released in 2001 on licence with a new identity after serving eight years for the murder of the toddler on Merseyside in 1993.

There have been suggestions from the British Government that if released Venables will need a new identity. This raises interesting questions about identities. He is a 27 year old man who may potentially have experienced three ‘identities’. Who is he? How does the Government go about providing someone with a new identity? One can only assume what this man will NOT be able to talk about. Fragmented memories? His anonymity may well be suspicious. I am sure his recall to prison has not gone unnoticed. How does anyone reinvent their youth, their life? Paraphrasing Rorty's words (1988) identity theories seeks to ‘pull one rabbit out of several hats (Rorty 1988, page 45).

Sunday 14th March 2010. The Observer newspaper. Undercover police officer infiltrates the UK’s violent left wing agitators.

A police officer from the Metropolitan Police forces provides a chilling account of how he spent years working undercover among anti-racists groups in Britain. Officers in the Special Demonstration Squad (SDQ) choose their new identities. This involves applying for the birth certificate of someone who died at an early age and use this identity to fabricate a cover story. For four years he lived a double life spending six days a week undercover and one day a week with his family. ‘When I came back to Special Branch I had to suppress who I was. I was no longer the same person. I hated the job and everything about it. I was later diagnosed with post traumatic stress disorder’. (Observer 2010, page 23)

This raises further interesting questions about ‘identities’. As du Gay (2007) argues the idea of the ‘person’ as a ‘free agent’ may be fiction but not an illusion.
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Our legal system implicates the person as a ‘free agent’ as illuminated by the case of Venables above. As Hirst & Wooley (1982) put it social organisations ‘require that conduct is attributable to individuals, not as its origins but as its locus’ (Hirst & Wooley 1982, page 132).

If as Gergen (2001) argues, our relationships are lived out in narrative form and the meanings we ascribe to our lives are told and retold through stories, then our lives and arguably our identities has to be ‘lived’ as a story. Our identity is reinvented and transformed through stories. Will Venables be ‘given’ a story to live by? Will Officer A revert back to who he was? Who is he now? Gunn (1982) argues that the ‘real’ question of autobiographies is not who am I, but where do I belong at this moment in time?

In summarising this chapter then as Ellis (198) says:

‘A good story may have a happy or tragic ending, but what makes it good is the way in which characters and plot interact in meaningful ways (Ellis 1988, page 315).

Stories are mediated through oral presentations (Any audio tape), performances (William Shakespeare or Harold Pinter), art (Watson 2009) and writing. Richardson (1990) worries that ‘How we are expected to write affects what we can write about (Richardson 1990, page 102) and Adams (2008) adds to this by saying that ‘How we are expected to present our writing affects what we can write about as well’ (Adams 2008, page 182).
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I have discussed how stories are not only important for entertainment but also for
the representation and presentation of who we are and who we might be. How
stories develop and offer opportunities for a constantly evolving self. As Bochner
(1994) maintains narratives are “stories people tell about their lives” (Bochner
1994, page 30). In addition and Richardson (1990) positions narrative as both a
“mode of reasoning and a mode of representation” (Richardson 1990, page 118);
the way we conceive of and also tell stories about our worlds. Narratives help us
make sense of life, and in the telling of stories, we abide by different storying
conventions such as the use of common storylines; linear or chaotic and writing
within and or against different genres.

As Carless & Douglas (2010) introduce the ideas of storytellers and story analysts.
Something for you the reader to consider. From the storytelling perspective,
analysis is the story. It is complete and theoretical and dialogical (Smith and
Sparkes 2009). By contrast story analysts, think about a story, which means to
reduce it to content then analyse the content (Frank 1995, page 23).

I will complete this chapter with two suggestions:

‘Stories, by their ability to condense, exemplify, and evoke a world, are as
valid a device for transmitting cultural understanding as any other
researcher-produced concoction’ (Van Maanen 1988, page 119)

In relation to stories I like the idea of Muncey (2010) who suggests:

‘You, the reader, are responsible for your interpretation of my ideas; the
onus is on you to follow up the trails of references I have left or not’
(Muncey 2010, page 147).
So what have you been up to?
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The can of worms

‘At moments of disappointment and difficulty I have often been advised “Don’t take it personally Nigel”.

Well intentioned this advice may be, but it does not succeed in its task. I do take it personally. Sometimes I wish I didn’t. In recent years I have come to see this less as a shortcoming and more as an intellectual resource, or as I refer to it ‘my mental audience’. Impersonal approaches perpetuate the myth of abstract, disembodied knowledge (Stanley 1990), strip understanding from its social and biographical roots (Harding 1987) and obscure the agency of the knower and their ways of knowing. (Wilkins 1993, page 93)

This thesis has explored some of the possibilities which have unfolded when I have ‘taken it personally’; this is when I have paid attention to evocative experiences and tried to understand the social, emotional, cultural and autoethnographic sources of my academic insights.

“Reflexivity requires an awareness of the researcher's contribution to the construction of meanings throughout the research process, and an acknowledgment of the impossibility of remaining 'outside of' one's subject matter while conducting research. Reflexivity then, urges us "to explore the ways in which a researcher's involvement with a particular study influences, acts upon and informs such research."

‘Personal reflexivity’ involves reflecting upon the ways in which our own values, experiences, interests, beliefs, political commitments, wider aims in life and social identities have shaped the research. It also involves thinking about how the research may have affected and possibly changed us, as people and as researchers (Willig 2001, page 10)
So what have you been up to?
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I believe that as a work colleague, a Dad and a psychotherapist, amongst some of my selves, it is not only important but necessary to be regularly questioning my questioning; Meta questioning, to be reflexive upon my reflexivity, meta-reflexivity. I have been interested in investigating me and the world since I was a young boy (often irritatingly).

***************
‘Dad is it possible to pick up the concrete slab bit of the garden’
‘No son. It’s too heavy’
‘But if you had a forklift, could you pick it up?’
‘No, it’s too heavy for a forklift?’
‘Ok. But if you had a really big forklift truck could you do it?’
‘No, it’s far too heavy. Just stop son?’
‘But Dad, if you had a really really big forklift could you pick it up?’

***************

All of us are products of our upbringings and the past that our parents and their parents transmitted. Where I came from, what might have influenced me has fascinated me. I love hearing stories–I favoured an oral tradition. I didn’t like reading. It sometimes seems a waste of time. Football or violin practice? Football! Football or reading? Football! I wanted to be ‘doing’. In contrast my family circumstances offered me many opportunities to be on my own in my bedroom to reflect upon my experiences and be reflexive. My Mother has strong memories of the orphanage where she grew up with her older brother and younger sister. She continues to tell me stories and recites poetry. My Dad on the other hand was a quiet, and I assumed an internally uncomplicated
So what have you been up to?

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man. I was blessed with a balance at home. Talk and quiet. My Mother was and remains an inquisitive person and I think she encouraged investigation and thoroughness in me.

My reflexivity has brought into question my assumptions and how I have used these to make sense of what I do and think. My experience of providing psychotherapy, teaching psychotherapy and supervising psychotherapists, trainees and qualified colleagues is that far too much space is given over to traditional ways of delivering therapy and far too little to the lived experience of the delivery, subsequent reflection and importantly accompanying reflexivity.

***************

It’s Thursday morning. The rain is hitting the windows. The old wooden frames are rattling. The person I am working with clinically is talking about his worries. He regularly thinks he has cancer of his throat. There is no anatomical or physiological evidence to support his concerns. We share an idea; an idea that he is possibly misinterpreting his physical experiences. His experiences; the feelings in his throat are not in doubt; maybe his interpretation of the feeling was possibly misleading him.

We have a conversation about the Falklands war and how there was much celebrating when the Soldiers returned home. We remembered the streets of Portsmouth and Plymouth lined with flag waving spectators.

We wondered why this was not always happening for the soldiers as they returned from Iraq and Afghanistan. A discussion developed about imperialism, Thatcherism, politics and how the nation ‘needed’ pulling together, a need for solidarity.

‘Things change’ He said. ‘People are more fragmented now’.

He then said ‘Things change. Hey I just said things change. Perhaps I can change as well.

We agree that knowledge isn’t fixed’.  

***************
So what have you been up to?
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My ability to demonstrate critical subjective reflexivity has been crucial in the analysis. Reflexivity can be understood as a ‘bending back on itself’ (Steier 1995: page 2). A further description is an idea of a turning-back of one’s experience upon oneself. The self must also be understood as a socially constructed experience. Turner (1981) continues by referring to ‘social reflexivity’. I understand this to mean that we tell ourselves a story about ourselves. I can then think of my research as a process of social reflexivity and then of self-reflexivity as a social process. The self I am coming to know and the world I am developing knowledge about are being assembled out of the many different constructions of my own experience. Thus being reflexive is an attempt to be relational, to encourage an expansion of the languages we all use to increase understandings. I see critical subjective reflexivity as being a continuous process.

So how do I think we contribute to this continuous process? It is difficult to imagine people being unreflective. Since 2005, the start of this Doctorate, I have taken all available opportunities to talk about my developing research. During these sessions I have heard other people be reflective and reflexive. We have often constructed new socially situated knowledge. This feels continuous to me. This reminds me of the work by Stanley (1993). She talks of the ‘symbiotically linked: ‘social and the individual, the personal and the political’ (Stanley 1993, page 44). I was drawn to this text as it represents the meshing together of the way individuals affect traditional rigid structures and how we might reconceptualise our individual responses to these structures and to possibly effect structural transformations.

In order to produce findings that transform the raw data into new knowledge I have engaged in active self analysis, embedded within cultures, as a self only has meanings in a social sense (Augoustinos et al 2006), throughout the whole research process. I have attempted to uncover new knowledge, perhaps
So what have you been up to?

revisiting what I might describe as previous knowledge, about how I think and feel in certain circumstances rather than necessarily making judgements about whether the thoughts, feelings and emotions are valid and reliable.

Another advantage of presenting my work is that I have come into contact with people whose paths I may never have crossed; for example PhD geography students, Students of molecular studies. I have been aware that people generally have seemed interested in what I have to say and contribute. The feedback I have received has been encouraging as well as constructively critical. Stanley (1993) seems to complement this by suggesting that ‘knowledge differs systematically according to social position’ (Stanley 1993, page 45). My social positioning within some of my social situations feels like it has altered. People seem to be experiencing me in different ways. This makes much more sense to me now. In this way I think autoethnography can contribute to communication. It has the capacity to use an individual’s perspectives to generate a shared general social knowledge, whilst retaining our uniqueness. From this perspective autoethnography involves a series of mediations between the different ways we construct our realities, assisting us in our understandings of various constructions of our social worlds.

What does validity and reliability in qualitative research actually mean?

These two words have prompted much debate within the qualitative approaches.

I have drawn on Morse’s (1999) paper Myth 93: Reliability and validity are not relevant to Qualitative Inquiry as an example. In this she says:

‘To state that reliability and validity are not pertinent to qualitative inquiry places qualitative research in the realm of not being reliable and not valid. Science is concerned with rigour, and by definition, good rigorous research must be reliable and valid’. (Morse 1999, page 538)

Silverman (2000) expresses his concerns in the following way:

‘..research descends into a bedlam where the only battles that are won are by those who shout the loudest’ (Silverman 2000, page 175)

I was inspired by the work of Wolcott (1994), he talks of the absurdity of validity:

‘What I seek is something else, a quality that points more to identifying critical elements and wringing plausible interpretations from them,
something one can pursue without becoming obsessed with finding the right or ultimate answer, the correct version, the Truth.... I suggest we look elsewhere in our continuing search for and dialogue about criteria appropriate to qualitative researches approaches and purposes’ (Wolcott 1994, pages 336-369)

Validity

Ellis (2004) discusses the importance of validity in Autoethnography. She suggests that this approach needs a conceptual framework. For her the questions should focus on how to judge the inquiry.

1. Do the stories ‘ring true’ to the reader?
2. Do the stories resonate with the lives of the researcher and the reader?
3. Are the accounts plausible and coherent?
4. Does the author make claim to a single standard of truth or leave open the possibilities of multiple interpretations and truth, as is inherent in Autoethnography?
5. Is the whole person taken into account?
6. Does the work communicate with others?
7. Is the resulting story useful in helping others?

In addition I would add:

4. Is my work believable?
5. Is it authentic?
6. And is the work credible?
Reliability

There are limited ways of speaking about reliability in Autoethnography as there is no objective reality separate from me, the researcher (Ellis 2004). I have on occasions provided work colleagues with opportunities to read my work. Some of their interpretations and comments have then contributed to the re-written text. My intention in giving them my work was not necessarily to focus on whether my colleagues ‘agree’ with what I have written but to find out what they think and feel about what I have written. Did they find the experiences evocative? I have written and asked the question about what the purposes are of asking other people to comment on the same experience. I think this is a redundant activity and lends itself to ‘realist’ worldviews (Short and Grant 2009). I am more interested in what people find out about themselves, if anything, when they have read my work.

In conclusion of the validity and reliability debate criteria I have drawn on the work of Arthur Frank (1991). In his book At the Will of the Body, which focuses on his difficulties with cancer and a heart attack, he provides further guidance as to how to judge autoethnography:

I want what I have written to be touched as one touches letters, folding and refolding them, responding to them. I hope ill persons will talk back to what I have written. Talking back is how we find our own experiences in a story someone else has written. The story I tell is my own, but readers can add their own lives to mine and change what I have written to fit their own situations. These changes can become a conversation between us....My own experiences are in no sense a recipe for what others can expect or should experience. I know of no exemplary way to be ill. We all have to find our own way, but we do not necessarily have to be alone (Frank 1991, page 4-5)
So what have you been up to?
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Data collection has been recording what has happened for me and identifying what I have found evocative and linking these experiences to theoretical understandings. This often happens in the moment, often requiring immediate reflection and reflexivity. The analysis takes the form of reflexivity. Macbeth (2001) discusses several ways of being reflexive; positional, textual and constitutive reflexivity.

Positional reflexivity leads the analyst to examine the place, the self and others to understand how they shape the analytical exercise. ‘A self referential exercise...an articulation of one’s analytical situated self’ (Macbeth 2001, page 38).

- Textual reflexivity leads the analyst to examine and then disrupt the very exercise of textual representation. ‘The textually reflexive move arrives on the deconstruction and seeming collapse of the respectability of representational language games’ (Macbeth 2001, page 41).

- Constitutive reflexivity refers to ‘the essential reflexivity of accounts or how it is that your accounts of the world reflexivity constitute the very affairs they speak of (Garfinkel 1967). ‘Rather than a reflexivity of professional self-reflection, textual deconstruction or methodological procedure reflexivity in an ethnomethodological mode stands on behalf of indefinitely distributed practices of ‘world making’ (Macbeth 2001, page 49).

The different reflexivity's have different projects and interests, but as Macbeth (2001) suggests:

‘there is room for many discourses on reflexivity and we may turn to one and then the other, depending on what reflexivity, whose practices and whose worlds we hope to bring into view’ (Macbeth 2001, page 56)
So what have you been up to?
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I think my reflexivity has included these different positions at different times during this thesis. I have reflected and been reflexive in the moment; I have been reflexive when reading texts and have also used reflexive accounts to constitute the very situations I have been speaking of.

According to Adams (2003) the idea of the reflexivity project is a modernist notion. It implies purposefulness, voluntarism, rationality and an essential self. The idea of a purposefully choosing, rational, somewhat anxious self, even supposing an individual chooses not to choose, implies teleology of self mastery—a lone individual who can transcend culture according to his/her self interest.

A problem for Giddens (1991) and for others who assume the possibility of cultural transcendence is that reflexivity inevitably embeds individuals in the cultural symbols they want to disembed themselves from. Indeed the whole notion of ‘reflexivity’ derives from contemporary cultural symbols (Grant 2010)

Reflection and reflexivity are an attempt to understand the evocative moment. This prompts questions like ‘In what way has the process affected me in my multiple selves? What has changed as a result of this reflexive process? Generally the writing of my field notes has taken the format of bullet points or scribblings:

- Notes on the back of theatre programmes
- Scribbles on train tickets
- Sometimes I remember to take post it notes with me and make a note
- Sometimes a word
So what have you been up to?
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- Sometimes a sentence
- Writing on the back of free post cards at Art Galleries
- Taking photos with my new digital camera

These varied contributions have then helped me to move between the reflection about me and my relation to the cultures I live within (Ellis 2004). The main thrust of this approach is the clear communication, (using many different representations) of the process of the inquiry, including personal understandings and accompanying lived meanings that were aroused in me.

Many of the stories I heard about me in the hospital were unrecognisable. I would often be asked how I was just before a ward round. I would then be invited into the ward round and would hear what I had just told the staff but my story would be re-told with their filter, their biases, their epistemic styles. Were they reliable accounts?

Were they valid? Ellis (2004) uses the metaphor of a ‘sandwich approach’, where the autoethnographic story sits in between the literature and associated theory. This process has involved revealing; warts and all of what I have done and how and why I have done it and what these experiences mean to me and the cultures I inhabit (Tenni, Smyth and Boucher 2003). In addition I have written about some of my errors, embarrassments and my inconsistencies. Coffey (1999) discusses how keeping a journal of thoughts and feelings are part of a process that ensures data
generation and rigorous analysis. This theme of identifying the ‘researcher’ in the
text has also been emphasised by Golden-Biddle & Locke (1997) who say that:

‘……..authors never can choose to vanish completely from their texts; they can
only pick the disguise in which they will appear’ (Golden-Biddle & Locke (1997,
page 72)

In continuing with this transformation of raw data into new knowledge I
have actively engaged in using my ‘world views’ to concentrate on situations that
I have found evocative: to try to understand how I fit culturally and socially in the
world. It has been my intention to reflect on how my stories are co-constructed,
then de-constructed and finally re-constructed within social and cultural contexts.
I believe that most changes take place following social or cultural discoveries and
not uniquely through scientific discoveries. The therapeutic value of narratives
becomes apparent each time I deconstruct my often experienced debilitating life
narratives and reframe them in ways that empower me, thus improving the
quality of my life (Pennebaker 2004). I have tried to demonstrate how the stories I
have told and continue to tell have been a loose framework for how I act, think
and interpret experiences. When my stories don’t seem to have worked or no
longer help me it seems reasonable to examine these stories and where necessary
I have actively reinvented my stories in ways that help me to live a more fulfilling
life.

I travelled to Farnham Maltings, Farnham, Surrey, on the 27th February
2009. The Maltings is an Arts and community centre set in a unique building which
has different spaces to hire.  http://www.farnhammaltings.com/ I had gone to
watch Neil Brand. Brand is a silent film pianist. He showed rare, comic and
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stunning clips from a wealth of silent cinema which he accompanied on the piano. He told us that each performance is unique. He reported that he usually has opportunities to watch most films that he accompanies. He described however that he always starts off each performance with a ‘blank sheet’. Each performance is influenced by how he is feeling and how the film ‘feels’ to him on that unique occasion. This ‘felt’ autoethnographic to me. Each performance seems socially constructed for him, the audience and me. We were invited to watch a five minute clip from a film. Brand tells us he has not seen this passage before. He accompanies the footage whilst simultaneously describing to us his reactions to it. It reminded me of many situations that I find myself in. I have a psychotherapy tool box. Like the keys on a piano as a psychotherapist I can call upon different ‘techniques’; the automatic thought record, the daily diary, metaphors, the responsibility pie. They are rarely used in the same order however. They are used with uniqueness to that particular situation.

In terms of rigour criteria and related values of autoethnographic work, Ellis (2004) and Richardson (2000) place autoethnography at the artistic end of the continuum of qualitative work from science to art and literature. Autoethnographic writing anticipates evoking an empathic, emotional response in its readers. This clearly differentiates autoethnographic writing from other, more positivistic-informed, approaches of qualitative research with their concerns around distancing the writer from the participants, objectivity and anticipates critical charges that autoethnographic writings is both subjective and self
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indulgent. Sparkes (2002) echoes the work of Ellis (2004), Ellis & Bochner (1996) and Richardson (2000) in arguing that it is both possible and valuable to learn about general issues from particular experiences, but not to completely generalise. For example it may be reasonable to think that if we fall into deep water we may drown if we cannot swim, but this doesn’t take into account that a wooden log may float by and we grab on to it and are saved from drowning. I have taken the reader through the steps I have taken and have made my interpretations explicit so the reader can ‘follow’ how I move through the data.

Neil Brand continues the evening by investigating how music works with film by inviting us to score a love scene from a silent cine-verite classic shot by a young Billy Wilder. Brand stops the film at several ‘moments’ and invites us to help him accompany what we are watching. Is the scene sinister? happy? How do we think it will develop? What is ‘happening’ however is not what the film is telling us, but what the film is saying about us! I felt attached emotionally to this idea. It felt evocative. I felt excited-like I had connected with someone. I also felt sad. I felt sad for people who might not feel connected. For a few brief moments I felt alone again. I spoke with a friend about this experience. It reminded me of an earlier experience. I visited the Da le Warr Pavilion in Bexhill with a friend. We go and see an exhibition about secrets. ‘A Secret Service: Art, Compulsion and Concealment’. The exhibition explores the work of international artists and groups whose practices centre on the creation of secret worlds or the exposure of hidden facts and images. Key figures of modern art, established and emerging contemporary artists and ‘outsiders’ together address numerous aspects of secrecy: magic,
The first pieces of work I saw was a collection of photographs by an artist named Kurt Schwitters, an artist who lived in Hanover. Over a period of twenty years he secretly concealed images and objects in his house. They were placed in order and were buried within it. Some of these ‘hidden’ objects and their ‘hiding places’ had been photographed for this exhibition; they were now not secrets anymore! For many years I have ‘hidden’ objects. For example when I visit church yards I will place a stick or some other object, somewhere and unless I am being watched, this location will only be known by me. If I ever visit the same place I am interested in seeing if the stick, or whatever it might be, is still there. If not this then interests me as to who found it and what they might have thought. I have objects placed in my house that no one knows about. I like the idea that someone might happen to find it or not.

As I was reading the information about each photo at the De La Warr I suddenly felt very alone and yet part of something as well. I was frightened, yet very liberated. I started crying. It ‘felt’ like I had caught a butterfly and harnessed
So what have you been up to?
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some mercury. I described it to my friend as best I could. It felt like a window to me had been opened up. Everything seemed relevant to me at that particular moment. I have never heard anybody else confess to me that they hide objects. Although I am not that grandiose or special to think I am the only person who does it, to ‘discover’ that someone else was prepared to expose this was very moving. It seemed very odd to be experiencing myself in this way. I thought momentarily that I was going mad! I hadn’t told too many people that I hide objects. There are two reasons for this. Firstly that it may be considered odd and secondly it would not be a secret anymore. I thought it was contra to received wisdom. Another way of interpreting the above experience is to see it as a Transformational moment for me and one that may compliment what Perkins (1999) refers to as troublesome knowledge-knowledge that is alien or counter intuitive or even intellectually absurd at face value.

On the weekend of the 6th and 7th of June I travelled with a friend to the Forest of Dean in Gloucestershire. I had spent the last few weeks of May 2010 re-watching Pennies from Heaven and The Singing Detective; TV dramas by the late Dennis Potter. Further to these viewings I had a strong urge to find the village where Potter had spent his youth in the Forest; a little village named Bell Hill.

On the way through the forest we stopped at another little forest village; Park End. Much to our delight we arrived during their early summer fete. It was a beautiful quintessential English scene; a village green, an old single Decker omnibus, steam train and the Forest of Dean brass band.

As we sat watching and listening to the band a man walked by with a young baby in a back pack harness. I thought I recognised him. I said to my companion ‘I think that’s Neil Brand, the pianist we saw in Farnham’. After much ummin and arring I approached him and said
So what have you been up to?
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‘I wonder if can just briefly interrupt your day’

‘Sure’ he said

‘Do you play the piano? I asked

‘Yes’ he said.

I then replied ‘I saw you play in Farnham last year. I know what I am like if I
had not have asked you I would have kicked myself later in the day.’

When I got back home I wrote Neil an email.

Dear Neil

I am writing further to a chance meeting with you at Parkend in the Forest of
Dean last Saturday. Further to my clumsy ‘do you play the piano and I saw you at
Farnham last year’; I wanted to let you know that your show in Farnham has been
included in my Doctoral thesis. I have been considering how identities and the
'self' are formed and who does this forming and how are our identities shaped
and who shapes them. There was a moment in your performance where you
invited us to tell you what 'we' thought might be happening in a clip of film and
you then played the music accordingly. This was a very powerful moment for me
and I HAD to write about this experience; it felt like life and the influence that
other people have on our journeys. Anyways I digress. I wanted to tell you about
this on Saturday but my embarrassment got in the way. I am never sure if people
like your good self want to be approached when you are having time 'off' with
your family.

Anyways thanks for your time.

I also enjoyed your concerts of Pandora’s Box and Nosforatu, which I saw a few
years ago at St Mary in The Castle, Hastings, where I live.

Best wishes

Nigel

He kindly replied

Hi Nigel,

Many thanks for that - it’s always nice to hear one's work is appreciated, no
matter where or when!
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I'm very pleased indeed to have made some contribution to your doctorate - there is quite a bit of academic study into the place of cinema in defining individuals and societies, although I must admit my overall, dystopian impression (for what it's worth) is that cinema's influence has been overwhelmingly malign. Movies that push back the boundaries of 'accepted behaviour' (and that intention has become a mantra for most modern film) have no need to respect the systems in place to prevent a breakdown in society. A melodramatically written scene can be justified as 'ground-breaking' and 'edgy' and immediately enter the mainstream (of movie plotting, if not human behaviour) and thus receive some form of erzatz 'acceptance' in the real world. Our headlong rush towards brutalism and nihilistic individuality has, to my mind, been fuelled by the movies more than any other art form. And that depresses me.

Nice to be reminded of St Mary in the Castle too - I enjoyed my shows there and I think we did a great job of building an audience for silent film. Ah well.

Best wishes and thanks again for kind words, written and spoken,

Neil

Another connection

A (mischievous) secret.

I worked at the Institute of Psychiatry, London, between 2000 and 2003. The college had a well resourced media department hidden in the bowels of the main building on Denmark Hill. At one end of the main video suite a wall is completely covered with academic books. In front of the books are two chairs: chairs that had been secured to the floor with L shaped metal brackets. I discovered that these chairs were positioned in this way for
So what have you been up to?
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I have reflected many times upon the incident in Bexhill. What happened to me? I think the feeling of connectedness was very powerful. I am not naïve enough to think that I am the only person who hides things; but not many people have told me that they do this. Here was someone in an art gallery telling me that he did it as well. This was the connection. This provided me with more confirmation about pursuing the autoethnographic approach. Perhaps telling people my stories would give people an opportunity to think about their stories and our similarities.

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When I meet people in clinical practice they have their stories to tell and some of their story is concealed. Often they will have developed elaborate and habitually impenetrable codes around their stories. They may have good reasons to keep their stories inside. They may have met people who have laughed at them, scorned them or refused to listen to them. These strategies may provide for temporary safety but may be maintaining their difficulties. We use many metaphors when discussing secrecy; we speak for example of keeping people in the dark, keeping information from view and hiding my emotions.

The more I have investigated these types of experiences the more I realise they are never theory free. What I choose to write about and how I have chosen to write is constructed; based on the ways I understand the world through my multiple selves. For example I had never been to Farnham before but I began thinking before I got there about what the venue might be like, what about the audience? Would they be like me? Are my assumptions about the county of Surrey influencing me and if so how? Am I a hostage to my old stories?

Went for a walk one afternoon along the coast near Peacehaven. Peacehaven is a town located above the chalk cliffs of the South Downs six miles east of Brighton. There is a wide grassed area between the houses and the cliff top. As you walk along the path you can see inside people’s houses. I saw a few people watching me watching them. I wondered what they were thinking. Was I inspecting their property, was I making a judgment? Was I
So what have you been up to?
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being nosey? Was I interested in them? I then started thinking about car boot sales. The way we approach different stalls, pick up peoples belongings and decide if we want their articles or not. It often seems like we might be picking up people’s lives; deciding if we want their contributions; tossing their items aside if unwanted. My autoethnography it seems to me can be like this. Inviting people to pick up my life and have a look. People might be interested or might not. Maybe bartering with me to take it home or tossing my work back on to the table and walking away.

Evolution

Ethnography is first and foremost a perspective: a particular framework for thinking about the world. Jackson (1989) claims that:

“our understanding of others can only proceed from within our own experience, and this experience involves our own personalities and histories as much as our field research (Jackson 1989, page 17)

Mykhalovskiy (1996) argues that to write about the self is to write about social experience. Autoethnographic approaches suggests that without self there is no other, therefore, the study of other must start with study of self in relation to other. Self’s interactions with people in everyday lives can provide a better understanding of underlying cultural beliefs, values, ethics, motivations, and behaviours of the subjects rather than using any other method of investigation, which becomes a new ways of knowing about our social experiences that advances human knowledge. I have been doing and experiencing ‘autoethnography’ since the winter of 2005 and I have noticed changes in me: changes that have helped me to be more self soothing with an increasing ability to show myself more compassion.

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Winter 2008

Start reading a book about ruminating and depression.
So what have you been up to?
Chapter eight

Depressive Rumination: Nature, Theory and Treatment (Paperback)
By Costas Papageorgiou and Adrian Wells
I have known for many years that I have a propensity to internalise, to revisit situations; a post mortem of the interactions I have been involved in and can easily ruminate on past events.

This is occurring less now and when it does occur I am more able now to stop it from escalating. I think one explanation for this reduction is that I am more able to ‘construct’ past events. What role did the people involved play in the interaction, how did we construct the event. I have used my reflection and reflexivity in a helpful way.

This may happen for my colleagues. I think that this approach will offer my colleagues an opportunity to reflect upon their practice, be reflexive with their reflections and many have reported their own personal and professional developments. It is difficult to predict how people who read my work will react. Ellis (2004) argues that feedback is usually mixed: it is often favourable to the concept of frank, self-disclosing first person accounts contextualised with broader psycho-social-cultural analysis. I have read an article in the Iowa Journal of Communication by Karen Lee; Lee (2008) Scrabble: An Autoethnography about Adoption, Iowa Journal of Communication 40, 1, 115-126, which includes a reference to an article I had co-authored (Short, Grant and Clarke 2007). I was excited to read this citation and I was also confident that my autoethnographic work was being disseminated. In addition to this citation I then discovered another one. The Short, Grant and Clarke article was cited in: Exploring the personal tutor–student relationship: an autoethnographic approach by Gardner and Lane (2010) in the Journal of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing. Only available online http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/122246940/issue

Sometimes, as discussed in chapter six, autoethnographic work, can be seen as self indulgent (Coffey 1999). I was pleased to hear my work had been used but did not feel self indulgent at all; proud maybe but not indulgent. I have also had an opportunity to be published in the commentary section of the peer reviewed Journal of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing: Burnard (2007): autoethnography or a realist account? (Short & Grant 2009). This commentary offered a critique of an article that Philip Burnard had written about personal account of a consultation with a psychiatrist: Burnard (2007), seeing the psychiatrist: an autoethnographic account. My house has many photos pinned to the walls. I particularly like photos of people. I do not know the people in the snaps. I regularly visit a second hand shop in the Old Town of Hastings. The owner empties people’s houses. He then sells the contents. He has thousands of photos. He sells them for a few pennies each or a bunch.
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for a pound. I choose a pounds worth on each visit. I am interested in the faces I see, who are they? What are their stories? It saddens me that these people may be forgotten. This is my contribution to keep them alive somehow.

Does my performance betray me in some ways? What does my performance reveal about me and my family, my social class? What will people think about what I am writing about? Will I be ‘fixing’ myself? Like organisations, once we are established in people’s eyes this identity tends to persist. As Berger and Luckman (1967) observe ‘institutions confront the individual as undeniable facts’ (Berger and Luckman 1967, page 60); facts that despite our potential for transformation, will outlast us even as we out date the original foundation.

It is anticipated that readers will have taken an active role in this work as they will be invited to enter my world, to be stimulated and reflect upon and maybe gain a different understanding of their own lives. The goal then has been to write meaningfully and evocatively about topics that matter and to write from an ethic of care and concern. I have used various Education meetings at work to disseminate my findings, (I have already presented my work to colleagues whom I work with on several occasions at the department Education meetings as well as the student presentations at the end of each academic year). I have had several pieces of work published and intend submitting more as the study progresses.

In the same way that I have been inspired by some ideas from what I have read, I took much encouragement from Rorty (1999) who referred to the ‘inspirational value of reading’-what is already known by the reader is re-contextualised in the light of their encounter with someone else’s life or culture. Originality in this form, as in all relationships, is never a sole act. It requires readers. While
So what have you been up to?
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Autoethnographers write about themselves the goal is to touch a ‘world beyond the self of the writer’ (Bochner & Ellis 1996, page 24).

Précis

In this chapter I have documented my time contexted analysis. In addition I have discussed the values of autoethnographic data collection and the accompanying analysis. I have found autoethnography liberating and this approach has offered through writing and talking, an opportunity to remove some of the constraints of the dominant realist representations of empirical ethnography. Richardson (2000) argued that what researchers are expected to write influences what they can write about. This approach remains marginalised and despite many contemporary texts promoting this progressive approach, for example:


It remains troublesome for qualitative researchers and continues to have battles with traditional qualitative reporters (for example Hammersley 2008). I think autoethnography is a creative thoughtful endeavour which provides an alternative approach to examining life experiences in a self-reflexive manner. I have tried to move away from adherence to any particular position that I have adopted or been given, to one of a messy, fragmented and multiple self capturing the many Nigel’s in the multiple cultures I inhabit.
So what have you been up to?

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David Reekie (2000)
A captive audience?
Refers to cloning - but there is one individual at the back about to make a getaway. I saw this in the Victoria and Albert museum in July 2010. It represented how I have often felt during the writing of this thesis. Trying to make a getaway from traditional ways of representing qualitative research
Harmony

Phil [left] and Rob [middle]; my walking companions

Widening the ‘zones of expressive tolerance’ (Hearn 1996)

In this chapter I discuss my insights, my evolving transformations and (any) new information. I am reluctant to suggest a conclusion, as this implies a closure, an ending. The thesis has provided me with insights rather than clear and precise conclusions. I have some evidence of transformations that have helped to influence my perspectives and practice.

As reported in chapter one, the main aims of this study were:

- To try to understand my perceptions of being misheard, misunderstood and misrepresented from a social construction perspective.
- To use autoethnography to stimulate new ways of thinking about relational selves.
- To emphasise and actively encourage the importance and use of active self reflection and associated self reflexivity.
- To describe and discuss the difference between inductive, prescriptive and often retrospective ethics which defend organisational biases and relational
So what’s new?
Chapter nine

ethics which compliments ethical ways of being with others and stimulates creative thinking using our moral imaginations.

- To provide opportunities for self-healing, self-compassion and new and developing multiple understandings of the many different Nigel’s.

To investigate the use of stories and storytelling in the development and maintenance of possibilities for transforming socially constructed identities.

So have I achieved these aims?

When I started this doctorate and in particular started to read the literature about autoethnography it took me many visits to books and articles before I eventually I understood that autoethnography, for me, is about what you read and how you embed yourself within the presentations. The indexes of autoethnographic books for example were unhelpful; I often couldn’t find what I wanted. Unlike most qualitative books where I could easily find references for ethics, methods or hermeneutics for example, autoethnographic books didn’t seem to apply the same conventional rules. Ah. It dawned on me one day that I would have to read the text, become involved in the text in order to try and find what I wanted. It was in there somewhere. As Denzin (2006) says:

Ethnography is not an innocent practice. Our research practices are performative, pedagogical, and political. Through our writing and our talk, we enact the worlds we study. These performances are messy and political. They instruct our readers about our world and how we see it. (Denzin 2006, page 422)

This mystery reminded me of a book that was published in England in the late 1970’s; Masquerade by Kit Williams. Masquerade is a children’s book, written and painted by Williams which sparked a worldwide treasure hunt by concealing clues to the location of a jewelled golden hare, created and hidden somewhere in Britain by Williams.
So what’s new?
Chapter nine

The answers to aims are woven into their representations. In the same way I think I have answered the aims of the thesis within the text and I hope that readers will have been with me during the writing to appreciate this. I have not listed answers to the aims individually. To further compliment this idea I call upon Freshwater and Rolfe (2004) book ‘deconstructing evidence-based practice’. Their premise is that it is impossible to write a book about deconstruction, it cannot be described. What they have done however is to write deconstruction; they have deconstructed the text. In the same way autoethnography is difficult, though not necessarily impossible, to describe. I have tried to write autoethnographically and be autoethnographic. I have drawn on personal experiences with the explicit intention of:

‘exploring methodological and ethical issues as encountered in the research process’ (Sparkes, 2002, page 59).

Hunt (1989) says that disclosing our own beliefs and experiences:

‘enhance[d] our self understanding, improve[d] our ability to communicate and provide[d] the foundation for changing our actions’ (Hunt 1989, page 9)

As a practitioner and a researcher within the field of psychotherapy I have become increasingly interested in the role of narratives and storytelling methodologies, reflexive practices and identities and self’s. These approaches have helped me to consider how knowledge is developed and perhaps more importantly who owns this knowledge and when. This has drawn me to listen to my stories, other people’s stories and to analyse them through reflexivity and then re-present the discoveries, using theories from many different schools of thought. These advances has been influenced by an understanding that ‘reality’ is
So what’s new?
Chapter nine

Socially constructed, that knowledge is situated and created in contexts and embedded within cultures and historical stories, beliefs and practices. These ways of researching challenge the accepted nature of ‘grand narratives’ and modernist certainties and question how we come to know what we know.

Writing about emotional events has provided me with some psychological improvements. Writing about some of my emotional upheavals continues to maintain my mental health. Whilst writing this thesis I have written about some experiences that I have never disclosed or discussed before. When the writing has brought up difficult or complex feelings I have sought help from a psychotherapist colleague.

When writing my stories I have limited the censorship and have used whatever language I have wanted to use at the time. I have paid little attention to the grammar, the correctness of the spelling or punctuation. I have amended the writing later into more appropriate academic language. The reflections and associated reflexivity in the thesis has had less amendments and corrections.

Balas (2005) tells us that in the telling of a personal trauma story, victims engage in a transformative process that helps them (a) make sense of the loss and destruction, (b) construct a new story, and (c) move on with their lives. Narratives help us make sense of the experience and process the emotional pain (Balas 2005, page 185).
Whilst writing autoethnographically I have discovered how being autoethnographic can feel and how to use the principles of the approach, in a Nigel- influenced way. I am more aware of stories and storytelling and how different stories can change and become clearer and occasionally cloudier as I have tried to understand them within the different contexts I find the stories I am embedded within. I have begun to understand where my different philosophical positioning might have developed and continue to develop. I initially used Ellis (1997, 1999) and Ellis & Bochner’s (1986) texts to help me conceptualise the self and cultures. I am far more attentive now to how we socially construct our realities.

I have posited autoethnography as a way of attaining reflexive enquiry for narrative research and practice that specifically addresses the stories of the researcher-practitioner. I have used my multiple selves as the research subject and my primary writings (a continuous reflective and reflexive diary, notes, scribbings, jottings on post cards, entries at the back of books) served as the data for the thesis. I have regularly asked my ‘selves’ why I chose autoethnography. I do like its uniqueness and the ever changing and evolving possibilities that a multi context approach provides. In the same ways that different approaches lend themselves to different types of questions I have come to realise and accept that this thesis is unable to be all things to all people. We all experience a plural world and this many faceted diverse system presents many interesting challenges. For example when I have been invited to present my Doctoral work it seems clear
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from the questions that I am asked that people’s questions are a representation of their particular world views; their constructions.

This thesis has offered opportunities to consider why people’s voices are often silenced or unheard as well as regularly being heard, that is ‘dominant discourses’. For example I have found that the greatest obstacle to writing has been my own attitude towards me and my writing. I have had occasional problems in convincing myself that the writing I do is part of me and who I am and what I do and is important enough to write about. What possible contribution can my writing make?

I think I am developing skills in trying NOT to arrive at conclusions. Often my thinking has prevented me from achieving what I now know I can and have achieved, for example being invited to be an external examiner for a University cognitive behaviour therapy course, being invited to review journal articles for a peer reviewed journal, being invited to review books for a peer reviewed journal. I have also discovered that the articles I have had published have been drafted, re-written and re submitted, taking into consideration reviewers comments. Finding this out was a revelation to me. I had spent most of my academic career naively assuming that authors of articles and books had just sat down and written their work. I wonder if other people have thought this and if so if this has put them off writing.
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Whilst Kunda (1990), explains how ‘motivated reasoning may be beneficial because the resulting illusions promote mental health’ (Kunda 1990, p480), he does not mention that the short-term benefits of maintaining ‘mental health’ may have long-term negative mental health outcomes. This has prompted me to think about a cognitive dissonance; how this ‘state’ of mind can prompt mental health difficulties and not necessarily the mental health that Kunda (1990) talks about:

Cognitive dissonance (CD)

My understanding is the idea that cognitive dissonance (Festinger 1957) is an uncomfortable feeling that is experience when two of our ideas seem contradictory. These ideas may include our beliefs or attitudes. The theories underpinning CD suggest that we are motivated to reduce our CD by changing our attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors, or by justifying or rationalizing our attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors.

CD usually happens when we experience a logical inconsistency among our cognitions. This happens when one idea implies the opposite of another. CD can lead to anxiety or guilt or shame. When our ideas are consistent with each other, they are in a state of harmony, or consonance.

In thinking about cognitive dissonance part of my continuous transforming is offering opportunities to understand my misunderstandings, misinterpretations or cognitive dissonance is moving towards more harmonious experiences.
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I have used this thesis to draw attention to new perspectives for me and hopefully you. I have looked at situations that I have found evocative and tried to draw out conclusions; to be continuously reflexive, that is, responding to what is happening at the moment and changing direction if necessary, and provide accompanying analysis. I have let my curiosity and associated scrutiny lead me to try to and understand and accept my multiple lives. I firmly believe that life deserves a second and third and possibly never ending look.

I also believe that this work is a topic of investigation in its own right and not just a resource to talk about, something outside the text itself. The work is a continuing process by which this writing has been constructed as well as interpreted. What contributes significantly to the process of writing autoethnographic texts concerns the process of how it is read.

*******************************************************************************

Many years ago I offered cognitive behavior therapy supervision to someone who had done some cbt training and wanted his work supervised. As our meetings progressed it became apparent to me that his cbt training was very superficial and dangerous. He was prescribing cbt to people rather than it being a collaborative enterprise. My approach to cbt supervision has expectation of the supervisee, for example they would be ‘doing things’ in between our meetings. This person didn’t do any of this. He started turning up late for our meetings, often missed appointments without informing me and eventually he stopped attending and I didn’t hear why.

A few years later I saw the same man approaching me in a corridor. He was with another colleague of mine. As he got nearer my heart rate increased, my breathing became shallow and fast. I nodded at them both and made my way back to the office I used and rested. What on earth happened there? I felt myself getting very angry.

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My response towards this person was arguably very primitive and spontaneous. I seemed to have little control over my physiology. As I tried to understand what had happened I became angrier. I don’t think I had had an opportunity to understand this man’s supervision behavior towards me and draw our meetings to a satisfactory conclusion.

This prompted more ideas about people’s identities and how we represent ourselves in different ways in different cultural and social settings by using different narratives; different constructions.

As Cottle (2002) discusses, hearing/reading the words of another person’s narrative is essentially an encounter, where we not only respond to the words of the ‘other’ -implying to echo the ‘other’- but to our own responses. In this way I have used many different ‘voices’; connecting scholarly and personal narratives. I have taken you through some of my experiences of writing whilst writing. You have been invited to experience the different ways I choose to express myself. I anticipate that my reflections and reflexivity will provide opportunities for you to hear not only my life but the lives of people I have contact with. My stories are influenced by others stories and so on. It’s cyclic:

‘Personal identity cannot seemed to be fixed... the person experiences himself as many selves, each of which is felt to have a life of its own’ (Miller 1974, cited in Gergen 1991 page 249).

James (1912) claimed that we all have as many social selves as those who know us, because each of those others may see us in a different way or see different aspects of our character depending on the social context.

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Sussex County Hospital 1980-1983
I often reflect on some of the late shifts (12.30pm-21.30pm) I worked during my General Nurse training. Late afternoon would see ranks of ‘bank nurses’ arriving to help out with the late afternoon early evening part of the shift. The ‘bank nurses’ were generally qualified nurses with much experience, and as a student nurse I found their presence to be reassuring and encouraging. The majority of these temporary staff was married women with children. I remember paying attention to how they were often addressed by the permanent senior staff; often sounding rude, patronising and abrupt. I couldn’t understand how these women, who I assumed had arrived at the hospital as partners, parents and all the associated responsibility, could be treated this way.

Burkitt (2008) reminds us:

‘...although the ‘social me’ gives me some stability and continuity to identity, this is only relative, as the self changes over time and in different contexts’ (Burkitt 2008, page 35)

My constant reflexivity has been a valuable way for me to enhance practice; both professional and personal (Schon 1987). The work of Cortazzi (1993) in education has also been helpful here. Schon (1987) and Cortazzi (1993) suggest in their work in education, that to improve educational systems, we need to know more about the teacher’s perspectives. We need to know how teachers themselves see their situation, what their experience is like, what they believe and how they think. In short we need to know more about teacher’s culture from the inside. I would add to this by saying that it is imperative for researchers and for cognitive behavioural psychotherapy researchers particularly, to include themselves, their experiences, emotions and reflexivity in their texts.
As Freshwater (2004) indicates:

‘naming an emotion requires a great deal of self awareness and attention to how one relates to another’ (Freshwater 2004, page 505)

She continues:

‘Naming an emotion is not just a case of being self aware; the individual also requires a rich emotional vocabulary, something that is not often the subject of the national curriculum nor is it necessarily to be found within the curriculum of nursing and other health care professionals’ (Freshwater 2004, page 505)

- In this way reflexivity proffers opportunities for new understandings and actions leading to transformations.
- So what does this say about my cognitive behavioural therapy practice? And the cognitive behaviour therapy community I inhabit, albeit peripherally.
- Two standpoints seem significant when considering progression.
- Inter paradigm communication
- Inter qualitative epistemological exchanges

Inter paradigm communication

A paradigm is a way of conceptualising the world which informs and determines specific theories and research practices. The cognitive behaviour therapy
literature is dominated by evidence provided by randomised controlled trial (RCT); this approach is seen as the highest form of evidence (Rolfe 2001). The authority of the RCT is readily accepted. It rests on the relationship between knowledge and power. The knowledge-power is best illustrated in the concept of authority. As Rolfe (20010) details, authority is associated both with being knowledgeable, to be an authority, and with being powerful, to be an authority. So in the cognitive behaviour community those considered to be in the in position of power decide what counts as knowledge and perhaps more importantly what doesn’t. This leaves the difficulty for post modern representations. Are they ever likely to be recognised by traditional qualitative-experimental approaches?

Inter qualitative epistemological exchanges

There are disagreements within qualitative approaches as was discussed in chapter six. In a recent public debate Hammersley (2009) prompted a debate between realistic and relativistic assessment criteria. He suggests that arguments put forward by Smith & Demmer (2000) and Smith & Hodkinson (2005) that advance antirealist and antirealist ontologies and reject empiricism and foundationalism are neither coherent nor convincing. We are then offered a response by Smith & Hodkinson (2009). Hammersley then replies (2009). There are arguments for and against read as well rehearsed and there seems to be little movement between them. Their dialogue ‘is now exhausted’ (Hammersley 2009). Whilst I enjoyed reading their conversations via the Qualitative Inquiry journal it ‘felt’ like an impasse would happen and unfortunately it did. Neither side seem to
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share any agreement. As discussed in the inter paradigm communication
passages above it would seem we are left with similar questions for the Inter
qualitative epistemological exchanges. I am left with the post modern qualitative
representations. Are they ever likely to be recognised by traditional realistic
qualitative-relativistic qualitative approaches?

Rorty (1989) provides one solution. He calls for new ways of representation,
which could:

‘..redescribe lots and lots of things in new ways, until you have created a pattern
of linguistic behaviour which will tempt the rising generation to adopt it, thereby
causing them to look for appropriate new forms of non-linguistic behaviour..It
says things like ‘try thinking of it this way’ or more specifically, try to ignore the
apparently futile traditional questions by substituting..new and possibly
interesting questions’ (Rorty 1989, page 9)

So instead of being caught in the binaries of:

Modernist traditional approaches versus post modern progressive
representations

Or

Realist qualitative approached versus progressive alternative relativist
representations; there may be a third way; a different way of representing the
multiple realities that we experience and the multiple ways these realities are
interpreted. This new way of representing, where equity is encouraged and the
possibility that each community; each representation is afforded equal respect
(Gergen 1999) can be achieved by alternative forms of writing. These new ways of
writing, where the experiences might include the therapists’ views, the views of
people involved in therapy. As mentioned earlier in the thesis, I have published
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one article that provided readers with the views of two people who had came to see me in my capacity as a cognitive behaviour therapist:


Interestingly this paper was rejected by two cognitive behaviour therapy journals. They did not think it would interest their readership. It was finally accepted by a peer reviewed nursing journal.

I propose that the autoethnographic approach offers cognitive behaviour therapists an alternative qualitative methodology beyond the routine post positivist grounded theory representations that are offered in mainstream cognitive behaviour therapy/psychological literature for example:


enabling them to talk about their experiences and in this way undermine the ‘othering’ that is implicit in cognitive behaviour therapy practice. I am mindful that different research questions require different epistemologies and their accompanying methodologies to answer these questions. I am seeking and suggesting solidarity and equity.

This autoethnographic approach is self narrative; it offers a critique of the situatedness of self and others in social contexts. Cottle (2002) develops this idea by suggesting that in forming our responses and making our interpretations we constantly run the risk of pushing our stories against the stories of others; demanding that others re-think their stories in light of our stories. In addition when we push out stories against the stories of others we are providing opportunities for developments, new information and transformations.

***************
My children and I are invited via email to a meal in a pub. I reply and accept via email. I tell the organiser that we are unable to attend until 7.00pm. I suggest that if we are not there by 7.00pm then to please commence without us.

When we arrive at 6.55pm my friends are in the pub, completing their puddings.

This has happened to me before with this particular friend. I am angry and very disappointed. My children are equally irritated. They have also experienced and witnessed this before. Arriving on time and yet given a sub text message that we are late. I am regularly left with a sense that I have done something wrong.

I take my friend to one side and tell her how I am feeling. I provide her with several situations when this has happened before. I tell them that I am not prepared to accept and tolerate this anymore.

This was a risk for me. We have not spoken since (I wrote this on February 2010). I have sent several texts but have not had any replies.

***************
February 2010
I arrange for a group of old friends to meet up. There are seven of us. We haven’t all been in the same room since 1974. A few of us spend the day walking along the
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South Downs near Ditchling. We then rendezvous at another friend’s house in the evening. I tell them all that I have recently been to Madrid, my first visit. We then discuss what we know about the Spanish Civil War. Although we don’t agree on some of the details we all agree at the end of the conversation that we have all learnt something from the conversation and have new information. An opportunity for developments, new information and transformations.

**********************

One of the challenges in preparing this thesis has been directing my attention to the descriptions I write about as it became apparent early in the work. Its ‘immediacy’ is rhetorically constituted rather than deriving from any actual one to one relationship between the events I have written about and the writing that this is ‘of’. Literal description it seems to me is impossible. Even the most accurate ethnography descriptions are actually rigorous combinations of selectivity and interpretation. In terms of writing it seems clear that for example descriptions are post hoc constructions in order to demonstrate points of representations or understanding. The text has been littered with examples of the same event(s) being described differently, but still accurately.

As Bochner (2006) has said, good autoethnography is ‘ethically self-conscious’. In order to generate findings I have transformed raw data into new knowledge. I have been constructing rather than discovering social realities and social knowledge. I have actively engaged in using my 'world views' to concentrate on situations that I have found evocative: to try to understand how I fit culturally and socially in the world. I have not ‘looked’ for evocative experiences. I have provided some examples of the types of situations that I have found evocative. Through trying to gain a more enlightened understanding of evocative situations I
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have discovered new ways of understanding my selves and the different cultures I inhabit.

**************************
I think that if I feel something then perhaps other people feel similarly. The life I lead is autobiographical. Putting this down is really ‘something’. Writing anything down is exposing and revealing. I have noticed that when I have suggested to people that they can write as well-just write-the suggestion is usually met with gasp of breath. People think they can’t write. When I have explored this they often tell me that it is not the writing they are worried about it is what it might reveal that troubles them; not necessarily the content but the grammar, the spelling, the syntax. This might give away their past, their inadequacies and their vulnerabilities.

**************************
This narrative in all its forms is considered a mode of inquiry that creates meanings, evokes, inspires, or even provokes the inquirer as well as the viewer as reported by Bochner and Ellis (2004) who suggests that:

‘The product of research, whether an article, a graph, a poem, a story, a play, a dance or a painting was not something to be received but something to be used; not a conclusion but a turn in conversation; not a closed statement but an open question; not a way of declaring ‘this is how it is’ but a means of inviting others to consider what it (or they) could become. As a result art as an inquiry became a transgressive activity’ (Bochner and Ellis 2004, page 507)

I have reflected on how my stories have been co-constructed, then deconstructed and finally re-constructed within social and cultural contexts. I believe that most changes take place following social or cultural discoveries and not uniquely through scientific discoveries. The therapeutic value of narratives became apparent each time I deconstructed my debilitating life narratives and reframed them in ways that empower me, thus improving the quality of my life (Parry and Doan 1994). I have tried to demonstrate how the stories I have told are a framework, an embodiment, for how I act, think and interpret experiences. When my stories didn’t seem to work or no longer helped me I examined the stories and tried to actively reinvent my stories in ways that have helped me to live a more fulfilling life.

**************************

Bernard Leach was born in Honk Kong in 1887. He has a lasting reputation for his drawing, etching and pottery. His pottery in St Ives succeeded in marrying eastern
and western ceramic works. The Leach Pottery became a training ground for numerous, now famous, potters, and at times must have seemed like the United Nations, except they had a shared interest (Godden 1988). Leach’s definition of a potter was ‘a craftsman who carries out his ideas of form, texture and pattern with his own hands’ (Leach 1940). Like Leach I have tried to craft this work with a shared interest. You have been in mind whilst I have written this presentation.

In terms of rigour criteria and related values of autoethnographic work, Ellis (2004) and Richardson (2000) place autoethnography at the artistic end of the continuum of qualitative work from science to art and literature. Autoethnographic writing anticipates evoking an empathic, emotional response in its readers. This clearly differentiates autoethnographic writing from the other, more positivistic-informed, varieties of qualitative research governed by concerns around distancing the writer from the participants, objectivity and anticipates critical charges that autoethnographic writings is both subjective and self indulgent. Sparkes (2002) echoes the work of Ellis (2004), Ellis & Bochner (1996) and Richardson (2000) in arguing that it is both possible and valuable to learn about general issues from particular experiences.

Richardson (2000) adds to this by suggesting that:

‘Qualitative research has to be read, not scanned; its meaning is in the reading’ (Richardson 2000, page 925)
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In addition, reflexive subjectivity has included the many risks I have taken; exposing my vulnerabilities. I have paid attention to relational ethics; by keeping the people involved in my evocative experiences anonymous, I have constantly given attention to the potential harm that the sharing of my stories may have had on the people involved in the narratives.

I have used anonymity to describe some events and have used a story about a joiner in appendices one and two as a metaphor for some of my experiences. Interestingly, some people have immediately recognised ‘me’ in the story and others have interpreted this story in many different ways. This supports the idea that how people read this work is guided by the individual’s perspectives; multiple truths. The act of writing presupposes an audience.

Francisco de Goya. Máscaras de B. También ay máscaras de Borricos Literatos (Masks of B. There are Also Asses Who Put on the Mask of the Literati). 1796-97.

In his book Mortification: Writers’ stories of their Public Shame, Robin Robertson (2003) gathered a group of seventy commissioned writers to contribute ‘true’ stories that describe: A grim treadmill of humiliation and neglect—true stories of
public indignity… a celebration of defeat… for that acknowledgement of human frailty, of punctured pride, but also the seeming absurdity of trying to bring private art into the public space (Robertson 2003, page x)’.

*************

All I know I know at any one time is what I know at that particular moment. I know how I feel (although I might not have a name for some sensations) and I know what I am thinking (most of the time although I might not know how to say it) and I know what I am doing (although I might not now be able to explain it fully after the event). I have struggled for years thinking that I am not allowed to change my mind or to have different views, regularly. I have often thought that because my opinions don’t sound fixed that I am weak or mad or unusual. I get these feelings and thoughts less and less now.

*************

The Doctoral thesis explicitly directs my work from the private to the public. This has moved the work from ‘self as subject’ to self as object. Barthes (1975) expresses this when he characterises the flow between the ‘self who writes’, the ‘self who was’ and the ‘self who is’. The ‘self who writes’ does not have smooth access to their past. In my experience my ‘past’ has been recovered in drips; drips of information that are prompted by the different contexts I find myself in. This is different to them appearing before me as a whole in my mind.

The ‘self who is’ moves on outside the text, it moves in time so that the ‘self who writes’ becomes part of the ‘self who was’, a part of the past and its sets of multiple overlapping stages in the assembling of the ‘self who is’ current. Interestingly what is written and what is left out then becomes an issue.

One way of reducing this difficulty is to agree with the reader that the selection process of choosing, framing and applying innocent (or maybe not innocent)
boundaries to the work will effect what is written..’. It is impossible to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth’ (Caulley 2008, page 446-447).

Continuing with Barthes (1977) I would suggest that it is therefore inevitable in any reader/author relationship that the author must eventually let go and let the reader make their own mind up about what is really going on. To do otherwise is to become passive as a reader and the writer remains omnipotent, I find this position unacceptable now. I wanted to engage the reader. If I no longer want my academic and creative selves to be totally separate then it has been important to apply the same standards to both entities. Since embarking on this thesis my job has changed significantly. I have moved from secondary mental health delivery to primary mental health. In addition to this move I have been promoted. I welcome this new opportunity and the accompanying validation from my superiors (I say superiors, when really they are my colleagues, but often feel superior to me) but there is an understandable expectation that I will be more visual; to use my band analogy to move from the side of the stage to the middle and use the microphone more regularly.

Having spent many years being anonymous, but getting projects completed, I have to develop new skills. As my football teacher said many years ago, ‘You will need to learn what to say and at what time and when’. This apparent progress prompted some thoughts about the tension of being the quiet one in the corner and being autoethnographic. Is it possible to write about me and yet remain the quiet man who dislikes ‘showing off? How is this done? These questions maybe
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suggesting a reflexive timidity and shyness on my part: whilst I have included many stories that have exposed my vulnerabilities I am still unsure on occasions what to tell the reader.

I like writing poetry. What will people think?

Another poetry attempt
Moore’s humility

Leave the busy expense of the coffee bar
The huge untouched glass vessel full of carrot juice
Its rotating blades
The grotesque gift shop, unwanted objects
Those that you never knew you never wanted or needed

And then suddenly, there it is
Unsignposted, untitled and as untouched
As he had desired
What Moore can you want?
‘To remind you of the spontaneity of life’s
Rich unpredicatableness’

There amongst the translucent blue gums
Settled on the sandstone, near katoomba
An early carving
That reminded me of his
Reclining figure

Take the Great Western Highway
From Sydney
Maybe old Bells Line of Road
Or the train that makes
Its way through to Orange

All this from a man who refused to join
The International Brigade
And help the republicans
Would this have changed his modelling?

Hastings
January 2009

Each time I write a poem (ha ha) I am reminded of a line in a song by Squeeze: Sunday Street, from their CD, Play.
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“In my bed reading poetry
No one knows what’s come over me’.

***********************
I have considered how people in my life might respond to my work and have
looked after myself whilst I have written about me and my experiences, to date.
Coffey & Atkinson (1996) highlight the common practice in anthropology of
preserving their ‘participants’ confidentiality by disguising the identities of the
people involved. In addition the use of pseudonyms and non-essential details are
falsified. It often became necessary to change the details of the specific
departments and locations. According to Coffey & Atkinson:

‘These little subterfuges are performed primarily for ethical reasons’
(Coffey & Atkinson: page 128)

Coda

Autoethnography is first and foremost a perspective: a particular framework for
thinking about the’ world. Jackson (1989) claims that:

“our understanding of others can only proceed from within our own
experience, and this experience involves our own personalities and
histories as much as our field research (Jackson 1989, page 17).

Mykhalovskiy (2004) argues that to write about the self is to write about social
experience. Autoethnographic approaches suggests that without the self there is
no other, therefore, the study of others must start with study of the self in
relation to other. Self’s interactions with people in everyday lives can provide a
better understanding of underlying cultural beliefs, values, ethics, motivations,
and behaviours of the subjects rather than using any other method of
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investigation, which becomes a new way of knowing about our social experiences that advances human knowledge.

I have been doing and experiencing 'autoethnography' since the winter of 2005 and I have noticed changes in me: changes that have helped me to be more self soothing with an increasing ability to show myself more compassion. This may happen for my colleagues (and some have reported to me, having read my work that it is happening for them as well). Although this work espouses cultural and historically located inconsistent ‘realities’ and addresses issues using various theoretical frameworks, it is constrained through its form, that is the written word. I have used different forms of representation, for example photos, radio links and websites to articulate different autoethnographic presentations. It is difficult to predict how people who read my work will react. Sometimes it can be critical of such accounts and can be seen as self indulgent (Coffey 1999).

It is hoped that you have taken an active role. You have been invited to enter my world, to be stimulated and reflect upon and understand your own life. The goal has been to write meaningfully and evocatively about topics that matter to me and to write from an ethic of care and concern. I have used various Education meetings at work to disseminate my findings, (I have already presented my work to colleagues whom I work with on several occasions at the Psychological Therapies Services Educations meetings as well as the University Professional Doctorate Student presentations at the end of each academic year).
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It is also a hope that this study will have at least two benefits. Firstly for me, as a way of self-knowing; to try to understand the experiences I have lived through. The hope is that by exploring my life I can enhance my understanding of my life. I have noticed that as I make changes, that is becoming more self-soothing and compassionate, that my clinical practice is changing. I am more confident in my understandings of stories and my contributions to the stories that people tell me.

As I gain a better understanding of an evolving and ever changing me I am having different types of conversations with work colleagues and with clients. Secondly I do not exist in a vacuum and my life stories are not isolated accounts. This process is a social activity influenced by whom I interact with. From a social constructionist view, the self is relational and challenges the dominant ideology of the self-contained individual that underpins the notions of self-indulgence.

As Bochner and Ellis (1996) ask:

‘If culture circulates through all of us, how can autoethnography be free of connection to the world beyond the self?’ (Bochner and Ellis 1996, page 24)

In this way autoethnography allows another person’s world of experience to inspire a critical reflection of one's own. Rorty (1999) has referred to this as the 'inspirational value of reading'-what is already known by the reader is re-contextualised in the light of their encounter with someone else’s life or culture. Originality in this form, as in all relationships, is never a sole act. It requires readers. While Autoethnographers write about themselves the goal is to touch a ‘world beyond the self of the writer’ (Bochner & Ellis 1996: page 24)
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It is my belief that autoethnography not only creates new knowledge, but is a new way of knowing. I also believe that new ways of knowing advance human knowledge. Rorty (1999) suggests that truth is only manifested through language, language is human, and therefore truth is constructed. I have found Autoethnography liberating and it has removed some of the constraints of the dominant realist representations of empirical ethnography. Richardson (2000) argued that the way researchers are expected to write will then influence what they can write about. I think autoethnography could be a useful way for examining my life experiences in a self-reflexive manner.

Autoethnography seemed to be the appropriate research approach for my dissertation because it confronts dominant forms of representation and power in an attempt to reclaim, through self-reflective responses, representational spaces that have marginalized those of us at the borders (Tierney 1997). I have tried to produce an account of me as a self-perceived marginalized figure; portraying the personal tensions I experienced integrating my worldviews within the organisational philosophy.

I believe that this thesis makes a contribution to our understandings of the world. I plan to do this by using a variety of ways: opening up conversations, through personal learning and development as well as finding new knowledge. The study offers opportunities for reflection and reflexivity. It questions my assumptions about the way I have constructed my selves and my therapeutic understandings.
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of people’s lives, particularly the people I am invited to engage with in an ever-
evolving collaborative psychotherapeutic relationship. Rolfe (2006) suggests that all we can do is describe what our truths are and help others with different ontologies and epistemologies to understand and encourage them that our approach is just as valuable. I would suggest that if we use objective criteria for judging ‘truth’ then this would limit our understandings and reduce opportunities for solidarity. Lincoln (1997) contributes to this debate by suggesting that:

‘We will never totally ‘get it right’. Perfection is not a requisite from social science research, and the postmodern doubt which we share leads us to believe that ‘getting it right’ is a project best abandoned’ (Lincoln 1997, page 52)

We are more likely to be able to empathise with ourselves and other people when we can ‘feel’ their experiences. In addition I think that this work is a valuable addition to the literature of openness, critique and disclosure that I have already contributed to (Grant et al 2004; Short 2007a; Short 2007b; Short, Grant and Clarke 2007, Short & Grant 2009).

So tell us about your managerial experiences.

‘Well I have been involved in auditing staff and those who have not been reaching their targets have been summoned to the general office and we have ‘got rid of them’.

My reflection
‘I think the interview went well and I scored their responses highly until they said ‘get rid of people’.

‘But that’s what we do David isn’t it?’

‘Maybe. But surely there are more sensitive ways of saying and doing this?’

I was attracted to the work of Nye (2009). In his book ‘Soft power: the means to success in World Politics’, Nye suggests that the soft power elements of international diplomacy have achieved greater authoritative stature and are having an increasingly visible impact on United States foreign power. A definition of soft power is:
‘Soft power is the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments. It is much more than ‘image, public relations and ephemeral popularity. It constitutes an ability to gain objectives’ (Nye 2009, page 18)

This description of ‘soft power’ felt like the way I have tried over the years to be a ‘leader’. I believe that ideas and the implementation of these ideas are more likely to succeed and to be less costly if shared with others. Nye (2009) quotes former American House Speaker Newt Gingerich:

‘The real key is not how many do I kill. The real key is how many alliances I gain’

Discussion

A number of findings have been emerging. I have discovered the usefulness and personal relevance of engaging in an autoethnographic exploration. A critical review of the evocative experiences has revealed some painful aspects of my life; aspects which have been deeply buried. This approach to writing has commenced a healing process and brought a closure or settlement to some difficult experiences. The writing of Pennebaker and Frank has helped with the healing process. I discuss their work in more detail in the stories chapter. (Chapter seven and eight) This self-soothing has been accompanied by a discovery and recognition of the more helpful aspects of me. I have begun to take notice of things about me that I may not have noticed before or was not prepared to pay attention to. I have become aware of my shortcomings, my limitations and my humanness.

The usefulness and helpfulness of experiencing autoethnography cannot be sufficiently underscored. On the other hand, this approach has the potential of inducing fear and feelings of fragmentation. I am feeling ‘easier’ about this now. The experience of experiencing autoethnography is not necessarily a journey to embark on without appropriate support. An empathic supervisor is essential and I am pleased that I have an opportunity to discuss emerging concerns with a psychotherapist colleague. It has been difficult to know how I could have prepared for autoethnography. I thought I was a resilient character but no matter how much experience I have this has not protected me from the often-harsh impacts that my experiences have had on me! I can at least deal with what I previously didn’t now.
One of the many themes that my autoethnographic approach has aroused for me is the realisation that what we, as autoethnographers are presenting impacts on us in ways that are difficult to prepare for.

Middle of May 2009

During early May I Made contact with a bloke I was at school with. I am trying to arrange a ‘get together’ with a few people who all knew each other in Brighton 1974-1976. As our conversation developed my friend asks me about this thesis. I continue in the following way:

Nigel: ‘I wonder if the old headmaster is still alive I would like to be able to tell him about this award’.

Friend: ‘You still got that old chip (laughs) on your shoulder Nigel?'

Nigel: ‘No’. He was one of the few people who encouraged me at school and told me regularly that I did have potential’.

Friend: ‘You never change mate do you’

Everything that we present is part of a reflexive cycle of meaning making. Sometimes we have to acknowledge that we may not choose the meaning making. This may be for the reader to decide. Foucault (1989) describes this as the ‘great anonymous murmur of discourses’ (Foucault 1989, page 27). As I have developed and presented my work I have become more interested in the transformations that are meaning making and that may actually make a difference to the lives we all live.

Late May 2009.

I’m disillusioned by the Doctorate. I took an opportunity to read the 45,000 words I have drafted to date. I didn’t enjoy what I saw. Rubbish. I thought it was and had been a waste of time. I was unsure what, if anything I had learnt. I’d hit a brick wall. I was unsure if I wanted to carry on. Did I want to succeed?
So what’s new?  
Chapter nine

I knew that my reduction in motivation was not happening in isolation. It related for example to a reduction in satisfaction with work. I had lost sight of the bigger picture and my local connection with the larger picture (Mills 1974). Reminding myself of the bigger system as well as the local opened up lots of possibilities for me. Sometimes our motivation returns when we take a different approach to our workload that embodies more self respect, limits and variety.

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June 2009
I arrange to have two academic discussions with two Doctoral supervisors. I thought that an objective view may help. I had not experienced this ‘flatness’ before. I had enjoyed the doctorate and had been optimistic throughout the four years. This was a new experience. A mood reduction was not new but not wanting to write anymore for this award was new.

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Motivation often shows up again when we investigate it -- show it more understanding, see what it wants to keep in balance, and get why it disappeared.

Whilst describing this ‘state’ as being a crisis, I did introduce possible options. The first is to abandon the project as flawed. The second is to persist with the research aims and seek more understandings... continuing until I develop more answers to my research questions. The third is to work with what I already have. I also agreed to meet up with the one of the supervisors again in July 2009 to review.

At one supervision session I heard a new word; liminal. This reminded me that I had seen this word used by Speedy (2008) who talks about texts that ‘generate liminal spaces’ (Speedy 2008, page 31). What did this word mean? What has this word got to do with my research? What is a liminal space? Liminal spaces are imaginative sites where we can extend, provoke and create knowledge in new ways.
June 2009

Looking back over my presentation so far I note the importance I have attached to reflection and reflexivity as being essential for ethical research. I often see my finger hovering over the delete key to hide the contradiction between what I say and what I do. I resist the urge to delete when I am reminded of the power of dominant social science discourse. I want to try and remain within my philosophy, yet tolerate the associated vulnerabilities. It also affirms that my ‘knowing’ is hanging through the process of writing.

Autoethnography seemed to be the appropriate choice for my dissertation because this approach confronts dominant forms of representation and power in an attempt to reclaim, through self-reflective response, representational spaces that have marginalized those of us at the borders (Tierney 1997). I am trying to produce an account of me as a self-perceived marginalized figure; portraying the personal tensions I experienced integrating my worldviews within the organisational philosophy. I believe that this thesis makes a contribution to our understanding of the world. I plan to do this by using a variety of ways: opening up conversations, through personal learning and development as well as finding new knowledge. In addition I think that this contribution is a valuable addition to the literature of openness, critique and disclosure that I have already contributed to (Grant et al 2004; Short 2007a; Short 2007b; Short, Grant and Clarke 2007, Short & Grant 2009)

Narrative acts as both an organising strategy and meaning-making device. I specify linearity because readers will have a different experience to mine. The opening chapter will outline a map for the reader and me. The map is but the
beginning of a journey that I hope the reader will find as intriguing as I have. Emerging through a collection of different theoretical positions readers may understand that my knowledge is contextually constructed, culturally produced where meaning is multiple, shifting and often contradictory.

The way I understand this text is to view it as a cultural product, an historical artefact rather than something that is stable, truthful and permanent. I see narratives as a social construction. As the interactions within me develop, the self-narratives will undergo continuous alterations and different understandings. The self is known to itself through the engagements with the world and as a consequence is conceived as relational (Greenberg 1995).

An autoethnographic standpoint offers opportunities for the production of alternative ways of knowing, reconsiders existing dominant accounts and opens up the possibilities for different relationships and new conceptual directions. This seems appropriate for a study that is re-evaluating me in relation to nurse psychotherapy. There is an expectation that psychotherapy provides people with an opportunity to transform, to heal and offers them a more compassionate understanding. Hence as I make changes then this may enable other people who read this work to change themselves. The text espouses personal and culturally inconsistent realities’ and addresses issues through theoretical perspectives.
So what’s new?
Chapter nine

This is a study that has offered me many opportunities for reflection and reflexivity. It questions my assumptions about the way I have constructed me and my therapeutic understandings of people’s lives, particularly the people I am invited to engage with on a developing collaborative psychotherapeutic encounter. It also offers responsibility to all of us: to be whom or we want to be we have to make sense of whom or what we are being. As a professional who helps the self, I need to pay attention to the relationships between me and the structures of the psychotherapeutic world and accompanying other cultures.

‘... the human interface between writing and reading. Sometimes the two elements mix, sometimes they curdle and sometimes they stand like oil and water, resolute and opposed’ (Armitage 2003, page 36)

In line with Foucault (1989) and his focus on language as doing more than just describing object and events, he sees that certain ideas have the capacity to make us think and feel and do particular things.; we are constituted through discourse. So as a father and I make judgements about whether I am a good enough Father based on standards of behaviour thoughts and emotions that fathers are supposed to display. These standards are propagated by the media, books, and men’s magazines. I am therefore ‘policing’ my selves against standards of behaviours. Foucault talks about decentring; we are all inscribed with what it is to be a Father, a cognitive behaviour therapist, a friend; these are historically contingent. It is some of these contingencies that I have been trying to reconsider in this thesis and whilst I might resist these historical descriptions it is inevitable I will be producing more. This got me thinking about what my
So what’s new?
Chapter nine

responsibilities are or have been and continue to be with my children, colleagues, clients and trainees that I work with.

For example, when I moved from my old job to my new one I experienced many situations where people expected me to know things about the new Improving Access to psychological Therapies project which I didn’t know about. I think that they saw me as someone with 13 years of psychotherapy experience, and expert. This may or may not be accurate but what I didn’t have was experience of new computer systems and news ways of analysing data. It felt like I was returning to a less creative and less independent Nigel.

It seems that often when people become experts (a word I find difficult to attribute to myself) then they get moved to new jobs; jobs they are expected to manage because of their previous expertise.

A major advantage of the autoethnographic approach is the potential benefits that this autoethnography might have for local emerging nurse cognitive behaviour therapists. This small scale autoethnographic study has served as a form of therapy for me to become a more developed holistic and healed healer. I think this type of personal and cultural investigation can be used as a very helpful and effective way for mental health nurse and psychotherapists to become more aware of who they are and in this way use their selves in their therapeutic encounters. The advantages in engaging in this type of study cannot be underscored; however, autoethnography has the potential for inducing fear,
vulnerability and uncertainty. I would suggest that anyone who embarks on the autoethnographic seek out a supportive network. I have been supported by colleagues, friends and an empathic supervisor who has been available for me when required.

A further benefit, though paradoxical, is that no amount of preparatory work is able to protect one from the potential effects that this might have on the researcher. In addition to the excitement of using this approach there have been some dark and vulnerable moments. I have tried throughout the four year study to accept all the experiences I had as being an insight into me. For example I have mislaid many references, lost articles, been unable to find that important sentence. Whilst other colleagues became anxious if they experienced the same I thought that this was interesting. What was it saying about me? A lesson for Nigel maybe. An outsider observation.

One important lesson for me through developing this work is that I am not self-sufficient and that I am more reliant and dependent on other people than I might have thought before. It has been a very humbling experience. I have had to encounter my limitations on academic, emotional and physical levels. As a consequence of this autoethnographic study I experience a constant feeling that not only is my academic ability being judged but my life is being scrutinised.
In addition there is of course the tension between my desire to provide an authentic account of me and the cultures I inhabit and the production of a polished linear report. This seems to be an oxymoron. Sometimes I have thought of using obscurity as a device for presenting my work. As my supervisor has often told me; I have used obscurity very well!
So what’s new?
Chapter nine

Evocative experiences

- Social construction
- Inter qualitative relations
- Inter relational relationships
- Inter disciplinary
- Reflections and reflexivity
- Post modernist ideas
- Stories and narratives

New constructions
New understandings
So what’s new?
Chapter nine

We shall not cease from exploration,
and the end of all our exploring
will be to arrive where we started
and know the place for the first time

TS Eliot
Little Gidding
Four Quartets
1942

Thank you

Hastings Spring 2010

‘In the end,’ said Auden, ‘art is small beer. The really serious things in life are earning one’s living and loving one’s neighbour.'
The joiner

It’s late September. A handful of people are sleeping aboard a wooden life raft. The raft has been washed ashore on a beach on the Gulf of Mexico. The sun is high in the sky and the heat is beating down on the raft’s occupants. The grey torn tired lifeless canvas sail is offering little protection from the fierce penetrating sultriness.

I was the latest recruit to the ill fated Spanish ship ‘Cabeza de Vaca’. My name is Jose Zapata; one of the five survivors. I am Fifty-four years old. I work for the Spanish navy as a carpenter. I work with timber. I make wooden joints. I have large tough rugged sun tanned hands. I had only been on board the last six months. I had been sent from the onshore naval carpentry workshop to join the ship. Whilst I knew most of the ship’s crew I had not worked with them before. We had set sail from the sea port of Vigo in Northern West Spain three months earlier to make our way across the Atlantic. This was to be my first long voyage. I had said an emotional goodbye to my family and packed a few belongings in my brown canvas bag, drawn the neck string and thrown the bag over my shoulder. After weeks of nothing but settled sea and blue sky the lookout in the crow’s nest saw the southern coast of America and shouted out with excitement ‘Tierra ahoy’ (land ahoy). We then began travelling west along an uncharted coastline keeping parallel with the land at a distance of approximately tres millas (three miles). Exciting and worrying: scary and exhilarating. Unfortunately our rudder had been broken few days ago in a particularly wild storm. Normally this would have been something I would have been expected to repair. I would usually have gone overboard, attached to the boat with a length of rope and repaired the damage. The rudder would
be tilted at 45 degree angle to the ships stern. My leather tool belt would be tightly hung from my waist. My tools would be attached to my belt with rope. The recent turbulent unsettled weather however had made this task impossible.

The wooden galleon was now at the mercy of the wind and tide. It was after the rudder damage that the Captain, Porfirio Diaz, had struggled to maintain respect from the crew. People thought he had let the side down. His navigation competencies were being drawn into question. He had a divided crew. He was trying to maintain discipline by using fear and intimidation. This time however his strategy wasn’t working. I thought that if we hadn’t been hit by the big waves, which wrecked the rudder, then a mutiny might have happened.

When I first joined the ships company I had been immediately attracted to the crew’s derogatory words about him. What can be so challenging, awkward or difficult about him? I have often been described like this. Is this ‘first impressions’ in action? Did the crew think the same way about me? I wanted to draw my own conclusions based on how he was relationally with me.

I am from the seaport of Lisbon in Portugal. All of my shipwrecked colleagues are Spanish. Our languages sound similar but are not the same. Our words have very different meanings. Smiles though can be universal I’ve found; when they are offered and accepted. The other mariners often appeared to look down upon me. I think they think I am from the wrong side of town. I thought getting an Education would be the tool to fight my feelings of oppression?
I remember a carpentry workshop I had attended a few years ago. There were about thirty people in attendance. The group were stood in a circle around the workshop table. I was stood at the back, looking over peoples shoulders. A Tutor from the carpentry college had brought some new joints for us to look at. He told us how he had constructed them.

I asked some questions:

‘Excuse me which type of saw did you use please?’

‘That sounds a very useful joint. How did you manage to join those two different woods together without glue?’

The tutor then says in front of everyone.

‘I see you are being your usual awkward self Jose?’
‘There is always one in a crowd’

Most of the attendees turned around to see who had asked the questions. I felt humiliated and embarrassed. Did the tutor have to say that? I was being curious and inquisitive; I wanted to learn about the joints.

The huge white frothy waves had washed the ship against some submerged rocks. People had begun jumping overboard. Wet, tired and bedraggled bodies scrambled for the few remaining undamaged life rafts. As our raft got closer to shore the water became calmer. The warm clear water gently lapping against the raft is pushing it slowly towards the beach. I am together alone. It is curious when we have nobody and nothing to rely on outside of oneself. Liberating; yet lonely. Language differences again. The Captain has perished in the storm. We would have to find a way to pull together now!
I wake up on the shore. I see other bodies scattered along the coast. Apart from the Captain, we all seem to be alive. Beyond the sand a figure emerges from the tall palm trees. They are wearing their bright poppy red coat.

I don’t recognise them immediately. They are the subaltern the officer, Adoracion Buena. She takes command. She removes her red jacket and rolls up her white shirt sleeves. She looks prepared to ‘get her hands dirty’. What can we offer? We need to be a team now.

The sound of a conch attracts my attention. I make my way to the others sailors. We sit silently in a circle. Eventually I say ‘Ola. (Portuguese for ‘hello’)’ A conversation develops. I only understand a few words. The conversation sounds nourishing. Some people have brought broken coconuts. The moisture of the coconut flesh is most welcome on my dry sore tongue.

My contributions about wood joints seemed to have been generally unwelcomed, perhaps unheard or misunderstood.

‘We can make those joints. We don’t need a joiner’ the crew often say.

My opinions are rarely validated. For example I had regularly seen people using metal nails in their wooden joints. A good mortise and tenon structural joint without nails would have been more effective, but when I mention this I am dismissed and told to get on with my work.

From what I understand from the conversations amongst the crew they were often having discussions about how we got marooned. What had caused the rudder to break?
Why had the ship leaked so much water? Whilst this was important to make sure we
didn't make the same mistake again, I was interested in where we were going and what
we were going to do. The cyclic conversations sounded like ones we had at home. We
didn't have time for discussions in my family house. Perhaps I could get used to it. How
did I get my voice heard? I think I learnt to be quiet.

It had been agreed long before I joined the ship, that regular meetings would take place
between the crew. This would hopefully provide an opportunity to discuss successes,
difficulties and to make any necessary plans. My experiences of these types of meetings
had been mixed. People had often been reflective but rarely reflexive, that is, agreeing an
action. The first project was to see what we could salvage from the ‘Cabeza de Vaca’. Her
debris was spread for miles along the sandy shore. We could recycle much of the
materials. The torn sails could be used to shelter us from the sun. The square timbers
which had been battered by the warm waves into smooth oval shapes, could be used for
make shift homes. Sometimes it was difficult to resist the swell of the tide.

I found a mizzenmast. Mizzenmast: it’s the third mast or the mast immediately aft of the
mainmast. They are typically shorter than the foremast. It is divided into three sections:
Mizzenmast lower — Mizzen topmast — Mizzen topgallant mast. The metal mast makers
stamp informed me that one had been had been made of a fine fir tree from near
Zaragoza.

The huge round timber was lapping gently against the shore. I found a piece of rigging
and attached it to the iron necklace joint. I walked along the shore pulling the rope. I used
the swell of the water to help me. The huge lump of wood slipped through the water
behind me. It was difficult, but the warm turquoise water was doing most of the work. I could see other people dragging pieces of wood along the sand shore. It looked like hard work. I then noticed them copying me.

Imagine the scene. A group of people stood round on the beach. I have three different conversations.

I talk to someone I only ever meet at the weekly crew meetings. They work in ships galleys as a cook. We talk about wood and timber joints. They are interested in developing their joinery skills. I enjoy the conversation. I gauge by their responses that they do as well.

I then talk to an apprentice master craftsman. They have been studying at college. The course teaches them about all the different trades needed for a ship; joiners, ships mates, cooks and navigators. They tell me about their course. It sounds interesting. I suggest that we meet. I can perhaps show them how to make some joints. Again I enjoy the conversation and again I gauge by their responses that they are engaged with our dialogue.

During the third conversation I am told about a type of woodwork I have not heard of before: I enquire about it. I ask if we can talk some more when we both have time. I have some questions to ask. They say ‘I don’t know yet because I don’t know your questions’. I am then told that I might not understand it and I might find it ‘airy fairy’. The conversation sorted of fizzled out. I ‘felt’ hurt and puzzled by these comments. How had my colleague constructed me? I didn’t enjoy the conversation. I am unsure if they did either. Accents are what other people have. I sound completely normal and standard to me. Other people’s lives can sound exotic and exciting and attractive. I wanted to get to know them.

One morning the subaltern Adoracion Buena approaches me. She tells me she is interested in what I have to say and what I might have to offer. She continues by telling
Blue story
Epilogue.

me that their knowledge of joinery is limited. We stroll along the shore. The sand tickles my toes. We both have children. A connection. We share stories. The content of stories tells me about people. How they talk about other people? How they incorporate their ideas, their opinions, and their concerns into their narratives? How do we create or develop or construct our identities? How do we perceive others? Bringing all the different experiences we have to one single moment when we may or may not connect with another. What is mine what is theirs, what is shared, connecting, disconnecting and what draws us to connections. We agree that some joiners are helpful and some joiners are unhelpful. Who makes these decisions is a question we both want to think about.

There have been many enquiries from the group about how I make different types of joints. How do you make a butt, a dado, perhaps a rabbet or dovetail?

‘Jose please help us to make a mortis and tenon’

What is missing from these requests is where these joints will be used. How do they fit in with the structure? As joiners we make different joints for different reasons. A mortis and tenon for example is good for making heavy doors and gates, whereas a lap joint is useful for light frames, which are going to be covered with sacking. It wouldn’t work if we used the same joint all the time. I think people are surprised when I tell them about the different types of joints that can be assembled and why.

It was a clear warm morning. I see a group of people heading towards our camp. I recognise one of them. A fellow Portuguese joiner. He taught joinery at the naval college in Lisbon. He showed me some letters he had received before we left Portugal. Several
people had complained about his teaching style. My name was written in one of the letters. I had been misquoted and seemingly misunderstood again. No control over the way I was being described.

For many weeks I become pre-occupied with the content of the letters. I was worried I would be reduced to the rank of junior shipmate and eventually demobbed (to discharge a person from the armed forces; demobilize). I found it difficult to concentrate on anything else. I had a constant sense of fragility. All I could think about was protecting me; from what, I was unsure. I regularly walked the shore alone crying. The flow to my life had gone.

Several weeks have passed. A small functioning hamlet is taking shape. We have fresh running water. Some of us have been trying new fruit and some unusual looking vegetables. It has been interesting to watch who amongst us has been prepared to experiment and those who have relied on old traditional and comfortable habits.

Suddenly the conch sounds. We stop what we are doing and make our way to the main beach; our meeting place. We are told that a ship has been sighted. It is heading towards us. The flag is Spanish. A friendly vessel the Villaricos La Balsa. Several days later the ship drops anchor a mile off shore.

A small rowing boat with six men on board is lowered gently into the ocean. They bring developing news. It has been agreed in Madrid that we must stay, develop the hamlet and make this our new home.
One of the crew from Villaricos La Balsa, a confidant of mine told me that the people who had complained about my colleagues teaching styles have all been removed from their respective positions. If the confidant hadn’t told me would I have ever found out? Whilst I am pleased about this development the ‘fragile feelings’ remain the same for many many weeks; I am still left with an uncomfortable feeling of ‘what else is happening that may involve me that I don’t know about?’ I start to invite people to come and watch me make some joints. I then watch people making joints. Some people seem keen to continue and some wander off. I give time to the people who want to stay.

One day a ship appears on the horizon. It’s another Spanish vessel The San Salvador. During this period many Spanish vessels were converted merchant ships, better suited to carrying cargo than engaging in warfare at sea. They were broad and heavy, and could not manoeuvre quickly under sail. Several hours later it weighed anchor. Two rowing boats beached. The Captain, Abelardo Armando, walks up the ashore. He told of a town further along the coast. Maybe two days away. A Spanish garrison.

The Captain told me of a Master Joiners course. It will be held on the last Thursday and Friday of each Month at the other garrison in the newly constructed Colegio de Carpinteros. He had arranged with our Garrison Captain, Adoracion Buena for me to be released from duties each month to attend. I begin attending the course.

There are twenty other people. To my surprise the other people come from different disciplines; painters, sail makers, cooks and a medical purser. We begin the day by introducing ourselves. On reflection this was an effective way of discovering each other’s
world views. I feel understood. People seem to be very interested in hearing what we have to say. A wonderfully validating experience.

I notice that each time I return to the hamlet my colleagues are interested in what I have been studying at college. I ask the captain Adoracion Buena if I can use the monthly team meetings to tell people what I have been finding out at college.

They agree: ‘It sounds like a good idea Jose’.

I take every opportunity I can to discuss college work with people. It is good for me to hear myself talking about new ideas. It helps me to understand what I am learning. I enjoy putting myself in a position where I don’t know what I am going to be asked. It keeps me on my toes. We talk about a new apprentice Junior Joiners course. How I am asked to get involved. Talk about being invited to be an external examiner at an apprentice Joiners course in the north of the land. Talk about contributing to a joiner’s journal. As more communities are being set up they need more joiners.

I am sat in my hut. I am looking through my college notes. I am pleased with my progress. I am involved in something that I thought only happened to those bright people from the other side of town; the merchant’s sons or the children of the bank manager. I was carving out a new mould for my family. I feel more in control of my destiny. I had felt trapped by others people’s directions and desires.

I am invited to become an instructor at the Joiner and carpentry school. One of my new responsibilities along with three other existing Tutors is to interview people for new
course. After several weeks of intense interviewing, a group of people are chosen for the next cohort. We have also considered people for a reserve list. This is in case our preferred candidates are unable to take up their places. The Captain of the San Salvador, **Abelardo Armand** is unhappy with some of our decisions. He wants us to go through the interview scoring sheets again and review what we decided on the days of the interviews.

This request confused and irritated me. My impressions belonged in the moment I was making those decisions. Why was I irritated? I had spent several days interviewing with the Captain. We spent some time thinking about and talking about stories and narratives and we seemed to come to the same agreement that situations were constructed at the time, decisions being situated in the time they are situated. Then I am confronted with this rigid attitude. Of course the situation that I am now being irritated by has been socially constructed. I wonder if we are socialised into different ways of looking at the world through various socialising cultures. Some cultures seem to be more dominant and superior than others. What I considered to be a developing relationship with the Captain, and the associated relational values are now being given little attention.

I have thought about the Captains request. The interviewed people I was unsure about were applicants I had ‘felt’ unhappy about. I was concerned about their interpersonal skills, their humility, and the way I ‘felt’ with them. One could say that I was guided intellectually and emotionally. Perhaps the captain was relying on their ‘rational’ values. Rather than seeking an answer I am inviting, opening up dialogue.
I am not trying to annihilate the truth or the Captains objectivity and rationality I am trying to reconstitute the situations and the way that dominant discourses and grand narratives have been practised. It is not that I think that the Captains authority is distrustful, their view and values may have been clouded by their own person motives.

Our small hamlet is slowly growing into a village. We have been here many months now. Many ships have been arriving from our homeland. Telegrams have been received from Madrid; ‘secure land; Viva Espaná’. Hierarchies are developed, project managers appointed and our Mariner superiors take over the leadership responsibilities. Predictable organisational tensions develop. It seems to me that the different languages amongst the different disciplines separate people rather than providing opportunities for union.

It’s lunchtime at college. I am walking along the beach. I feel ok when alone. In our daily relationships, we can act in different ways but it is often the way our actions are interpreted that determines the outcomes. The way we are described or spoken about constitutes our reputation. We do not own this representation. If we take control of our public identity we may end up misrepresenting the identity we are trying to control. For example if I try and represent carpenters, I could then be representing them. I may then innocently betray people; other carpenters. Sometimes I want to be a carpenter and sometimes I don’t. Yet it seems to me that people are often defined and are then ‘stuck’ with by these definitions. Dialogues offer a different motion however, a constant social construction and regular opportunities to re construct. There is no fixing of dialogues, as I believe dialogues to be continuously evolving in our cultures.

Best get back to work.
Uma história curta

Appendix one

O marceneiro

que é ao fim de Setembro. Um punhado das pessoas dormem a bordo de uma balsa salva-vidas de madeira. A jangada foi lavada em direção à costa numa praia no Golfo do México. O sol é alto no céu e o calor bate nos ocupantes de jangadas. A rasgada vela de lona cinzenta sem vida cansada oferece protecção pequena do sultriness penetrante feroz.

Era o último recruta ao navio doente espanhol predestinado 'Cabeza de Vaca'. Me chamo-me Jose Zapata; um dos cinco sobreviventes. Tenho cinquenta e quatro Ano de idade. Trabalho para a marinha espanhola como um carpinteiro. Trabalho com madeira. Faço articulações de madeira. Tenho sol grande acidentado forte bronzeou mãos. Eu só tinha estado em embarcar os últimos seis meses.

Tinha sido enviado da oficina de carpintaria naval na costa unir-se o navio. Enquanto soube a maioria da tripulação que do navio eu não tinha trabalhado com eles antes. Tivemos partimos de barco do porto de mar de Vigo em Oeste do norte Espanha três meses antes dirigir-se através do Atlântico. Isto era ser minha primeira viagem longa. Tinha dito um adeus emotivo à minha família e empacotou alguns pertences em meu saco marrom de lona, tirado o cordel e lançado o saco sobre o meu ombro. Depois que semanas de nada mas mar estabelecido e céu azul o posto de observação na serra de ninho do corvo o litoral do sul de América e gritou com entusiasmo 'Terra à vista' (terra à vista). Nós então começamos a viajar oeste ao longo de um litoral desconhecido mantendo paralelo com a terra a uma distância de aproximadamente millas de tres (três milhas). Enthusiasmăr e preocupar: assustador e estimulante. Infelizmente nosso leme tinha sido quebrado há poucos dias numa tempestade particularmente selvagem. Normalmente isto teria sido algo que eu teria sido esperado reparar. Eu geralmente teria-me-ia entusiasmado, anexado ao barco com um comprimento de corda e reparou a agressão. O leme seria inclinado em 45 ângulo de grau aos navios severo. Minhas ferramentas de cinto de ferramenta de couro bem seriam penduradas da minha cintura. O tempo recente incerto turbulento contudo tinha feito esta tarefa impossível.

O galeão de madeira estava agora à mercê do vento e maré. Era depois de que a agressão de leme que o Capitão, Porfirio Diaz, tinha lutado por manter respeito da tripulação. As pessoas pensaram que ele tinha desapontado o lado. As suas competências de navegação foram tiradas em pergunta. Teve uma tripulação dividida. Tentava manter disciplina usando medo e intimidação. Desta vez contudo a sua estratégia não trabalhava. Pensei que se não tínhamos sido batidos em pelas ondas grandes, que destruí o leme, então um motim talvez tenha acontecido.

Quando eu primeiro uni-me a companhia de navios eu imediatamente tinha sido atraído às palavras depreciativas da tripulação sobre ele. O que então pode estar desafiando, desajeitado ou difícil sobre ele? Eu frequentemente fui descrito como isto. Isto é 'primeiro impressões em acção? A tripulação pensou a mesma maneira sobre mim? Quis tirar o próprias conclusões baseadas em como era relacionalmente comigo.

Sou do porto de Lisboa em Portugal. Todos meus colegas de shipwrecked são espanhóis. Nossas linguagens soam semelhante mas não são o mesmo. Nossas palavras têm significados muito diferentes. Os sorrisos embora podem ser universais achei; quando são oferecidos e são aceitados. Os outros marinheiros frequentemente apareceram desdenhar sobre mim. Penso que eles pensam que eu sou do lado errado de povoado. Pensei recebendo uma Educação seria a ferramenta lutar meus sentimentos de opressão?
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Perguntei algumas perguntas:

'Desculpa-me que tipo de serra você usou por favor’?

'Isso soa uma articulação muito útil. Como você conseguiu para unir-se essas duas mata diferente juntos sem cola’?

O mestre então diz na frente de todo o mundo.

'Vejo é seu auto-Jose desajeitado normal’? ‘Há sempre um numa multidão’

A maioria do attendees vira para ver quem tinha feito as perguntas. Sento humilhado e envergonhado. O mestre teve que dizer isso? Era curioso e curioso; quis aprender sobre as articulações.

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As ondas enormes espumantes brancas tinham lavado o navio contra algumas pedras submergidas. As pessoas tinham começado a saltar ao mar. Molhem, corpos cansados e enlameados mexeram para o poucos permanecer balsas salva-vidas intactas. Como nossa jangada ficou mais próximo a margem que a água tornou-se mais tranquilo. A água clara quente suavemente marulhando contra a jangada empurra-o lentamente em direcção da praia. Estou juntos sozinho. É curioso quando nós não temos ninguém e nada a contar com exterior de si. Libertar e mas solitário. As diferenças de linguagem outra vez. O Capitão pereceu na tempestade. Teríamos que achar uma maneira para puxar juntos agora!

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Que O som de um búzio atrai minha atenção. Dirijo-me ao outros marinheiros. Sentamo-nos silenciosamente num círculo. Eventualmente digo’ Ola’ (Português para ‘oi’) UMA conversa desenvolve. Eu só entendo algumas palavras. A conversa soa nutrir. Algumas pessoas trouxeram cocos quebrados. O vapor da carne de coco é a maioria de boas-vindas em minha língua seca. Minhas contribuições sobre articulações de madeira que são parecidas ter sido geralmente unwelcomed, talvez inauditas ou mal entendido. 'Podemos fazer essas articulações. Não necessitamos um marceneiro’ a tripulação frequentemente diz. Minhas opiniões raramente são validados. Por exemplo eu regularmente tinha visto as pessoas usando pregos de metal em suas articulações de madeira. Um bom embutido e espiga que articulação estrutural sem pregos teria sido mais eficaz, mas quando menciono este sou despedido e sou contado seguir com meu trabalho. De o que eu entendo das conversas entre a tripulação eles frequentemente tinham discussões sobre como ficamos abandonado. O que tinha feito o leme quebrar? Porque o navio tinha vazado tanta água? Enquanto isto era importante assegurar-se que nós não cometemos o
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mesmo erro outra vez, fui interessado em onde íamos e o que nós íamos fazer. As conversas cíclicas soaram como uns nós tivemos em casa. Não tivemos tempo para discussões em minha casa de família. Talvez podia receber que é usado a ele. Como recebi minha voz ouvida? Penso que eu aprendi a ser tranquilidade.

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Tinha sido concordado muito tempo antes que uni-me o navio, que reuniões regulares aconteceriam entre a tripulação. Isto com sorte forneceria uma oportunidade de discutir êxitos, dificuldades e fazer qualquer planos necessários. Minhas experiências destes tipos de reuniões tinham sido misturadas. As pessoas frequentemente tinham estado pensativas mas raramente reflexo, que concorda uma acção. O primeiro projecto era ver o que nós podíamos do 'Cabeza de Vaca'. Seus escombros foi espalhado para milhas ao longo da margem arenosa. Podíamos reciclar muito dos materiais. As velas rasgadas podiam ser usadas para proteger nos do sol. As madeiras quadradas que tinham sido surradas pelas ondas quentes em formas ovais lisas, podiam ser usadas para fazer casas de mudança. Às vezes era difícil de resistir o aumento da maré. Achei um mizzenmast. Mizzenmast: é o terceiro mastro ou o mastro imediatamente à popa do mastro grande. São geralmente mais curtos que o foremast. É dividido em três secções: Mizzenmast abaixa — topmast de Mizzen — mastro de vela de ojoante de Mizzen. Os criadores de mastro de metal selam informaram-me aquele tinha sido tido foi feito de um abeto bom de Zaragoza próximo. A madeira redonda enorme marulhava suavemente contra a margem. Achei um pedaço de guarnecer e o anexou à articulação de ferro de colar. Andei ao longo da margem puxando a corda. Usei o aumento da água para ajudar me. O torrão enorme de madeira escorregou pela água atrás de mim. Era difícil, mas a água quente de turquesa fazia a maioria do trabalho. Podia ver outras pessoas arrastando pedaços de madeira ao longo da margem de areia. Pareceu-se trabalho duro. Eu então notei-os copiando-me.

Imagine a cena. Um grupo das pessoas ficou por toda a volta na praia. Tenho três conversas diferentes.

Converso a alguém eu só já encontro nas reuniões semanais de tripulação. Trabalham em galés de navios como um cozinheiro. Conversamos sobre madeira e articulações de madeira. São interessados em desenvolver suas habilidades de marcenaria. Gozo a conversa. Estimo por suas respostas que eles fazem também.


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Uma manhã que o subaltern Adoracion Buena aproxima-se-me. Conta-me ela é interessada em o que eu tenho que dizer e o que eu talvez tenha que oferecer. Continua contando-me que seu conhecimento de marcenaria é limitado. Passeamos ao longo da margem. A areia faz cócegas os meus dedos. Nós ambos têm crianças. Uma conexão. Compartilhamos histórias. O conteúdo de histórias conta-me sobre as pessoas. Como conversamos aproximadamente outras pessoas? Como incorporam suas ideias, suas opiniões, e suas preocupações em suas narrativas? Como criamos ou desenvolvemos construimos nossas identidades? Como percebemos outros? Trazer todas as experiências diferentes que nós temos que a um único momento quando podemos ou não pode ligar com outro. O que é minha o que é o seu, o que é compartilhado, ligar, desconectar e o que nos tira a conexões. Concordamos que alguns marceneiros são úteis e alguns marceneiros são inúteis. Quem toma estas decisões é uma pergunta que nós ambos querem pensar sobre.

Havia muitas investigações do grupo sobre como faço tipos de articulações diferentes. Como você faz uma bagana, um dado, talvez um encaixe ou combina? 'Jose por favor ajuda que nos fazer um cadavérico e espiga'

O que perde destas petições é onde estas articulações serão usadas. Como adaptam-se com a estrutura? Como marceneiros que nós fazemos articulações diferentes para razões diferentes. Um cadavérico e espiga por exemplo é boa para fazer portas pesadas e portões, ao passo que uma articulação de volta é útil para armações leves, que será coberto com despedir. Não trabalharia se usássemos a mesma articulação todo o tempo. Penso que as pessoas são surpreendidas quando conto-os sobre os tipos de articulações diferentes que podem ser montados e porque.


Para muitas semanas eu torno-me preocupo-me com o conteúdo das letras. Fui preocupado seria reduzido ao posto de colega de navio Júnior e eventualmente demobbed (descarregar uma pessoa das forças armadas; desmobiliza). Achei-o difícil de concentrar em algo mais. Tive um sentido constante de fragilidade. Todo que eu podia pensar sobre proteger me; de o que, era inseguro. Eu regularmente andei a margem só chorando. O fluxo a minha vida tinha ido.
Várias semanas passaram. Uma pequena aldeia que funciona toma forma. Temos água fresca de corrida. Alguns de nós têm estado tentando nova fruta e algumas raras verduras que olham. Foi interessante observar quem entre nós foi preparado experimentar e esses que contaram com hábitos velhos tradicionais e confortáveis. De repente o búzio soa.

Paramos o que nós fazemos e dirigimos-nos à praia principal; nosso ponto de encontro. Somos contados que um navio foi com vista. Encabeça em direcção de nós. A bandeira é espanhola. Um navio amigável o Villaricos La Balsa. Vários dias mais tarde as gotas de navio asseguram uma milha fora margem.

Um barco pequeno de remo com seis homens em tábuas é abaixado suavemente no oceano. Trazem notícia que desenvolve. Foi concordado em Madri que devemos permanecer, desenvolver a aldeia e faz esta nossa nova casa.

Um da tripulação de, Villaricos La Balsa, um confidente meu contou-me que as pessoas que tinham-se queixado sobre meus colegas ensinando estilos têm todo foi retirado de suas posições respectivas. Se o confidente não tinha-me contado iria eu já descobri? Enquanto sou agradado sobre este desenvolvimento o 'sentimentos frágeis permanecem o mesmo para muitas muitas semanas; eu ainda sou deixado com um sentimento incomfortável de 'o que mais acontece isso envolver me que não sei sobre'?

Começo a convidar as pessoas para vir e observar me faz algumas articulações. Eu então observo as pessoas fazendo articulações. Algumas pessoas parecem entusiasmadas por continuar e alguns afastam-se. Dou tempo às pessoas que querem permanecer.


Há vinte outras pessoas. A minha surpresa que as outras pessoas vêm de disciplinas diferentes; pintores, criadores de vela, cozinheiros e um comissário médico. Começamos o dia introduzindo-nos. Em reflexão isto era uma maneira eficaz de descobrir se vistas de mundo. Siento-me entendido. As pessoas parecem muito ser interessadas em audição o que nós temos que dizer. Uma experiência que valida maravilhosamente.

Que eu noto que cada vez eu retorno à aldeia que meus colegas são interessados em o que eu tenho estado estudando em faculdade. Pergunto o capitão Adoracion Buena se posso usar as
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reuniões mensais de equipa para contar as pessoas o que eu tenho estado descobrindo em faculdade.

Concordam: 'Soa como um Jose bom de ideia'.

Aproveito cada oportunidade que eu posso discutir trabalho universitário com as pessoas. É bom eu ouvir conversando sobre novas ideias. Ajuda-me entender o que eu aprendo. Gozo pôr me numa posição onde eu não sei o que eu serei perguntado. Mantem-me nos meus dedos.


Sou sentado em minha cabana. Olho por minhas notas universitárias. Sou agradado com meu progresso. Sou envolvido em algo que eu pensei só acontecido a essas pessoas brilhantes do outro lado de povoado; os filhos do comerciante ou as crianças do gerente de banco. Esculpia para fora um novo molde para a minha família. Siento-me-o em controlo de meu destino. Tive feltro pegou na armadilha por outros as direcções das pessoas e deseja que eu sou convidado tornar-me um instructor no Marceneiro e escola de carpintaria. Um de minhas novas responsabilidades junto com três outros Mestres existentes é entrevistar as pessoas para novo curso. Depois de várias semanas de entrevistar intenso, um grupo das pessoas é escolhido para o próximo bando. Nós também consideramos as pessoas para uma lista de reserva. Isto está em caso nossos candidatos preferidos não podem dedicar-se a seus lugares.

O Capitão do São Salvador, Abelardo Armand está infeliz com alguns de nossas decisões. Quer que vamos pela entrevista marcando folhas outra vez e revisão o que nós decidimos nos dias das entrevistas.

Esta petição confundi e me irritou-se. Minhas impressões pertenceram no momento eu tomava essas decisões. Fui irritado sobre isto. Porque eu fui irritado? Tinha gastado vários dias entrevistando com o Capitão. Gastamos algum pensamento de tempo sobre e conversando sobre histórias e narrativas e nós parecem vir ao mesmo acordo que situações foram construídas no tempo, decisões sendo situadas no tempo eles são situados. Então sou enfrentado com esta atitude rígida. Naturalmente a situação que eu agora estou sendo irritado por socialmente foi construída. Pergunto-me se somos socializados em maneiras diferentes de olhar o mundo por vários socializar culturas. Algumas culturas parecem ser mais dominantes e superior que outros. O que eu considerei ser um relacionamento em desenvolvimento com o Capitão, e os valores relacionais associados agora estão sendo dados atenção pequena.

Pensei sobre a petição de Capitães. As pessoas entrevistadas que sobre eu era inseguro eram candidatos que eu tive "feltro" infeliz sobre. Fui preocupado sobre suas habilidades interpessoais, sua humildade, e a maneira que eu "siento" com eles. Um podia dizer que fui guiado intelectualmente e emocionalmente. Talvez o capitão contava com seus valores "racionais". Antes que procurando uma resposta que eu convindo, abrindo diálogo. Não tento aniquilar a verdade nem a objetividade de Capitães e racionalidade que eu tento reconstituir as situações e a maneira que discursos dominantes e narrativas grandiosas foi praticado. Não é que penso que a autoridade de Capitães está desconfiada, sua vista e valores podem ter sido obscurecidos pelo próprios motivos de pessoa.
Nossa aldeia pequena lentamente cresce numa aldeia. Estivemos aqui muitos meses agora. Muitos navios têm estado chegando de nossa terra natal. Os telegramas foram recebidos de Madri; 'segura terra; Viva Espaná'. As hierarquias são desenvolvidas, diretores de projecto nomearam e nossos superiores de Marinheiro assumem as responsabilidades de liderança. Conflitos de organização previsíveis desenvolvem. Parece a mim que as linguagens diferentes entre as disciplinas diferentes separam as pessoas antes que fornecendo oportunidades para união.

Que é hora do almoço em faculdade. Ando ao longo da praia. Siento-me OK quando sozinho. Em nossos relacionamentos diários, podemos agir em maneiras diferentes mas é frequentemente a maneira que nossas acções são interpretadas que determina os resultados. A maneira que nós somos descritos ou é falada sobre constituir nossa reputação. Não possuímos esta representação. Se tomamos controlo de nossa identidade pública que nós podemos acabar apresentando erradamente a identidade que nós tentamos controlar. Por exemplo se tento e represento carpinteiros, eu então podia estar representando-os. Eu então inocentemente posso trair as pessoas; outros carpinteiros. Às vezes eu quero ser carpinteiro e às vezes eu não faço. Mas parece a mim que as pessoas frequentemente são definidas e então são mantidos por estas definições. Os diálogos oferecem um movimento diferente no entanto, uma construção social constante e oportunidades regulares re construir. Não há nenhum fixar de diálogos, como acredito que diálogos continuamente estar desenvolvendo-se em nossas culturas.

Melhor afaste-se para trabalhar.
Get a phone call from a good friend of mine. He is concerned about an email. He thinks he has sent me one but cannot remember. I had experienced some difficulties with my short-term memory in 2005. My friend wanted to know if his problem sounded similar. I said yes. But added, 'Was there anything else that was 'new' for him?' He told me that he often found himself in Brighton town not knowing how to get home. This was very different than my experiences. We agreed that a visit to his General Practitioner seemed the best thing to do. This is frightening news. I’m worried about him.

Go and visit my friend in hospital in Brighton. I used to work in the same hospital. The long corridors are unwelcoming and hostile. I tell my friend about a party I went to the previous evening. I have stopped drinking alcohol (about 6 months). Being with people who drink is unusual for me now. It’s good to see my mate. He is not surprisingly, perplexed by it all. I go off into Brighton and wander around aiming aimlessly.

Visit my friend at Hurstwood Park neurology unit. A brain biopsy had been taken. It was now a case of wait and see. I met his sister who I had not seen since 1983. We began talking about our lives. I reported how people wanting money or fags often stopped me in the street. I had that sort of face she said; a face that invited people to talk. About half an hour later, with no prompting from me at all, she tells me about embarrassing incident that had happened to her when she was at senior school, some 35 years earlier. She then tells me that I am the first person she has ever told this story to. My mate works for the Independent newspaper. He is listening to the BBC news on his radio. A professional. We share some jokes. We hold hands and both cry, together.

My friend has malignant brain lesions. It had been suggested that he receive a course of radiotherapy and accompanying Chemotherapy. I feel re-assured by this. I begin looking up different websites. Not entirely sure how helpful this is, but I need/want to do something.

I visit my friend in Brighton. His course of radiotherapy has now finished. He has put on a lot of weight and his memory remains poor. I feel optimistic however. Several friends who are journalists, like him, join him. There are several bottles of Cava on the table. We tell each other funny stories. His wife texts me later. It has been a v jolly evening. And it was good that u cd b here. I want to leave after a short while. I am at a loss as to what to say. I have to get back home and say my goodbyes. Some of the people have not seen my friend for a while. It saddens me to think that we sometimes don’t see each other enough, all of us.
Visit my friend. I notice a smell in the kitchen-a smell reminiscent of electricity. I kiss my mate on both cheeks of his face and he mine (we have done this for years). The smell is his skull. It must be the radiotherapy. He tells me that he has been here before, like Déjà vu. He has visited the future and has now returned. He tells me that all is well for both of us in the future. He becomes distressed. I offer what comfort I can. We sit and watch several episodes of Dr Who on the television. He tells me that distraction is helpful. It becomes clear to me that conversations with my friend are more fulfilling if they remain in the ‘here and now’. I notice how many conversations we all have begin with a reminder about a memory. ‘How have you been since we last met? Do you remember when we…….My buddy can’t do this now-although his long term memory remains intact. I am missing my ‘old’ friend.

I visit my friend. He has started a course of anti-depressants. He seems less agitated today. His short-term memory remains poor and his immediate re-call continues to worry him. My friend has always been a perfect host, ensuring that there is food and drink available. This hasn’t changed. He continues to regularly ask me if I would like any refreshment. He often starts making me tea and doesn’t complete the task. We laugh and cry together. Driving away my eyes well up with tears. I try and listen to music. This time it’s King Arthur by Purcell. Another time it could be Crowded House, my friend introduced me to Crowded House back in 1986. Bugger-bugger-bugger.

I visit my friend. We have made plans to go out for the day. He has forgotten that I was coming. We head out of Brighton and make our way to a farm shop in Henfield, West Sussex. We buy some fruit and vegetables. We then drive to Bognor Regis and buy some freshly cooked Fish and chips and eat them on the beach near the Pier. We drive home to Brighton via The Devils Dyke. I take my mate home. We have been out for about 6 hours. He sits in the kitchen and I put some things away in my car. I walk back in the kitchen and he says ‘hello Nige, good to see you-I didn’t know you were coming over today. He had forgotten our little journey already! Bugger

I am watching a football match. I text my friends partner. My friend is not eating. No appetite or he thinks he has eaten already. His partner and me share several texts. I feel impotent. Life at home must be wearying for all involved. It feels like bereavement.

My friend and his family have gone to Cornwall for a holiday. Its half term at his children’s schools.

I text my friends wife. ‘How did the holiday go? We had a lovely time. Hope you are well too.
20th May 2007

Visit my friend. He has lost most of his hair, his face is very round. His smile remains unmistakable. His wife is there, their two children and a friend of theirs I haven’t seen for ages. We chat, have tea and a bottle of Cava is opened. I am beginning to forget what my friend was like before October. I have to think. It’s very difficult trying to bring him into conversations. It’s all so bloody pathetic.

5th May 2007

Visit my friend. We have a conversation about United football club; this chat ends up with us talking about the velvet revolution in Prague. We laugh and share some cordial and all seems like it used to be. He then forgets what we have just spoken about and becomes distressed. It is awful watching him like this. We hug again and swear a lot.

17th May 2007

Text my friends wife. Any news? His tumour is growing. The Doctors are going to try another type of chemotherapy.

8.19 12/9/2007 (From my friends wife)

Actually Wyn has got heart failure. Sorry I could not tell you last night. He will be having tests on Friday. They have given him a diuretic. I don’t know what to do think. I am at work today and tomorrow. Love S xx

19.11 13/9/2007 (From S)

Wyn is in hospital they now think it might be a blood clot. I will let you know what happens xx

18.40 17/9/2007 (from S)

Wyn still in hospital and has had several episodes where his heart is really beating fast. They also think that his spine may have been injured by taking steroids and his legs are swollen

8.48 20/9/2007 (from S)

Hi Wyn is still in hospital bcos they haven’t sorted out his back pain his legs are swollen or his heart stuff. He will probably still be in on sat so phaps we can speak b4hand. Beryl is here
Dialogues about Wyn Appendix two

21.40 23/9/2007 (from my sister who works in the hospice)

Hi again win is due to come in tomorrow x

16.59 26/9/2007 (from S)

Still much the same. Wyn still in hospital but his legs are better. His back is still v painful and he is confused and they are supposed 2 b doing the spinal scan tomorrow xx

22.07 30/9/2007 (from Sue)

Wyn is going to martletts tomorrow. They will be better placed to regulate his pain and then decisions can be made about him coming home and so on xx

7.18 2.10.2007 (from my sister Melly)

Hi me again I think you need to come and see win sooner rather than later he was calling your name last night its open visiting xx

1/10/07 Phone call

Speak with S. Wyn is in the hospice. He is ‘poorly’ according to the medic there. Why would they say that when he has been seen by many medics at the County. Does this say something about hospice care and if it is better why?

2/10/07

Get a text from My @ 7.18. Wyn has been calling my name. She suggests that I come over sooner rather than later. I contact the hospice and speak with Melly. She said he is very poorly. They are sedating him, as he is so agitated when awake. Because he is so large they need to give him a lot of medication. I ring S and I will visit later today. I need to cancel my appointments at work.

2nd October 2007

I go into work and cancel my appointments and make my way over to the hospice. I drop in to the church at Berwick. Wyn and I visited here with Sue. I buy some post cards. I think he might like one. I then go to the hospice and meet up with J M, a woman called J and D. J had been sleeping there overnight. The nurse is attending to Wyn and I sit and wait. As a group we all move outside and this becomes the place where we spend the next few hours. The weather is warm and the garden is beautiful. Wyn is asleep and remains this way till his death. I don't get to hear his voice again. His breathing is purposeful and he is Cheyne Stoking. I hold his hand and I can feel that his is peripherally shutting down; his skin is cold to the touch. Wyn’s sister Beryl arrives and looks very tired. More and more people turn up as the day progresses. I meet S B; he works for one of the London papers. A nice bloke, I warm to him. He is wearing a pin stripe suit and some black Jodhpur boots. I then notice that many of the journos are wearing the same footwear. Did Wyn have a pair of jodhpurs? S G turns up. I
Dialogues about Wyn Appendix two

haven’t met S for ages. We catch up. The day is odd. We find ourselves keeping a vigil round Wyn’s bed. I leave about 11.00 and make my way to a friend’s place.

3rd October 2007

I cancel my attendance at the CBT governance group meeting. I buy some flowers for Wyn.

By 3.30 pm his life is taken. At last S weeps. I haven’t heard her do this publicly before. She has been remarkably stoic and I am so pleased that Wyn has had S by his side this last year.

N F, Wyn’s Lincolnshire mate, turns up. He is clearly very shocked when he comes out into the garden. I offer him a shoulder and we hug each other. He seems to be trying to ‘hold it together’. J has just flown in from Moscow. He has been interviewing someone who is apparently putting money into Arsenal footie club. I meet Wyn’s Mum, F and his older brother G. We speak about his son who is working in France at the moment. Richard, Wyn’s other brother turns up, he has just arrived from Germany. Jim Hatley and his girlfriend arrive as do KP, who I haven’t seen since the early 80’s and Lisa, who Jim used to date. Wyn is showing how he connects people.

We go to M’s place late afternoon. M and S B go and get some beer. S is drinking canned Boddingtons. We sit round the kitchen table. J, who also works for the Independent is there. We then move on to Wyn’s place. The kitchen is chocker. Several people came up to me at the end of the day and thank me for being around. They have found it comforting and refreshing that I was there. This arouses sadness in me and the eternal question arrives. Why would people want to like me? Perhaps I am likeable.

20.34 4/10/2007 (S B in response to me sending an email to him)

Nice one. Enjoyed meeting u 2. Cu in happier times. Maybe up north?

It might surprise people that I think this.

I often doubt this at work particularly. Perhaps I am OK. I drink a few bottles of Beck’s non alcoholic beer. It’s ok. Steve Burley keeps mentioning how good it has been to meet me. Oh dear. This reinforces the evocative question.

So how do I manage being ‘significant’ for some people and an absolute pain in the arse to others. Did my worries about getting the sack start around the time of the troubles at work? Did they start about the time that Alec was having some problems?

Early 2005. I noticed that I am regularly scared at work. I think they want to get rid of me. To sack me! I often have the thoughts about being ‘caught out’. Maybe I haven’t written my clinical notes properly. Sunday evenings are tainted by my worrying. I begin to regularly seek (unnecessary) reassurance from my colleagues and friends. I become quite skilled in asking for help without it sounding (I hoped) that it sounded like I was seeking help. The trust has dismissed several key people. I think that like me these people have stuck their heads above the parapet. Speaking their minds. I do this. Should I shut up? Have I opened my mouth too much?
Dialogues about Wyn Appendix two

I am often asked for my opinion at work. I offer my impressions and then sometimes worry about it. It is not that I am doubting my contribution. The concerns are about what people might think about my contributions.

20.34 4/10/2007 (Steve B in response to me sending an email to him)

Nice one. Enjoyed meeting u 2 Cu in happier times. Maybe scarboro

23.56 3/10/2007

We will keep in touch. I promise. Take care. M

8.57 4/10/2007 (From my sister M)

Good morning ru ok? B kind to yourself all the girls at work thought we were very alike xx

17.23 4/10/2007 (from Martyn)

Hi mate trying to do some work but its not exactly flowing. Feeling very low. S is a lovely bloke and his mobile is .......... talk soon Mx

11.18 7/10/2007 (from Martyn)

Hi mate if you should find yourself in Hove this afternoon wed love to see u for a bit of lunch. S and kids r coming and S too. No probs if u can't make it but were thinking of you. M

17.18 8/10/2007 (from Martyn)

Wyn funeral definitely next Monday. Friends meeting house Brighton prob noon followed by burial and wake. Exact details to follow. All welcome but cd u plse let me know if u will b there and pass these details on. Best M

10.25 9/10/2007 (from Martyn)

Piece on Wyn in Argus today. Great pic. M

17.01, 15/10/2007 (Text from Ruth, my daughter)

Hello Dad hope today went or is going ok? Well as much as it could xxx love you
Dialogues about Wyn Appendix two

Have been experiencing some very unusual dreams post Wyn’s death.

The following poem was read at Wyns burial by one of his brothers

When your parachute doesn’t open

If you pull the emergency ring in a panic,
And your parachute still doesn’t open above you
While far, far below you there’s nothing but

Forest

And it’s perfectly clear that nothing can save you.

And you’ve got nothing left any more to hold on to
And nothing to meet any more on your way
Simply spread out your arms, like a bird in

It’s soaring

And, hugging the void that’s in front of you, fly

Nowhere to go back to, no time to go crazy

And only one answer, for better or worse:
Be calm and composed for once in your lifetime,
And fall with your arms round the universe

E. Vinokurov (1979)

16/10/2007 12.23 (From M)

We did him proud. Nothing less than he deserved. Feeling drained today. Let’s get together soon. Lots of love from us all x
Wyngate-in memorium

Appendix three

Wyngate

I met Wyn in 1981. He moved into the house I was then living in on Queens Park Road, Brighton. With the help of John Jameson and occasionally John Powers, we regularly sorted the world out. This sorting out usually began in the Red Lion, then on to the Montreal Arms and finally the Walmer Castle. We then retired to the front room of number 13 where we would listen to some music, maybe Life without a cage by Adrian Belew or watch a Mike Leigh drama unfold on the box.

We all have our many stories about Wyn and I hope that none of mine are insensitive and inappropriate for this very sad day.

I have been thinking over the last few days ‘What was it I liked about Wyn? An unusual question perhaps. Why am I, like most of you I’m sure, experiencing waves of emotions? When I think about people who have and continue to have an impact on my life they are more likely to be people who have helped me to reflect and be reflexive. Even during the last terrible twelve months Wyn has managed to do this. I soon noticed that the most rewarding chats I had with Wyn over the last year were the ones that remained in the ‘here and now’. He helped me to be mindful; to try and live in the now. He got distressed when he couldn't remember things so why would I want conversations with him that relied on him remembering?

We have experiences of his ‘balanced’ take on life. Five a side football followed by a ‘gutbuster’ at the market café in the days before bouncers.

We have experiences of his diplomacy. John Humphries was interviewing John Reid on the Today radio programme. Reid had been wheeled on to defend Blair and it was obvious that Reid didn’t believe what he had been asked to support. Humphries picked up on this and had Reid up against the ropes. It was a great interview. I rang Wyn at the Independent and asked him if he had heard the interview and what he thought. He said ‘Considering he didn’t have a leg to stand on he stood up very well’

We have experiences of his generosity. The last time I spoke with him was at the Sussex County Hospital. He offered me some of his stew and boiled potatoes. He particularly recommended the gravy.

We have experiences of his unique form of wit. The landlord of my local weighs in at about thirty stone. Wyn and I were sat in the pub one evening and during a lull in the conversation Wyn asked me if I thought the landlord wore boxers or thongs?
Wyngate-in memiorium

Appendix three

About two and half years ago I was having trouble with my short term memory. I rang Wyn one morning at work to ask if he had received an email from me. I couldn’t remember whether I had sent it or not. He reassured me that it had arrived. I had some scans and psychological tests and all was Ok.

Last October Wyn rang me and asked me the same thing. Had I had received an email from him. I had. He was also having problems with his short term memory. He asked if this was similar to my experiences. I said yes. I then asked if there was anything else. He worryingly told me that he often found himself in Brighton not knowing how to get home. He knew where he lived but had lost the bit in the middle. I suggested he get off to his GP straight away. Four days later, on a Friday evening, Sue rang me and told me the dreaded news. How our lives have panned out with such different consequences.

I’m going to end now with a thought. In cognitive psychotherapy, which I try and practice, there is a suggestion; a suggestion that we have two ways of acquiring knowledge. One is called propositional knowledge and one is called implicational knowledge. Propositional knowledge is rational, scientific and logical. Implicational in contrast is acquired through creativity, feelings and emotional experiences. I have been experiencing a lot of Implicational experiences recently when I have been thinking about Wyn. Maybe the question ‘What was it that I liked about Wyn? is the wrong question. A better question is ‘How do I feel about knowing him?’ I can answer that one.

I wonder if it would be ok and appropriate to show our appreciation with a round of applause.
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