



ALWAYS DOUBT YOURSELF

Using auto-ethnography to critically examine cultural, power, and communication issues in evaluation and research.

Dr. Sara Lystlund Hemi



CONTENTS

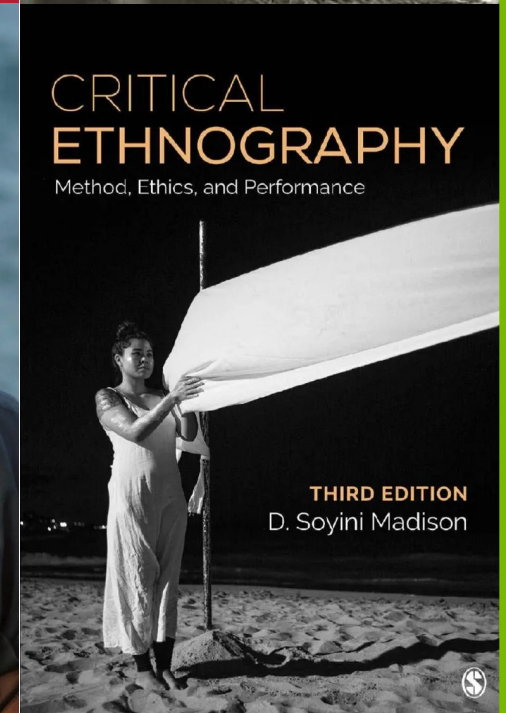
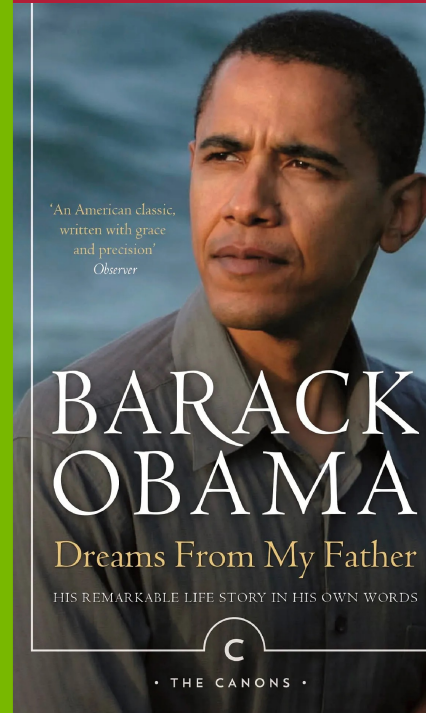
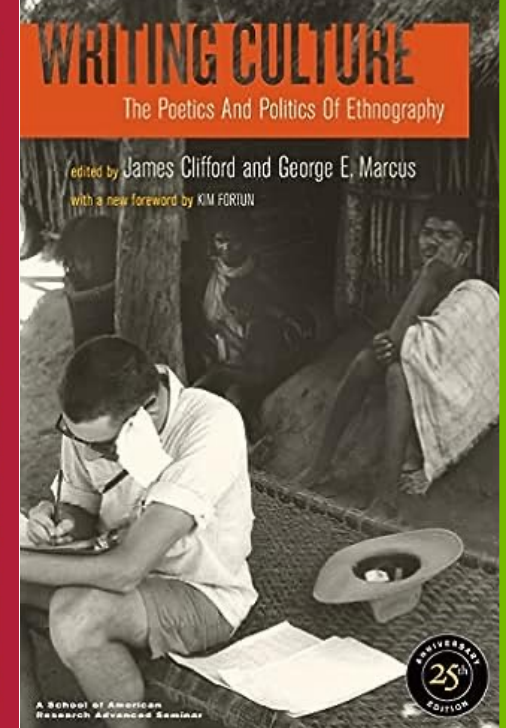
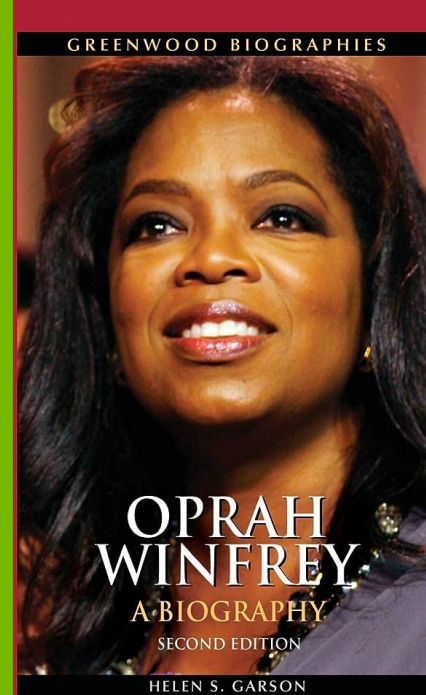
- 1 What is Auto-ethnography?
- 2 Introduction to Critical Auto-ethnography
- 3 An example how to apply critical auto-ethnography
- 4 Relevance to evaluation
- 5 Benefits of the method
- 6 Relevant literature

AUTO-ETHNOGRAPHY (AE)

Auto (personal)

...ethno (cultural)

...graphy (describe and analyse)



CRITICAL AUTO-ETHNOGRAPHY

Critical auto-ethnographers use critiques of personal experience against existing research and other experiences to bring to light aspects of cultural life (Ellis et al., 2010; Ellis et al., 2011).

Three main objectives:

- to understand the lived experiences of real people in context
- to examine social conditions and uncover oppressive power arrangements.
- to fuse theory and practice to challenge processes of domination.

Boylorn and Orbe (2014).



A PRACTICAL EXAMPLE OF HOW AE CAN BE APPLIED

Wasn't just a method it became a different approach to research and data collection.

- Wrote my thesis from a first-person perspective
- Collected fieldnotes, diary notes, images, poems and other memorial artefacts (like social media posts and videos).
- Crafted personal vignettes and stories
- Analysed and coded personal data alongside other data sources.
- Use the AE data in combination with other data sets (interviews and participant observations) and literature.

8 Which ethnic group do you belong to?
Mark the space or spaces which apply to you.

- New Zealand European
- Māori
- Samoan
- Cook Islands Maori
- Tongan
- Niuean
- Chinese
- Indian
- other, eg DUTCH, JAPANESE, TOKELAUAN. Please state:



HOW IS THIS METHOD RELEVANT IN AN EVALUATION?



There is a responsibility on the part of the researcher to the culture being studied because the perspective the researcher takes impacts the knowledge produced about the cultural group that is studied”

(Geertz, 1973).



BENEFITS OF AUTO-ETHNOGRAPHY TO EVALUATION

**Critical reflections about
roles and responsibilities**

**Critical assessment of
values and assumptions**

**Adapting to a subjective
and
relational outlook**

**Critical reflections about
roles and responsibilities**



**Critical assessment of
values and assumptions**



**Adapting to a subjective
and
relational outlook**



BENEFITS OF AUTO-ETHNOGRAPHY TO EVALUATION

Critical reflections about roles and responsibilities

- 1) Do you have the right cultural expertise and knowledge on the team?
- 2) Who can the team represent and work with in culturally safe and appropriate ways?
- 3) Who needs to be in positions of leadership?

Critical assessment of values and assumptions

- 1) Open up the discussion assumptions and values beyond the intervention.
- 2) Address the cultural context of these concepts.
- 3) Bring in multiple perspectives to determine what good looks like.

A subjective and relational outlook

- 1) Embrace your subjectivity (cultural backpack) and learn to understand the ways it impacts your work.
- 2) Learn to use your critical reflections about yourself and others to change the way you work with other cultures.

**QUESTIONS –
THOUGHTS -
COMMENTS?**





Interesting references

Boylorn, R. M., & Orbe, M. P. (2014). *Critical Autoethnography: Intersecting Cultural Identities in Everyday Life*. Left Coast Press.

Ellis, C., Adams, T. E., & Bochner, A. P. (2011). Autoethnography: An Overview. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 12(1), Article 1. <https://doi.org/10.17169/fgs-12.1.1589>

Fabish, R. (2014). *Black Rainbow: Stories of Māori and Pākehā working across difference*. <http://researcharchive.vuw.ac.nz/handle/10063/4166>

Houston, J. (2007). Indigenous Autoethnography: Formulating Our Knowledge, Our Way. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*, 36(S1), 45–50. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1326011100004695>

Wilson, J. Z., Chihota, C., & Marks, G. (2021). Teaching white privilege: An auto-ethnographic approach. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 0(0), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2021.1909154>



Dr. Sara Lystlund Hemi

Research consultant

Ph. +64 21 271 3748

shansen@allenandclarke.co.nz

