PERFORMANCE, DOCUMENTARY AND EMBODIED QUALITATIVE INQUIRY

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THE SHIFT TO INTERPRETIVE INQUIRY

- FROM THE HERMENEUTIC TRADITION
  - CONCENTRATING ON HISTORICAL MEANING OF EXPERIENCE AND ITS DEVELOPMENTAL AND CUMULATIVE EFFECTS AT BOTH THE INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIAL LEVELS (POLKINGHORNE, 1983, P. 203)

- PARTICIPATORY: A CO-CREATION BETWEEN RESEARCHER AND PARTICIPANTS

- AWARE OF POWER RELATIONS AND THE MEANING THAT COMES WITH INTERPRETATION

- (VERY SIGNIFICANT GIVEN OUR HISTORY OUT OF “POSITIVISM” WHICH BELIEVED THE RESEARCHER WAS OUT TO DISCOVER A SINGLE REALITY.)
WHY WE STAGE DATA

• PERFORMANCE AND ARTISTIC RESEARCH ALLOWS FOR THE EXCHANGE OF KNOWLEDGE ACROSS BODIES. IT IS DIFFICULT TO DENY A REALITY WHEN IT IS LIVING IN FRONT OF US (JONI JONES, 2006)

• THE PURSUIT OF THE UTOPIAN PERFORMATIVE: THAT AUDIENCES CAN GLIMPSE A WORLD BETTER THAN THE ONE THEY ARE IN (JILL DOLAN)
THE PARADIGMS WE STUDY FROM

- **DISCOURSE OF REPRESENTATION**: THERE IS A CAPITAL T TRUTH OUT THERE TO UNCOVER… OR IF THERE IS NOT, WE CAN GUIDE OURSELVES TO AN (ALMOST UNIVERSAL) FINDING
- **DISCOURSE OF UNDERSTANDING**: TRUTH IS RELATIVE AND PERSONAL, BUT WE CAN DEEPLY UNDERSTAND LIVED EXPERIENCE
- **DISCOURSE OF SUSPICION**: THERE ARE POWER STRUCTURES OUT THERE AND PEOPLE WITH POWER ARE TAKING ADVANTAGE OF OTHER PEOPLE
- **DISCOURSE OF VULNERABILITY**: HUMANS ARE FOREVER NEGOTIATING AND DISRUPTING MEANING, CULTURE, AND IDENTITY THROUGH THEIR ONGOING INTERACTION IN DAILY LIFE

(MUMBY, 1998)
THE SHIFT TO AESTHETIC REPRESENTATION OF DATA

- Ethnography & Narrative Analysis
  - Emerges from anthropology – we can observe a culture from a distance and submit a detached, intellectual analysis
- Discourses of representation and understanding
  - Critical ethnography, autoethnography & personal narrative performance
  - Emerges from phenomenological tenants grounded in communication studies and informed by phenomenology.
  - Discourses of understanding, shifting to suspicion and vulnerability
EXISTENTIAL PHENOMENOLOGY

- Focuses on the body’s lived knowledge grounded in the blood, bones, and organs interaction with the world. We are forever interpreting and making meaning.

(MERLEAU-PONTY)
ATTENDING TO THE STORY

- VISCERAL: WE FEEL STORIES IN OUR GUTS
- COLLABORATIVE: LIVING AND TELLING STORIES IS WORK
- SUSCEPTIBLE: OPEN TO CHANGE (BE OPEN TO RE-UNDERSTAND)

(Scott, 2018)
MAKING THE STORY

HAVE PEOPLE DEPICTED AS CHARACTERS
HAVE SOME SORT OF TENSION THAT POINTS THE STORY
TEMPORAL MOVING OF EVENTS
A POINT OR MORAL TO THE STORY

(ELLIS, 2004, P. 32)
AUTOETHNOGRAPHY
WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF AUTOETHNOGRAPHY?

SITUATE YOURSELF IN YOUR RESEARCH:
WHAT LENS DO YOU BRING TO THE PROJECT?
WHY DOES THIS MATTER TO YOU?
HOW ARE YOU INTERPRETING IT?

UNDERSTAND YOURSELF:
STORIES ARE HOW WE MAKE SENSE OF OUR WORLD

UNDERSTAND CULTURE:
UNDERSTAND WHO YOU ARE AND ARE NOT BASED ON THE STORIES YOU TELL AND THE ROLES OF OTHERS (BOTH WHO IS THERE AND WHO IS NOT)

HAVE OTHERS UNDERSTAND THEMSELVES AND OTHERS THROUGH YOUR STORY:
EMPATHY AND PHENOMENOLOGICAL EXPERIENCE.
YOUR STORY CAN CHANGE HOW OTHERS SEE YOU, OTHERS, AND THEMSELVES.
WHY AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

• BY DEFINITION:
AUTO = SELF
ETHNO = HUMAN BEINGS/CULTURE
GRAPHY = FIELD OF STUDY

SO
THE STUDY OF ONE’S OWN HUMANITY

THE AUTOETHNOGRAPHER GAZES BACK AND FORTH AT THEMSELVES AND AT CULTURE – SEEING THE STRUGGLE TO CREATE AND RESIST MEANING WITH OTHERS
DIFFERENT KINDS OF AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

• **PERSONAL AUTOETHNOGRAPHY:** YOUR PERSONAL STORY AS IT RELATES TO A CULTURAL PHENOMENON

• **NARRATIVE AUTOETHNOGRAPHY:** ADDING YOURSELF AS AN IMPORTANT AND CENTRAL CHARACTER IN AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY

• **REFLEXIVE AUTOETHNOGRAPHY:** TALKING ABOUT HOW YOU CHANGED (YOUR JOURNEY THROUGH THE PROJECT) THROUGH DOING YOUR RESEARCH

• **NOTE:** SOMETIMES IN META-AUTOETHNOGRAPHY A RESEARCHER RETURNS TO HIS OR HER OWN STORY AND ENACTS A REFLEXIVE AUTOETHNOGRAPHY. THIS WOULD COME AFTER THE INITIAL PERSONAL AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC ESSAY.
PERFORMING PERSONAL NARRATIVE RESEARCH

EMBODYING RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS ON STAGE OR IN FILM
BEING IN RELATIONSHIP WITH ANOTHER

• PARTICIPATORY: A CO-CREATION BETWEEN RESEARCHER AND PARTICIPANTS
• AWARE OF POWER RELATIONS AND THE MEANING THAT COMES WITH INTERPRETATION
• (VERY SIGNIFICANT GIVEN OUR HISTORY OUT OF “POSITIVISM” WHICH BELIEVED THE RESEARCHER WAS OUT TO DISCOVER A SINGLE REALITY.)
Essentially struggling through what is right and what is wrong.

“As critical ethnographers, we are compelled to act morally; in other words, we feel the responsibility to ‘make a difference in the world – to contribute to the quality of life and enliven the possibilities for those we study’ (Madison, 2006, p. 83).

A conscious avoidance of exploitation
AVOIDING THE TRAPS

• SKEPTICS COP OUT: WE CAN’T KNOW THE OTHER, SO I WILL NOT BOTHER TRYING
• CUSTODIAN’S RIP OFF: I JUST WANT TO CREATE A PROJECT FOR PERSONAL GAIN
• ENTHUSIAST’S INFATUATION: I’M ENAMORED. REALLY, WE’RE JUST ALL ALIKE
• CURATOR’S EXHIBITION: DESIRE TO SHOCK RATHER THAN EMPATHIZE.

(CONQUERGOOD, 1985)
REMEMBERING POWER AND PRIVILEGE

• EMBODYING STORIES FROM MARGINALIZED GROUPS IS COMPLICATED
  • TAKES RIGOR AND CARE
  • SOMETIMES IT JUST NEEDS TO BE AVOIDED

• CRIPPING

• MEMORIES THAT MATTER

• SEIZING
DOCUMENTARY

• BEING PARTICIPATORY (NOT EXPLOITIVE)
• ALLOW THE STORY TO EMERGE – DON’T FORCE WITH EDITING
• HONOR DESIRE FOR CONFIDENTIALITY
• GIVE COMPENSATION/SHARE SUCCESS
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