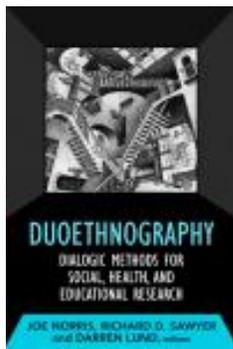


Professional Book Review

Norris, J., Sawyer, R., & Lund, D. (2012). *Duoethnography: Dialogic Methods for Social, Health, and Educational Research*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press. 326 pp., ISBN: 978-1-59874-684-6 (pbk). \$34.95

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It is an exciting time for those of us engaged in qualitative research. A quick glance at conference programs and social science journals confirms the vitality of the field. Poetry and theatre as method and representation (Cahnmann-Taylor & Souto-Manning, 2010), portraiture, and autoethnography (Chang, 2008; Vasconcelos, 2011): these are just a few of the creative and intellectual endeavors poking and prodding at the boundaries of qualitative research. Norris, Sawyer, and Lund contribute to this trend with their edited text on duoethnography, which is the latest book in the Developing Qualitative Inquiry series from Left Coast Press. The book follows a typical structure of most edited volumes on methodology, with introductory and concluding chapters by the editors that first frame, and then interpret, the 11 duoethnographies that comprise the bulk of the text.

In the opening pages the authors define duoethnography as a “collaborative research methodology in which two or more researchers juxtapose their life histories to provide multiple understandings of the world” (p. 9). They distinguish the approach from autoethnography, emphasizing that while duoethnographers examine their own life histories, the focus is ultimately not on the self. Rather, duoethnographers are the *sites* of the studies, not the *topics*. Taking a narrative approach, duoethnographers tell stories of their own experiences in relation to the topic at hand—beauty, identity, schooling, to name a few covered by the authors in this text. In the introductory chapter, Norris and Sawyer flesh out the core tenets of duoethnography, outlining the centrality of concepts like *currere*, *heteroglossia*, and *conscientization* from Pinar (1975), Bakhtin (1981), and Freire (1970) respectively. By doing so, they establish for the readers a sense of the theoretical origins for duoethnography and clearly locate it as an approach that seeks to be dialogic and transformative for writers and readers alike.

Of critical importance in the process and practice of duoethnography is the deliberate juxtaposition of the researchers’ voices. While two of the duoethnographies in this volume do incorporate a third voice to present a combined perspective (Ch. 7 on patriotism and music and Ch. 12 on dangerous

conversations), duoethnographies intentionally create space for each perspective to stand alone, whether in tension, conflict, or consensus with the others. As the duoethnographers interrogate past experiences on topics like beauty (Ch. 10) and immigrant identity in multicultural nations (Ch. 8), they recapitulate these experiences *with* and *in* the presence of others (their co-researchers and us, the readers) who are different from themselves. Some of the differences between duoethnographers in this volume include race, national origin, gender, and sexual orientation. Duoethnography asserts that juxtaposing such differences “aids in keeping the text open” (p. 18) and invites readers into the dialogue. Further, I believe this explicit focus on differences between the duoethnographers encourages the dialogic process that seeks unimagined possibilities in lieu of consensus.

The duoethnographies themselves address a range of topics that would be of interest to scholars across the social sciences. For example, Chapters 2, 3, and 5 address educational issues like the hidden curriculum, postcolonial education, and gender identity in teaching. Sitter and Hall, in Chapter 11, wrestle with the notion of boundaries. Through their evolving dialogue with one another, their understanding of boundaries shifts from something static and fixed to a more fluid and relational entity connected to specific spaces, times, and contexts. In Chapter 4, Norris and Greenlaw explore their experiences of becoming writers and the inspirations that motivate them to continue writing. Their dialogue highlights how duoethnography makes use of cultural artifacts, as the authors call on memories, photographs, and news clippings to juxtapose the ways travel and other experiences frame their craft as writers. Here it is critical to reiterate the polyvocal and dialogic underpinnings of duoethnography. These constructs command much more than the presence of multiple voices or conversational give-and-take between the authors. The framing of duoethnography as dialogic suggests an explicit attention to the possibility of reconceptualization and transformation. Further, each partner in the process assumes the responsibility for “assisting the Other in the making of meaning and [being] receptive to the Other in reconceptualizing their own meanings” (p. 22). This is an active and engaged dialogue characterized by commitment and responsibility among the duoethnographers. Such an arrangement facilitates the development of trust and disclosure in the research process.

While it is beyond the scope of this review to discuss the content of each of the duoethnographies, I do want to highlight one in particular. In Chapter 5, Breault, Hackler, and Bradley explore the issue of male gender construction in elementary schools. This chapter resonated with me partly because of my interests in public schools, but more so because of the transparency the authors provide regarding their methodological process. The content of their chapter deals largely with the methodological process; however, the addition of a hypertext site (<http://breaultresearch.info/trio-ethnography.html>) affords readers a unique window into the relationship between the content of their study and the actual processes that unfolded over time. This site provides contextual background information, complete transcripts of the authors' discussions, and

hyperlinks to numerous supporting documents. For example, embedded in the transcripts are links to each author's reflective essays. Additionally, the authors provide links to several excursus, or syntheses of "other research or scholarly thought that that speaks to a particular area of interest in the conversation" (p. 127). These elements help to expose and clarify the authors' thinking throughout the process, adding a level of trustworthiness and transparency that we rarely see in published research.

One of the strengths of this book is its accessibility and the engaging nature of the writing, thus highlighting the methodology's roots in narrative research. While I believe the book best fits a graduate qualitative methodology seminar, the stories here make good reading for anyone interested in the possibilities that engaged and critical collaboration has to offer to the human condition. Reading, writing, and telling stories appeals to everyone. It is likely that these stories/this methodology will encourage others to engage and tell their own stories. In this way, the dialogue continues.

Finally, just as Given laments her missed opportunity to employ duoethnography in crafting the forward to the book, I too acknowledge the limitations of my own review. While I clearly bring my own life curriculum to bear in the process of reflecting on the text and writing the review, it is nonetheless monologic. I am, however, hopeful that this review will intrigue and encourage others to delve into this text, to take in the stories, and to engage in the dialogues already in process. As an educator and educational researcher who seeks to engage in teaching, learning, and conducting research dialogically, I have gained significant insights from this text and expect them to strengthen my own work. I believe many others will agree.

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