

Digital Autoethnography: A Proposal for Maintaining Methodological Relevance in social sciences

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ABSTRACT

Autoethnography is a research method that uses personal experience (auto) to describe and interpret cultural texts, experiences, beliefs, practices and social phenomenon in groups (“ethno”). Autoethnographers believe that personal experience is infused with political/cultural norms and expectations, and they engage in rigorous self-reflection to identify and interrogate the intersections between the self and social life. Autoethnographer like Bochner and Ellis confirm that Autoethnography aim to show “people in the process of figuring out what to do, how to live, and the meaning of their struggles” (Bochner & Ellis, 2006, p. 111).

Autoethnography has become legitimized through its ability to connect culture to personal experiences. This legitimization has occurred alongside a titanic shift in communication made possible by digital technology, which has rapidly transformed, multiplied, and mediated the ways through which users engage. This connection that we are living today with information technology (IT) has given us “Digital AutoEthnography”, a method that relies on personal experience(s) to foreground how meaning is made among people occupying and connected to digital spaces.

Digital Autoethnography is distinguishable from traditional Autoethnography because the cultures analyzed are digital, this cultures situated within and concerned about digital spaces and the lived experiences, interactions, and meaning-making within these virtual contexts. This trend pushes us to consider and reflect upon the ways we have changed over time with the influx of digital technology, and provides a framework to keep Autoethnography to understanding the increasing personal experiences in virtual spaces and digital connectivity that becomes increasingly enmeshed in our everyday lives.

This essay will offer a brief history of Autoethnography, particularly within the communication discipline, we then describe key characteristics of Digital Autoethnography and identify the purposes of doing Autoethnographic research. Finally, we will try to determine the conditions that researchers depend in this type of qualitative studies.

Keywords: Autoethnography; Digital Autoethnography; virtual contexts; Autoethnographic research; qualitative studies