



BRITISH
SOCIOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

**BSA Auto/Biography
Study Group
Centre for Biography
and Education
University of
Southampton**

**BSA Auto/Biography Day Conference
Friends House, Euston Road
173-177 Euston Road, London
16th December 2016**

Auto/Biographical Methodologies



Dear Friend,

Welcome to the one day Auto/Biography Christmas Conference Programme. I think you will agree that we have a programme that looks exciting, varied and interesting. Thanks to all of you for your support and assistance in putting the programme together.

Very best wishes,

Michael

Forthcoming Attractions

2017 Summer Conference will be held at Dartington Hall, Devon
19th -21st July (Topic: *Gender*)

Delegate information

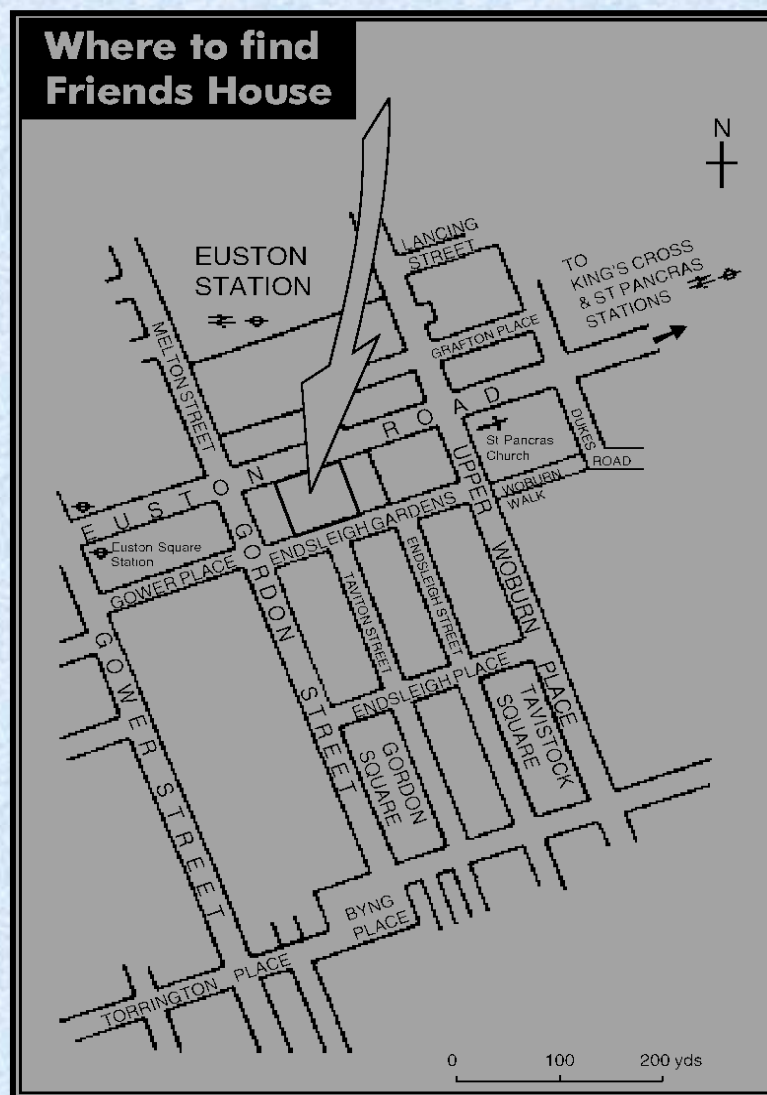
Directions to Friends House Religious Society of Friends, 173 Euston Road, London,
NW1 2BJ

Telephone: 02076631000

Friends House is on the south side of Euston Road directly opposite Euston station (BR main line, Victoria and Northern underground lines). It is ten minute walk from King's Cross and St. Pancras main line and underground stations, and five minutes from Euston Square underground station. Buses 10, 18, 30, 73 and 205 pass the door; 59, 68, 91, 168, and 253 stop nearby.

Where to park

Friends House is within a meter parking zone. Charges must be paid Monday to Friday 0830 – 1830, Saturday 0900 – 1630. There are alternative parking facilities under Euston Station



IT facilities and notes for audio-visual presentations

Each presentation room has full IT facilities for PowerPoint and access to the internet.

Auto/Biographical Methodologies Programme

9.00-9.25 Registration in the first floor lobby Tea, coffee & Danish pastries	
KEYNOTE 9.30.10.20 Marjorie Styles Room	
Andrew SPARKES Autoethnography in the Neoliberal Era: possibilities and perils. Chair: Jenny Byrne	
Conference papers 10.25 to 11.15	
Marjorie Styles Room	Hilda Clarke Room
Jeni NICHOLSON "How do you know how Gramsci felt?" – thinking about the methodology of writing a life. Chair: Anne Chappell	Yvonne ANDERSON What has evidence based practice done for research methodology? Chair: Mich Page
11.15 to 11.45 Tea, coffee & biscuits	
Conference papers 11.45 to 12.35	
Marjorie Styles Room	Hilda Clarke Room
Pablo Cortés GONZÁLEZ and Maria MARQUEZ GARCIA Ecologies of learning, visual narratives and ethnography. Methodological notes about <i>Universidad Rural Paulo Freire</i> case. Chair: Andrew Sparkes	Mich PAGE Methodology, letters and compassionate epistemology: the case of Rousseau's botanical letters. Chair: Jeni Nicholson
12.45 to 1.30 Lunch	
Conference Papers 1.30 to 2.20	
Marjorie Styles Room	Hilda Clarke Room
Judith CHAPMAN and Sarah COLLARD "I say tomato, You say tomato". Is Auto-ethnography Auto\biography by any other name? Chair: Terry Martin	Sara Louise WHEELER Pooling my semiotic resources: translanguaging as a facilitative methodological tool for autobiographical practice. Chair: Geeta Ludra
Conference Papers 2.25 to 3.15	
Marjorie Styles Room	Hilda Clarke Room
Nigel MATTHIAS Using the techniques of literary narrative analysis to enrich the use of biographical research methods. Chair: Jenny Byrne	Helen PLEASANCE and Ursula HURLEY But what does that mean in practice? Creative Methodologies in Auto/biographical Studies. Chair: Michael Erben
3.15 to 3.45 Tea, coffee & cake	
3.45 to 4.35	
Marjorie Styles Room	Hilda Clarke Room
Anne CHAPPELL and Geeta LUDRHA 'Messy' and entangled research: considerations for auto/biographical methodologies. Chair: Michael Erben	Jean-François JACQUES Autobiographical dialogue in performance: the production of meaning in dramatherapy. Chair: Gayle Letherby
4.40 to 5.25	
Marjorie Styles Room	
Gaby WEINER Academic Publishing Opportunities for Biography and Auto/Biography a talk by Gaby Weiner. Chair: Michael Erben	

Abstracts

Yvonne Anderson

What has Evidence Based Practice done for Research Methodology?

Set in the context of mental health, where values based practice is making an early tentative challenge to the Evidence Based Practice paradigm.

Anne Chappell and Geeta Ludrha

'Messy' and entangled research: considerations for auto/biographical methodologies

As we have previously explored, developing participant-centred auto/biographical methodologies in different research contexts is complex. In our respective research we have taken critically reflexive approaches and troubled ourselves with a range of considerations which have been considered 'messy'. However, as a result of working through the 'mess' we have become more confident researchers and our approaches have enriched the quality of our work. The outcomes of our discussions about our experiences are presented in this paper as examples of 'entanglements' in the research process and we will argue the ways in which these enhance auto/biographical methodologies.

Judith Chapman and Sarah Collard

"I say tomato, You say tomato". Is Autoethnography Auto\Biography by any other name?

This paper provides the basis of a debate between the established field of Auto\Biography and the emerging genre of Autoethnography.

Judith originally undertook research using a medically orientated, quantitative methodological framework. Through ancestral biographical explorations she discovered the use of the Auto\Biographical approach that has enabled her to scrutinise her personal experience of undergoing knee surgery. This narrative was generated to explore and emphasise the personalised and compassionate care offered by Physiotherapists in a protocol driven, ward environment. Sarah describes her journey into the field of Autoethnography which enabled her to explore her identity as an aspiring Olympian runner following the diagnosis and ongoing effects of Epilepsy. This personal study made her more aware of the ability of this approach in facilitating a path to acceptance of her diagnosis and enabling others to see themselves within her story. This led her to undertake her PhD exploring the psychosocial impact of exercising for other sportspeople with epilepsy.

These stories will be underpinned by acquired theory regarding the two genres and the methodological approaches used for each resultant study.

The floor will subsequently be opened to the audience to debate the similarities and differences between the two genres.

Pablo Cortés-González and María Jesús Márquez-García

Ecologies of learning, visual narratives and ethnography. Methodological notes about Universidad Rural Paulo Freire case.

In this paper we present some of the first methodological results of the R&D Project called "Ecologies of learning in multiple contexts: analysis of expanded education projects and citizenship configurations" funded by Minister of Economy and Competitiveness (Spain).

The interest of this project arises after considering that much of the individual and organizational learnings have been turning invisible in different educational spaces. Therefore, our purpose is to study the different socio-educational mechanisms that individuals and organizations put into play in different scenarios: schools, associations, virtual academic contexts, etc.

On this occasion, we present some of the methodological aspects from a rural environment, specifically the study we are developing with 'Universidad Rural Paulo Freire' of the Ronda mountain range (onwards URPF). This organization is focused in the recovery of traditional learnings that people used to have around the rural world. At the same time, they are settled in a critical perspective that connects their actions with the approaches of sustainability, dignity, feminism etc. The general objectives we consider for this project are the following:

- To know life style of people in Ronda mountain range context.
- To understand the configuration of URPF group and its impact in the territory.
- To promote learning communities of practice with other organizations.

In order to draw on these general purposes and after an agreement process with the URPF collective, we designed a methodology to develop the use of life stories, visual narratives and a deep narrative ethnography.

Jean-Francois Jacques

'Autobiographical dialogue in performance'

This paper will present preliminary findings of a doctoral research currently undertaken at Anglia Ruskin University in Cambridge. This research investigates the way in which the production of meaning in autobiographical performance in dramatherapy can be described as emerging from a relational and embodied encounter between performer and viewer within the shared space of performance. It applies aspects of intersubjective theory, literary theory and audience research to the way meaning is constructed in the autobiographical space and the way in which the self is (re)presented.

The research explores the dialogic relationship between performer and audience whereby the *outsideness* of the other provides, according to the Russian philosopher and linguist Mikhail Bakhtin, an 'excess of seeing' and becomes as a result a condition for knowledge, understanding, and the creation of personal identity and meaning. The research explores the ways in which the encounter between self and other in the liminal space of performance creates, in the words of the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur, a 'surplus of meaning' that reflects a relational understanding of performance, self and identity.

The research adopts a methodological framework that combines arts-based inquiry (performance as research) and phenomenological relational research. The paper will provide illustrations of a particular method of cross-performance thematic analysis (split-screens) that was developed for the research. This method was designed to help investigate the dialogical interactions between

different autobiographies and the way in which these interactions contribute to the production of meaning for the research participants.

Nigel Matthias

Using the techniques of literary narrative analysis to enrich the use of biographical research methods.

This presentation explores how Literary Narrative Analysis (LNA) - rather than more conventional methods deployed in the social sciences - can be used to illuminate the lived experiences of young people in the English education system. The traditional methods of analysing literary texts to examine the biographies of four young people has been a useful tool to examine their narratives in producing coherent and complex accounts of the young peoples' lived experiences of education over the course of school years 7 to 13 (11-18 years old).

In this example, the technique is used to explore the tension between accountability, autonomy and performativity in English schools within an historical context and elucidates the experience of individuals within the English state school system. The findings demonstrate that there is an orthodoxy in the narratives of participants' school lives, suggesting an unwitting acquiescence to the masterplots authored by the pervasive grammar of the broader education system. Within these masterplots there are episodes of enlightenment and equilibrium, exchanges with inspirational characters and epiphanies through friendship and engagement in music and the arts. Teachers appear as both protagonists and antagonists, but participants' narratives are also replete with dark plots of falling action and catastrophe, with their lexis replete with references to stress and anxiety, strengthened by powerful figurative representations of death and zoomorphic metaphors. It is suggested that government policy for surveillance and quality assurance of the school system must also enable provision for supporting young people as individuals, providing equally valued opportunities for the study of the arts as well as in the core academic subjects.

Jenifer Nicholson

"How do you know how Gramsci felt" – thinking about the methodology of writing a life.

"How do you know how Gramsci felt?...If there is a reference somewhere please give it" the editor wrote in response to the sentence "Antonio Gramsci felt weary, it had been another frustrating and depressing day."

What does 'knowing' mean in terms of writing about a life? Is a biography simply a collection of 'known' provable facts strung together in an order, whether chronological or thematic which suits either the subject or the writer, or indeed, the editor? What about the gaps in between 'provable facts' – the unchronicled time between recorded actions, the gap between stated intent and known action, the gap between expressed principle and results, the unexpected silence. Is interpretation, intuition or emotional empathy permissible, or are they simply fiction?

Also, on reflection, I sense a sub-text in the editor's criticism, an unease about the presence of feelings at all in an 'academic' biography of an important Marxist thinker. His feelings are at best a distraction from the proper consideration, his political thought. My feelings as the writer are inadmissible.

In this paper I explore some of the existing theories and methodologies for writing about a life in an attempt to articulate my own. I need to be confident that my method will do justice to Antonio Gramsci, that I can tell a truth about him. Can I arrive at a point where I can say I know how Gramsci felt?

Mich Page

Methodology, letters and compassionate epistemology: the case of Rousseau's botanical letters

'Votre idée d'amuser ... votre fille ... l'exercer à l'attention sur des objets agréables et varies comme les plantes, me paroît excellente,... je l'approuve de tout mon coeur, ... persuade ... l'étude de la nature émousse le goût des amusemens frivoles, prévient le tumulte des passions, et porte à l'ame une nourriture qui lui profite en la remplissant du plus digne objet de ses contemplations.'

(Rousseau: Du 22 Août 1771.)

I think your idea of amusing ... your daughter ... exercising attention upon such agreeable and varied objects as plants, is excellent; ... I approve it with all my heart, ... convinced, ... the study of nature abates taste for frivolous amusements, prevents the tumult of the passions, and provides a mind with the nourishment which is salutary, by filling it with an object most worthy of its contemplations. (Rousseau: Letter I. 22 August 1771)

It is well known that letters can be useful for the understanding and appreciation of a person's life. This paper concentrates on eight botanical letters written by Jean-Jacques Rousseau that have received less academic attention than his other writings on political, social, and educational ideas. Acknowledging that letters are written for a specific purpose and audience, inevitably raises important methodological issues that call into question the usefulness, reliability and validity of letters to biographers (Allport 1942; Denzin 1970; Plummer 2001).

The intention of this paper is to create a sympathetic reading of Rousseau's letters rather than a critical analysis. By adopting such a position, I hope to create a 'compassionate epistemology' rather than a crudely "objective" one. By developing an explanatory framework between myself and these letters I have in terms of their interpretation been able to move from description to inference.

Ursula Hurley and Helen Pleasance

But what does that mean in practice? Creative Methodologies in Auto/biographical Studies

Creative methodologies have been used across a range of disciplines, with backgrounds including poststructuralism, feminism, radical history, cultural studies, fictocriticism and thing theory. Creative memoir, autobiography, biography and historical fictions have all been used to illuminate, subvert and open up dialogue with other, more conventional knowledge systems within the field of auto/biographical studies. But there is still an uneasy relationship between the two terms: creative and methodology. The term methodology assumes that the researcher is on a forward journey to produce quantifiable 'results' or 'findings' of some kind. The term creative, conversely, suggests no such single direction or quantifiable end-result. What, then, does the one term do to the other? And why is there an increasing turn to creative methodologies within the field of life-writing studies?

In this hybrid paper we will explore these issues through our own creative practice and reflections upon that practice. We will note resistances to creative practice as a methodology, uncertainty about how creative practice does critical work, and the frequent perception that 'proper' research is the critical reflection on a piece of practice, rather than encountering creative work as a stand-alone intervention in the field. From these explorations we will move, via examples from our own practice, to open out some of the many issues raised by such creative methodologies. This will address the larger framing questions of paper and our work: what is creative knowledge and what does it offer for auto/biography studies?

Andrew Sparkes

Autoethnography in the neoliberal era: Possibilities and perils

2013 saw the publication of three major texts in autoethnography that provide aspiring autoethnographers with some solid foundations on which to build, in terms of defining what the genre is, what it does, and how it might be accomplished. These texts were the *Handbook of Autoethnography* edited by Stacy Holman Jones, Tony Adams and Carolyn Ellis; *British Contemporary Autoethnography* edited by Nigel Short, Lydia Turner, and Alec Grant; and the four-volume set *Autoethnography* edited by Pat Sikes. In combination, they represent a milestone in the coming of age of the genre. Importantly, autoethnography now has a coherent conceptual self-defence system available to ward off attacks from its many detractors in the academy. In this regard, it is a good time to be an autoethnographer. This said, given its subversive potential, in an academic climate framed by neoliberalism, an audit culture, and New Public Management practices, I want to argue that, for some, it is a bad time, indeed, even a dangerous time, to be an autoethnographer. This is particularly so for those who dare to speak truth to power by producing creatively written, detailed, local, and evocative first person accounts that intentionally highlight the relationship of their experiences to wider cultural practices and their consequences. Producing such tales, however, is the quest of the autoethnographer who needs to be aware of these risks. The presentation attends to these risks and also to the skilled and quality practices within this critical genre.

Gaby Weiner

Academic Publishing Opportunities for Biography and Auto/Biography

Gaby Weiner will introduce a discussion on differing publishing possibilities for books relating to formal biography and personal family histories. She will compare publishing her book, *Harriet Martineau and the Birth of the Disciplines* (Routledge) with her book, *Tales of Loving and Leaving* (AuthorHouse). As Gaby, says, “self-publishing (with a US company) has provided a fascinating insight into present-day mass publishing practices, while the Routledge book is an example of standard, academic elite publishing”.

Sara Louise Wheeler

Pooling my semiotic resources: translanguaging as a facilitative methodological tool for autobiographical practice

The concept of translanguaging originated as a pedagogic theory, referring to the planned, simultaneous use of two languages in classrooms when teaching bilinguals children. The idea underpinning this practice was that in receiving information through the medium of one language, and using the information through the medium of another language, a deeper and fuller level of understanding of the subject matter would be developed. The notion of translanguaging has subsequently been extended beyond pedagogy, to the complex sociolinguistic realities of everyday life for multilinguals, as they draw upon their semiotic repertoires to act, to know and to be. Meanwhile, analogous perspectives have also been mooted regarding the process of introspective, creative writing. Combined, these ideas bring new insights to the discourse regarding the importance of language use and writing conventions within sociological inquiry. In this paper, I

share some of my own experiences of combining my semiotic resources in the act of self-expression and meaning-making.

List of Delegates

Name

Yvonne Anderson
Andrew Bissell
Helen Bulbeck
Jennifer Byrne
Judith Chapman
Anne Chappell
Sarah Collard
Gill Constable
Michael Erben
Karen Fowler-Watt
Diane Galpin
Maria Marquez Gracia
Pablo Cortés González
Ursula Hurley
Jean-Francois Jacques
Gayle Letherby
Geeta Ludhra
Annastasia Maksymuk
Terry Martin
Nigel Matthias
Jenifer Nicholson
Mich Page
Helen Pleasance
Marie Price
Andrew Sparkes
Clare Taylor
Bernadette Waters
Gaby Weiner
Sara Louise Wheeler
Jenty Young

