

A true friend stabs you in the front: friendship as autoethnographic method in the paraversity

**Reimagining Experience 2019, British Autoethnography Conference  
22<sup>nd</sup>- 23rd July, 2019**

Alec Grant, PhD, Independent Scholar, UK

Trude Klevan PhD, Associate Professor, University of South-Eastern Norway, Drammen, Norway

This workshop was first presented at the Reimagining Experience 2018, British Autoethnography Conference. Because it proved popular and was very well evaluated, we are delighted to be running it again this year. It draws on and synthesizes ongoing theoretical, conceptual and empirical work emerging from our friendship-mediated, critical autoethnographic relationship (Grant, in press for 2019 a,b; Klevan and Grant, in review; Klevan, et al., 2018; Klevan, et al., in press for 2019 a,b; Sorly, et al., 2018).

In the first part, after initial sensitizing participant exercises, we'll present the content detailed below. The second part of the workshop will open out to a large group discussion. Our overall aim is to help participants achieve a critical conceptual and theoretical understanding, and appreciation, of the place of friendship in collaborative autoethnography, that they might choose to use to inform their own work.

The workshop will proceed from a definition of the following key terms and concepts: *paraversity*; *friendship*; *friendship as method (FAM)*; *the New Public Managed (NPM)/Neoliberal/Corporate Academy*; *trouble-nurturing*; *mentransgressing*; *wild time*; *becoming-researcher*.

We will go on to argue that the NPM Academy is politically and economically configured in ways that result in an anti-intellectual hostility to non-positivistic forms of qualitative inquiry. We will contend that, because of this, the Academy fails to adequately support the critical and experimental autoethnographic work of postgraduate and other researchers. At ground level, this happens as a result of academics working and surviving in environments antagonistic to curiosity, trouble-

nurturing, and new and different ways of conceiving, exploring and developing methodological approaches to inquiry and knowledge building (Grant, 2018; Grant in press for 2019a,b; Klevan and Grant, in 2<sup>nd</sup> stage review; Klevan et al., in press for 2019 a,b).

In critically responding to this, we'll then consider the question: why friendship as a basis for autoethnography? Building on the seminal work of Tillmann-Healy (2003), we'll describe how we've experienced friendship as a safe, supportive mediator of trouble-nurturing and curiosity. As a methodological resource, we've found it pivotal in challenging the often narrow and self-replicating onto-epistemological assumptions and practices which function to silence becoming-researcher forms of storied inquiry and knowledge (Klevan et al., 2018, in press for 2019a,b).

On the basis of philosophical (Vernon, 2007) and organizational (Alvesson and Spicer, 2016) scholarship, and our own single- and co-authored work, we'll bring the first part of the workshop to a close by discussing the following specific tips and issues for the management of collaborative autoethnographic friendships:

- Choose your autoethnographic friends wisely; temper serendipity with caution.
- Think beyond your institution; develop paraversity connections.
- Accept the reality that true friends fall out from time to time.
- Follow through on friendships, towards open-ended, unfinalized futures.
- Strive for, and exercise, generosity of spirit.

We look forward to seeing you at the workshop, and hope that it's useful for you and that you have a good, wild time in it!

## **References:**

Alvesson M, Spicer A. 2016. *The Stupidity Paradox: The Power and Pitfalls of Functional Stupidity at Work*. London: PROFILE BOOKS LTD.

Grant A. 2018. Voice, ethics, and the best of autoethnographic intentions (or Writers, readers, and the spaces in-between). In: Turner L, Short NP, Grant A, Adams TE. (Eds). *International Perspectives on Autoethnographic Research and Practice*. London and New York: Routledge.

Grant A. Autoethnography. In Aranda K. (Ed). In press for 2019 a. *Critical Qualitative Research in Healthcare: Exploring the philosophies, politics and practices*. London and New York: Routledge.

Grant A. The Reflexive Autoethnographer. In Aranda K. (Ed). In press for 2019 b. *Critical Qualitative Research in Healthcare: Exploring the philosophies, politics and practices*. London and New York: Routledge.

Klevan T, Grant A. In 2<sup>nd</sup> Stage Review. Performing Wild time: Workshopping Friendship as Critical Autoethnographic Paraversity Method. *Journal of Critical Education*.

Trude Klevan, Bengt Karlsson, Lydia Turner, Nigel Short, Alec Grant. 2018. “Aha! “TAKE ON Me’s”: bridging the North sea with relational autoethnography”, *Qualitative Research Journal*, <https://doi.org/10.1108/QRJ-D-18-00013>

Klevan T, Karlsson B, Grant A. In press for June 3, 2019a. The color of water and the becoming of a researcher – An autoethnographically-inspired journey. *TQR*. 24 (6).

Klevan T, Grant A, Karlsson B. Writing to resist; writing to survive: Conversational autoethnography, mentoring, and the New Public Management Academy. In: Moriarty J. (Ed). In press for 2019 b. *Writing to resist, writing to know: Autoethnographies from Higher Education*. London and New York: Routledge.

Sorly R, Karlsson B, Grant A. In press. (published online 27 July 2018). My Mother’s Skull is Burning: A story of stories. *QI (Qualitative Inquiry)*. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1077800418787547>

Tillmann-Healy LM. 2003. Friendship as Method. *Qualitative Inquiry*. 9: 729-749.

Vernon M. 2007. *The Philosophy of Friendship*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.