



Qualitative Research Journal

Arias to academia: an academic malpractice suite in three movements

Allison Upshaw

Article information:

To cite this document:

Allison Upshaw , (2016), " Arias to academia: an academic malpractice suite in three movements " , Qualitative Research Journal, Vol. 16 Iss 3 pp. 263 - 273

Permanent link to this document:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/QRJ-03-2016-0017>

Downloaded on: 17 January 2017, At: 13:43 (PT)

References: this document contains references to 30 other documents.

To copy this document: permissions@emeraldinsight.com

The fulltext of this document has been downloaded 57 times since 2016*

Users who downloaded this article also downloaded:

(2016), "Unearthing truths in duoethnographic method", Qualitative Research Journal, Vol. 16 Iss 3 pp. 238-250 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/QRJ-07-2015-0061>

(2016), "The traveling researchers' sisterhood: Four female voices from Latin America in a collaborative autoethnography", Qualitative Research Journal, Vol. 16 Iss 3 pp. 251-262 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/QRJ-07-2015-0062>



Access to this document was granted through an Emerald subscription provided by emerald-srm:129451 []

For Authors

If you would like to write for this, or any other Emerald publication, then please use our Emerald for Authors service information about how to choose which publication to write for and submission guidelines are available for all. Please visit www.emeraldinsight.com/authors for more information.

About Emerald www.emeraldinsight.com

Emerald is a global publisher linking research and practice to the benefit of society. The company manages a portfolio of more than 290 journals and over 2,350 books and book series volumes, as well as providing an extensive range of online products and additional customer resources and services.

Emerald is both COUNTER 4 and TRANSFER compliant. The organization is a partner of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) and also works with Portico and the LOCKSS initiative for digital archive preservation.

*Related content and download information correct at time of download.

Arias to academia: an academic malpractice suite in three movements

Arias to
academia

263

Allison Upshaw
Department of Interdisciplinary Studies,
University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, Alabama, USA

Received 2 July 2015
Revised 24 November 2015
31 January 2016
7 March 2016
Accepted 12 March 2016

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to explore the possible affects of personal traumas on the pedagogical practices of educators sometimes resulting in a type of pedagogical malpractice. The content shares an interest towards reformation in artist training programs, and personal learning experiences for K-12 teachers.

Design/methodology/approach – Beginning an inward/backward journey of narrative inquiry, I use autoethnography to explore the following questions: What am I teaching my students, explicitly and implicitly? To what extent do I perpetuate the traumas of my pre-professional training? How can I interrupt this legacy of abuse in my own pedagogical practices? My journey is shared through a collection of brief narrative vignettes, referred to by the musical term suite, in which I critically examine my life experiences in search of answers to these questions.

Findings – Like most qualitative research puzzles, I'm left with more questions rather than finite answers. How would my educational experiences have been different, if I understood learning as a shared privilege between teacher and student? How much more transformative could my teaching, have been, if it were not a catchall just in case I wasn't successful in my chosen path? How might I have grown as a performer, if teaching had been a respected and integrated part of my performance curricula? How much less of a failure would I have felt when I found myself leading a classroom in later years? Would I have perceived it as a failure at all?

Research limitations/implications – This situated narrative stops for the sake of article length, but the journey into becoming continues and will require consistent reflection to remain headed in the right direction.

Originality/value – This piece is an autoethnographic account that contributes to positive pedagogical practices.

Keywords Autoethnography, Teacher training, Trauma, Arts education

Paper type Research paper

1. Wounding named

Vignette 1

God doesn't like it when we draw attention to ourselves. You shouldn't be going to school for something like that. It's a sin (My aunt, 1984).

The walls are a stark white with pictures of family all around. I am standing in my aunt's living room facing the huge tan sectional that takes up all of the living room space. It's 1984, and I'm leaving for Oberlin Conservatory in a few weeks. This conversation has been going on for fifteen minutes or so today, but it's lasted a couple of months in total. I'm scared. I can't wait to go to college, but I won't know anyone there. My roommate's from Alabama and knows some friends of the family, but I still haven't met her. My aunt is a Jehovah's Witness, and she believes that I'll cause others to envy and become jealous if I pursue my goals. She says that I'll go to hell for being the cause of other's falling into sin. Auntie says things like this to me all the time. I want to tell her to stop talking to me,



but I'd get in trouble for being disrespectful. I stand silently, hoping she'll finish so I can go. The front door is only seven steps to my left, but those seven steps could take me a lifetime to make.

When examining the quote by my aunt, there are three key points I consider:

- God doesn't like it (drawing attention to ourselves because it causes others to envy us).
- I shouldn't do it (study to become a performer).
- It's a sin.

There is no way to win in this situation. Not only am I disappointing God, I'm deliberately flaunting his wishes. According to my aunt's perspective this decision is not a mistake, and I can't claim ignorance. I'm choosing sin, and in my 17-year old mind that means I can't ask for forgiveness. I am lost.

According to Bessel A. van der Kolk (1989), *trauma* is not the event, but rather it is the inability to categorize the event that makes it traumatic. In other words, how we respond to an event traumatizes us, not the event itself. In vignette one, my response to my aunt's statement was silence: **I stand silently, hoping she'll finish so I can go.** This was clearly a choice to me. At the time it seemed the only choice. In previous conversations, I attempted to reason with her. It never worked, so I carry forward the label of sinner in my 17-year old body, uncontested. I am a sinner because I want to perform on stage, and that might cause someone to become envious or jealous. This is one of my first memories of silence in the face of abuse, and a significant story thread in the woven narrative that is my life. It is also one of the first autoethnographic fragments on my journey from arias to academia. What does that mean?

Autoethnography is research, writing, story, and method, which connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social, and political (Boylorn and Orbe 2013; Ellis, 2004; Ellis and Bochner, 2000; Marechal, 2010; Sparkes, 2000). It spins the researcher's life into a story thread. That story thread weaves into a storied tapestry full of the colors and textures provided by its inclusion into similar stories told by others. This tapestry of stories becomes a narrative tapestry of importance to both the autoethnographer and the community within which her/his narrative is situated. Each autoethnography whispers a story of belonging to the tapestry weavers. They learn that they are not just a single thread with a single story, but rather they can be a part of the larger narratives that engage the world in order to make it a better place. Unlike quantitative studies that assiduously work to separate the researcher's personal opinions from entering the researched field, the point of autoethnography is to *inwardly* center the researcher's narrative (Clandinin and Connelly, 2004).

Particularly important for my interest in the storied lives of teachers, and the impact of their personal experiences on their teaching practices, is the concept of *inward* centering. In my 20 years of partnering with classroom teachers, there has been an audible silence from them regarding their personal pedagogical journeys. They speak of the restraints put on them by the school board and administration. They speak of "out of control" children, and *helicopter* parents who hover over their child and the teacher. The teachers I have worked with speak of everything but their personal journey of becoming a teacher.

Who are these teachers? What brought them to this place of teaching and caring for our young people? Where in the teacher training programs is there room for self-reflection on how their own experiences, both in and out of school, precede

them into the classroom? As I write this article, I remind my researcher self about the value in soliciting the active voices of the researched. Their narratives are not just what I see, hear, and/or count in the classroom setting. Their narratives, like mine, are more than what happens in an observed moment. Their lives began before I arrived, and will continue long after I am gone (Clandinin and Connelly, 2004). As I begin collecting data, I want to learn more about the before and after of their lives, in order to tell a more complete story.

Vignette 2

Why are you wasting your mother's money on something like singing? You came all the way up here to go to school for that? You need to go to school closer to home and find something you can make money at (my uncle, 1984)

It's my first Fall Break, and my uncle just called me upstairs in his house to talk. He tells me it's my fault that my grandmother got ill. She was so worried about me being in Ohio. He said I should just go home. He's never talked to me like this and I don't know what to say. I just stare at him, and wait for this to be over. He keeps saying that I'm being selfish, and I don't know what to say in return. I just want to be an opera singer. It's all I've wanted to be since seventh grade. I was so proud of getting accepted to such a prestigious school. My aunt and uncle are dead set on me not taking this path, they are not proud of me at all. I always felt like I could do anything because my family loved me. This hurts. This hurts me, but I can't say anything. I want to leave, but my roommate and I are here for the rest of the week. I worked so hard to get into this school. I'm only seventeen. Am I really so wrong for wanting to do something I love? First, I'm flaunting my wishes against God's. Now I'm a selfish, ungrateful child whose willful ways have caused my grandmother to literally become sick with worry. I just want to sing.

My mother's twin brother uses his words with just as much sting as my aunt, but with the personal attack disguised by references to school and money:

- *Why are you wasting your mother's money;*
- *You're killing your grandmother with worry for you;*
- *You came all the way up here for something as useless as singing;*
- *Go to school closer to home; and*
- *Find something to make money at.*

*He thinks I'm selfish for pursuing this dream. I'm not valuable enough to deserve my mother's sacrifice. He doubts my intelligence for leaving Alabama for Ohio just to learn to sing better. It's a waste of time and money. I still can't contemplate the idea that my choices were literally killing my grandmother with worry. What could I say in my defense (if I could have thought of anything at the time)? What could I have said that would not have been considered disrespectful? Again my response is to **just stare at him, and wait for this to be over.** I never imagined that I'd have to defend myself from an attack by my uncle. I never imagined that I'd leave that room carrying more labels: selfish, spoiled, uncaring, and ungrateful. I fold all these labels into my 17-year old body as I leave the room, each step becoming heavier than the one before.*

Telling my narrative journey through these brief autoethnographic vignettes situates this artist/researcher/teacher firmly in the present world as an analyst of the past (Clandinin and Connelly, 2004; Irwin *et al.*, 2006). This positioning of myself is in

hope of improving the pedagogical future for myself, and others who struggle to teach past the wounding of our own lived experiences.

Master Teaching Artist, Eric Booth (2012) proposed that 80 percent of what we teach is who we are, and the following questions, in no hierarchical order, formulate my initial research puzzle (Mason, 2002) as I begin this inward/backward journey (Clandinin and Connelly, 2004):

- What am I teaching my students, explicitly and implicitly?
- To what extent do I perpetuate the trauma of my pre-professional training?
- How can I interrupt this legacy of abuse in my own pedagogical practices?

Booth's statement resonated with me the moment I heard it, but it would take another three years before I had the tools to truly unpack what that could possibly mean for me as a pedagogue. To constantly examine with an eye towards improvement should be an integral part of any educator's life. I have always sought out many varied professional learning experiences in order to improve my craft, but in this article I examine my own learning experiences for answers on making fundamental changes.

Since my first voice lesson at the age of 11, I have been a singer of stories. However, I have always had a love affair with stories. My mother told me stories, read me stories, and acted out stories for me throughout my childhood. I have never not known stories as part of my life, so the use of narrative as a discovery process seems fitting. Patricia Leavy (2014), says that narrative methods allow participants to engage "in a process of storying and (re)storying in order to reveal multidimensional meanings" (p. 27). I use narrative in the form of autoethnography as inquiry into the personal and professional practices that shaped me, the process through which I continue my growth, and the product documenting my changes over a specific length of time.

Vignette 3

Who are you? I'm Allison and this is X. We're new voice students. Well you must not be any good, I've never heard of you (Upperclassman, 1984).

I should probably do something, but I have no idea what. Did she really just say that? Silence. I turn and look at my new classmate to see if I was just imagining things. No, she's standing there looking as shocked as I feel, so that girl really did just say that. I've only been here a few days, why would she say that to me, to us? I don't even know her name either! I should probably say something, but she's already gone. Is this going to happen all the time? I thought I was going to be safe here? I thought there was going to be a place for me, the smart little black girl who likes to sing "white folks" music. Maybe I was wrong.

Vignette 4

"Ms. Webb! Ms. Webb! I passed my juries!" "Yes, I know. I wouldn't have passed you if I'd been able to vote. I'm in the middle of a lesson, so I'll see you next week" (sabbatical replacement instructor, 1986).

I should probably do something. I'd say something, but she's already closed the door in my face. Turning around and slowly walking to the overlook of the lobby below, I sit on the couch, and stare at the wall. I wish my real teacher were here. He'd have hugged me and told me how proud he was of me. He'd have smiled and congratulated me. He never would

have shut the door in my face. I don't know why I expected more from this woman. It's been obvious that I can't trust her for a very long time. She doesn't think I'm good enough to be here, and has spent the entire semester proving to me that I don't belong. I want to cry, but I know better than to do that in public. In public is where the vultures circle the wounded, waiting to see you die. In conservatory though, they don't wait. They conduct you to your coffin, and sing you beautifully to your death. They are glad that it's not them, and glad that there's one less voice to compete with at the next audition. Never mind that your silence may be soul deep. Never mind that you may never know your voice again. Shhhhh, put on the mask. Let's go home.

Even as my focus changes from personal characteristics to talent and ability, my responses are still the same: **Silence**. These little microaggressions have been like paper cuts throughout my life. I have never understood why I spend so much time depressed. I never connected the silencing of self in the face of these, for want of a better word, microaggressions with the open wounds of my spirit. All my life, I have been spiritually bleeding out, dying by a thousand cuts to my spirit, and never knew.

When asked why she painted so many self-portraits, Frida Kahlo (n.d.) said, "I paint myself because I am so often alone, and because I am the subject I know best." Borrowing from Kahlo, I write autoethnography because I too am often alone, and because I am the subject that I know best. As a beginning researcher, I feel that I must become comfortable telling my story, and exploring the places in my own narrative that make me uncomfortable before asking anyone else to participate in my research process. As a lifelong performing artist, I am most comfortable sharing my stories through performance. Performative autoethnography allows me to ground myself in what I know best while I stretch towards the unknown (Spry, 2001; Oikarinen-Jabai, 2003; Denzin, 2003). This article is my best attempt at writing the performance that is my life (Auslander, 2008, p. 2; Pollock, 1998; Denzin, 2014). Like autoethnography, performative writing is evocative. It is doing, not describing (Pollock, 1998), and to quote Dorothy Allison, "some things must be felt to be understood" (Adams, 2004). "Performance helps me see [...] it orders the world [...] helps me live a truth" (Madison, 1999).

By writing performatively, (Hyden, 2013; Madison, 1999; Pace, 2012; Pollock, 1998) I initiate reclamation of my body's place in research with its integration of mind and body in order to enact the physical manifestation of the performance (Langellier and Peterson, 2006), and to make room for the voice of a truly aesthetic or sensory perception to be heard. With increasing purpose in my growth as a performing academician, I twist strands of literal autoethnographic performance (Spry, 2001) and performative writing (Pollock, 1998) into a fixed medium of my own. This article is a written performance for those that will never have the opportunity to see it performed in actuality.

This article is a script of sorts. It began as images playing out in front of me as memory. Through the performative writing of my personal stories, I choose to literally give my body to the narrative both internally and externally by connecting the inquiry, process, and product. This performance article is for:

- those that will never hear this work framed by the Negro Spiritual I've Been Buked;
- those that will never see the pain in my face as I relive a door slamming shut in my face; and
- those that cannot touch the tears I may shed in real time.

This narrative voices what my body/mind has internalized. It is my voice encouraging others to rise and join in the meaning making process. It is my performative narrative voice speaking truths for others who have not yet found their own (Langellier and Peterson, 2006).

Hughes (1995) asked a question of the world. What happens to a dream deferred? Does it dry up [...] fester [...] run [...] crust over [...] sag [...] or maybe explode? My answer Mr Hughes is [...] all of the above.

I believe that no matter what form a deferred dream takes, it is a wound. Wound, literally translated from the Greek, means trauma. A physical wound is fairly straightforward to treat. It is cleaned out, ridding it of debris and other materials. An antibacterial ointment is then rubbed on the site to reduce the chances of infection. Finally, the site is bandaged. Unfortunately, a psychological wound cannot be treated in the same straightforward manner. Unlike physical wounds, psychological or spiritual wounds are not so easily recognizable. After the initial wound is experienced, even if “cleaned out” through psychotherapy and an “antibacterial” ointment of psychotropic drugs is applied to “keep out infection” the mind itself would not allow for bandaging until it is healed. Over, and over, the mind reopens the wound, hindering the healing process in spite of best efforts to the contrary.

Microaggressions are not violent assaults. They are the little everyday slights (Sue, 2010). It is an aunt accusing you of willful sinning, an uncle that blames you for his mother’s illness, a colleague that denigrates your talents, or a teacher that insinuates you are a pig. They do not have to be intentional. They just have to communicate hostility towards a person according to their social, racial, sexual, or cultural group membership (Sue, 2010). These things didn’t happen to me in isolation. They happened to me in the context of being African American and female in the USA. They happened to me in addition to all the other ways I was also being marginalized. Repeated slights, combined into a larger wound, creating a trauma of spirit and mind.

“A wound needs a witness” (Vanzant, 2013). Iyanla Vanzant used this statement in her twitter feed. Felman and Laub (1992), a professor of comparative literature and French at Emory University, writes that testimony (bearing witness to a traumatic event) is a necessary and vital response in the healing process. For years, I have waited patiently for someone to be a witness to my pain. I’ve waited for someone to acknowledge that these things have hurt me. I have waited for someone to see me standing here; bleeding to death by 1,000 microaggressive paper cuts covering my spiritual self. It is from this place of internal bleeding that I was launched into a job as academic advisor for first year students at a small liberal arts college in upstate New York.

2. Wounding perpetrated

Vignette 5

Allison, I really want you to work with our gospel choir. They’re good, but they need someone to guide them. Since you’ve attended Oberlin, that seems like it would be a perfect fit. You’ll get a chance to hear them at the MLK program today (Boss, College Upstate NY 1990).

Dear GOD! Save me from this auditory hell! Where is the accompanist? Oh my goodness, are they seriously not going to skip over the instrumental part since there’s no one here to play it? Oh God, please let them pick a key and stay in it! I can’t believe my boss wants me to work with them! This is ridiculous it’s so bad. And why are all these people telling them what a good job they did today? Shut up Allison. Don’t say a word. You’ve only had the job a week. Just smile, and pray that nobody asks you what you think.

You want to know what I thought about the performance [...] It was sloppy. The song was sung in at least three different keys, sometimes at the same time! It was awful! Where was your accompanist? If he couldn't make it you shouldn't have sung. At the very least, the group needs to learn some spirituals so that you'll have songs that are meant to be sung a capella. It was a hot mess. You weren't on pitch half the time, and I can't believe you got up there like that. Don't let these people fool you by telling you that anything you throw together is wonderful. That was a hot mess!

One week later, some of the choir members arrived in my office. They asked me what I thought. I told them the truth. When those girls left my office most of them never returned, and the truly sad thing is that I did not really understand why for a very long time. I told them the truth. My boss reminded me that I was not in a conservatory now. What did that mean anyway? He was the one who asked me to get involved. I just told the truth.

Vignette 6

She requested that you be placed in her studio. I don't know why, you're not a particularly good singer. Anyway, you'll be in her studio, but Teresa will meet with you weekly to work on your technique (Grayman, Voice Department Chair, 1992).

The year that I arrived, David Duke (former head of the Ku Klux Klan) ran for governor. Raised in Alabama, I'd lived up North since I was 17. I had forgotten how to survive in the American South. In my late 20s, I'd locked away the memories of, what I now know to be, daily microaggressions against my race, my gender, and even my talent. You see Black girls who sing in foreign languages are a little too uppity for some folk. When the white, male department chair told me he didn't consider me to be a good singer, he didn't ask me to meet him in his office. He didn't pull me aside, or lower his voice. He made this statement to me in the lobby of the music building while I was surrounded by my peers. In one short statement he put me in my place by assigning me to weekly sessions with part time faculty, and undermined Ms. Herrera's status as an internationally famous (minority) opera singer as well as her teaching skills. By insinuating that she was incapable of teaching me without additional help from this adjunct faculty, we both were put in our place. It backfired. The adjunct was intimidated by my conservatory training and deferred to me during instructional interactions with her other students. I ended up teaching her more than she ever taught me.

Vignette 7

(Oh Madam Herrera, you just want me to be the guinea pig for today.) Well darling, you certainly have the pig part down (International opera star, my vocal coach, 1993).

Ms. Herrera was a godsend and the bane of my existence. She was so full of knowledge, and so open with all that she knew. On the other hand, she was just as likely to say snide little comments that undercut your confidence. The day she called me a pig I stood there shocked into silence as she strode to the center of the stage and introduced me as the first performer. Why did I put myself back into this situation? Why am I paying people to undermine my hard won confidence? When Ms. Herrera left, she didn't ask me to follow her, and I didn't ask to go. I was still too afraid to trust my skills or my talents, after all hadn't they all told me in more than one way how inept I was? Hadn't it been proven that I would never be good enough?

We would like to hire you to teach private and class voice (Christian University, 2007).

What is wrong with this girl? She's so talented. I could probably get her a MET audition, but she just wants to sing RnB! Why is she wasting her time? Why is she wasting my time? All my students are so talented, I can't believe [...]. STOP! Deep Breath! Again, deep breath. This is not my life. This is not my opportunity to make them do what I wish I'd done. This is not about me at all. This is not about my regrets and my fears. This is about being entrusted to prepare them as singers and performers. Where can I start? I can start by choosing not to break them down spiritually. I can start by nurturing their dreams instead of looking for ways to break them or see if they are worthy to pursue their dreams. (Deep Breath) I can start by acknowledging that being a full time performer is no longer my dream, and that's ok. I'm here not because I'm not a good performer, but because I have a heart for the students entrusted to my care. They are not my competition. They are my posterity.

3. Wounding renounced

Reflective vignette 1

"I learned that you love us, and you want the best for us." "I learned that you think we're smart" (4th grade students in Birmingham, AL).

I was writing songs with a class of fourth graders, and thought I'd ask them what they were learning from me. At first, they said the usual things like how to make music, and how to write songs. Then, I told them that I was teaching them other things too. I was teaching them things that I never actually talked about in class, but I wondered if they'd figured it out. When they gave me those answers, I realized that they had indeed figured it out (Irvine and Fraser, 1998; Ware, 2006).

I know that I am still growing as a teacher. I know that I do not get it right all the time, but when I miss the mark I think about these words. I remember that I have come a long way from those brutal reenactments of my own learning process. I now have former students that trust me both in and out of the classroom (Irvine and Fraser, 1998; Ware, 2006). When the phone rings or I see a message in my inbox that says, "Miss you. Love you," I realize the answer to the question of what I am teaching them has been answered. Yes, I am teaching them curriculum, but I'm also teaching them who I am. They are learning that 80 percent of me that is infused in their learning, loves them, thinks they are smart, and wants the best for them.

Reflective vignette 2

Upshaw's method is really clear cut straightforward. If she wants you to do something, she will tell you exactly what she wants. She's easy going. She's relatable. If you don't get it, she'll get right down there with you and show you how it's done. Even though I was singing before I got to her, I like to say she taught me everything. I actually use her method in my own teaching (Former College Student).

- To what extent do I perpetuate the trauma of my pre-professional training?
- How can I interrupt this legacy of abuse in my own pedagogical practices?

These last two questions in my research puzzle are answered in the vignettes above. I have been able to disrupt this tradition of abuse, so that my latest students will not

know the bitterness of my earlier years in the classroom. They will never have to leave my office crying, stripped of their confidence because that is the only way I know how to communicate my desire for their excellence. Though I teach in an entirely different area now, it is still sometimes difficult to hold back the vitriol that is waiting to attack mediocrity when it shows up in my classroom. I breathe, and try to remember that I am no longer that teacher (Irvine and Fraser, 1998; Ware, 2006).

Still, like most qualitative research puzzles, I am left with more questions rather than finite answers. How would my educational experiences have been different, if I understood learning as a shared privilege between teacher and student? How much more transformative could my teaching, have been, if it were not a catchall just in case I wasn't successful in my chosen path? How might I have grown as a performer, if teaching had been a respected and integrated part of my performance curricula? How much less of a failure would I have felt when I found myself leading a classroom in later years? Would I have perceived it as a failure at all?

While revising my article, I realized that the ending vignettes made it sound so simple. It seemed as if transitioning from performing to teaching was a simple choice, and not a heartrending, depression causing process. I dreamed of being on stage. I wanted lights, and the applause of thousands ringing in my ears. To settle into an unseen position behind my students, and somehow be satisfied as they received their accolades was not for the faint of heart. I hated them all at first, my students I mean. I hated watching them throw away opportunities I would have killed for in my youth. I hated them for being young and at the beginning of their possibilities, while I would never again get to make those choices. I hated myself for giving up, and settling for the life of a teacher.

The change was gradual. Slowly getting to know my students, each in their own right as their own person. Slowly allowing myself to grow. No longer holding the adult me hostage to the dreams of my childhood. It was not a smooth change. It was filled with jagged highs and lows for both me, and my students, but I learned to love them. I learned what a privilege it was to be able to pour into these young people's lives.

Have I solved my research puzzle? How do I know that I teach out of the fullness of my life rather than the broken spaces? Even with small successes, I do not know if the process will ever be complete. I can only continue to use all the tools at my disposal: autoethnography, performative writing, and the creative process, in order to understand the steps I've taken and the ones I have yet to take.

References

- Adams, T. (2004), "Telling stories in Dorothy Allison's two or three things I know for sure", *Southern Literary Journal*, Vol. 36 No. 2, pp. 82-99.
- Auslander, P. (2008), *Theory for Performance Studies: A Student's Guide*, Routledge, New York, NY.
- Booth, E. (2012), "Opening address", *1st International Teaching Artist Conference, Oslo, August 29*.
- Clandinin, D. and Connelly, F. (2004), *Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research*, Jossey-Bass Inc, San Francisco, CA.
- Denzin, N. (2003), *Performance Ethnography: Critical Pedagogy and the Politics of Culture*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Denzin, N. (2014), *Interpretive Autoethnography*, 2nd ed., University of Illinois, Champagne-Urbana, IL.
- Ellis, C. (2004), *The Ethnographic I: the Methodological Novel About Autoethnography*, AltaMira Press, New York, NY.

- Ellis, C. and Bochner, A. (2000), "Autoethnography, personal narrative, reflexivity", in Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. (Eds), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA, pp. 733-768.
- Felman, S. and Laub, D. (1992), *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, Routledge, New York, NY.
- Hyden, L. (2013), "Bodies, embodiment and stories", in Andrews, M. and Squire, C.T. (Eds), *Doing Narrative Research*, Sage, London, pp. 126-141.
- Hughes, L. (1995), *Harlem (A Dream Deferred)*, Vintage, New York, NY.
- Irvine, J. and Fraser, J. (1998), "Warm demanders: do national certification standards leave room for the culturally responsive pedagogy of African American teachers?", *Education Week*, Vol. 17 No. 35, pp. 56-57.
- Irwin, R., Beer, R., Springgay, S., Grauer, K., Xiong, G. and Bickel, B. (2006), "The rhizomatic relations of A/R/Tography", *Studies in Art Education*, Vol. 48 No. 1, pp. 70-88.
- Kahlo, F. (n.d.), "Personal quote", available at: www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/52760.Frida_Kahlo (accessed October 22, 2014).
- Langellier, K. and Peterson, E. (2006), "Shifting contexts in personal narrative performance", in Hamera, D.M. (Ed.), *The Sage Handbook of Performance Studies*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA, pp. 151-168.
- Leavy, P. (Ed.) (2014), *Method Meets art: Arts Based Research Practice*, The Guilford Press, New York.
- Madison, S. (1999), "Performing theory/embodied writing", *Text and Performance Quarterly*, Vol. 19 No. 2, pp. 107-124.
- Marechal, G. (2010), "Autoethnography", in Mils, A., Durepos, G. and Wiebe, E. (Eds), *Encyclopedia of Case Study Research*, Vol. 2, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA, pp. 43-45.
- Mason, J. (2002), *Qualitative Researching*, Sage, London.
- Oikarinen-Jabai, H. (2003), "Toward performative research: embodied listening to the self/other", *Qualitative Inquiry*, Vol. 9 No. 4.
- Pace, S. (2012), "Writing the self into research: using grounded theory analytic strategies in autoethnography", *TEXT Special Issue Website Series*, No. 13, pp. 1-15.
- Pollock, D. (1998), "Performing writing", in Phelan, P. and Lane, J. (Eds), *The Ends of Performance*, New York University Press, New York, NY, pp. 73-103.
- Sparkes, A. (2000), "Autoethnography and narratives of self: reflections on criteria in action", *Sociology of Sport Journal*, Vol. 17 No. 1, pp. 21-41.
- Spry, T. (2001), "Performing autoethnography: an embodied methodological praxis", *Qualitative Inquiry*, Vol. 7 No. 6.
- Sue, D. (2010), *Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender and Sexual Orientation*, Wiley & Sons, Hoboken, NJ.
- Vanzant, I. (2013), "A wound needs a witness", Twitter post, November 23, available at: <https://twitter.com/ianlavanzant/status/404438040094863360> (accessed November 4, 2014).
- van der Kolk, B.A. (1989), "Psychobiology of the trauma response", in Lerer, B. and Gershon, S. (Eds), *New Directions in Affective Disorders*, Springer Science and Business Media, New York, NY, pp. 443-446.
- Ware, F. (2006), "Warm demander pedagogy: culturally responsive teaching that supports a culture of achievement for African American students", *Urban Education*, Vol. 41 No. 4, pp. 427-456.

Further reading

Boylorn, R. and Orbe, M. (Eds) (2014), *Critical Autoethnography: Intersecting Cultural Identities in Everyday Life*, Left Coast Press, Walnut Creek, CA.

Helms, J., Nicolas, G. and Green, C. (2010), "Racism and ethnoviolence as trauma: enhancing professional training", *Traumatology*, Vol. 16 No. 4, pp. 53-62.

About the author

Allison Upshaw, an Artist, holds a BM from Oberlin Conservatory, and an MM from the LSU both in Vocal Performance. She is also a proud member of Actor's Equity, the professional stage actor's union. As a Researcher, she is an interdisciplinarian with interests in education/performance/arts based research methods, and the trauma sensitive classroom. As a Teacher, she provides K-12 residencies that facilitate meaning making through the arts, and offers private voice lessons/coachings for young performers. As a Scholar, she is involved with community based partnership research (juvenile justice), training pre-service teachers, and African American females in academia. In the fall of 2016, Allison expects to receive her PhD in Interdisciplinary Studies from the University of Alabama. Allison Upshaw can be contacted at: aupshaw1@crimson.ua.edu