Book Review

Duoethnography: Dialogic Methods for Social, Health, and Educational Research

Joe Norris, Richard D. Sawyer, and Darren Lund, editors
Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2012

Review by: Hilary Brown
                    Brock University

As an educational researcher, over the past decade I have conducted research that employed self-study (LaBoskey, 2004), autoethnography (Ellis & Bochner, 2000), and writing as a method of inquiry (Richardson, 2000). My extended immersion in these monologic methods of qualitative research that focuses on the self led me to an American Educational Research Association conference proceeding. *Advancing Innovation in Qualitative Research: New Methods, New Inquiry* featured Rick Sawyer's (2009) presentation, which highlighted the emergence of duoethnography, a research methodology that requires at minimum two researchers engaged in a dialogic process. After listening to the strengths of this new method of inquiry, I was excited to engage in duoethnography but unsure of how to go about conducting this type of research.

I read *Null and Hidden Curricula of Sexual Orientation: A Dialogue on the Curreres of the Absent Presence and the Present Absence* by Norris and Sawyer (2004). This seminal duoethnography pioneered the way for future duoethnographers. Further to this reading, I intermittently searched for articles and exemplars that could *show* me how to conduct and write a duoethnography. *Duoethnography: Dialogic Methods for Social, Health, and Educational Research* (Norris, Sawyer, & Lund, 2012) was the answer to my call. The 11 duoethnographies that are bookended between the opening chapter explaining the tenets of duoethnography and the closing chapter explaining what was learned as a result of the authors' immersion into duoethnography capture the depth and breadth of topics that can be explored through this innovative research methodology and, at the same time, show me a variety of ways to produce a duoethnography.

Quite a compendium of topics is represented within the bulk of the text including diversity, gender identity, hidden curriculum, beauty, how we embody music, and postcolonial education to name a few. As a researcher, I become the site of the study not the topic. This entry point separates duoethnography from the autoethnographic process. Two researchers juxtapose their differing positions and/or understandings on a topic by using their personal curriculum or what Pinar (1975) calls *currere* to dialogically reconceptualize new imaginings in their understanding of that topic. This reconceptualization is fundamental when undergoing a duoethnography. In order to facilitate this kind of transformation, the two researchers need to be aware of and be open to articulate the difference(s) that exist(s) between them. For example, some differences between researchers are obvious (such as gender or race), but other differences need to be explicitly brought to the surface as a potential topic in order for that difference to be

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considered by each participant (such as nation of origin, sexual orientation, and one's approach to the writing process). Once this recognition of difference is unveiled, the next step is to commit to a process that honours dialogue with the intention of challenging one's assumptions. This methodological process involves taking a risk through the sharing of one's intimate experiences on a mutual topic in relation to the Other who has differing and at times opposing points of view. Duoethnography is about trusting the Other to be open to new and challenging points of view. It is also about trusting one's self to be open to new and challenging points of view. It is about seeking and finding, not holding on to; about letting go and ultimately moving and transforming. This methodology is not for every one. In fact, I would suggest it is a way of being.

When I initially read the text, I read the critical opening and closing chapters to learn how to conduct a duoethnography to insure I was doing it *properly*. Upon deeper immersion with the complete text, I was provided with enlightening examples of how to write and position myself within a duoethnography. All chapters demonstrate the back and forth dialogue by clearly delineating who is speaking. However, the majority of the duoethnographers use subheadings to outline the themes, lessons learned, and/or common reflections that emerge from the dialogue. In this manner, the literature is brought forward by means of signposts, which help the reader follow their line of thought. However, this is not always necessary. In Chapters 8, 9, and 11, the researchers allow their dialogue to flow back and forth from one another without disruption. There are no subheadings. The literature is completely embedded within the dialogue. Both formats worked equally well depending on how familiar I was with the topic being interrogated.

In a further example, *Seeking Rigor in the Search for Identity* (Ch. 5), Breault and Hackler were researching male identity construction in negotiating one's place in a predominantly feminine work setting. After a number of discussions, they realized they were headed towards a less than critical exploration since their experiences were very similar. At this point, a female member was added to the duoethnography making it a trioethnography. The addition of the third person provided a counterpoint to disrupt the initial duo partnership who found they had come to more commonalities than differences. One tenet of duoethnography is that conversation partners bring differing experiences, meanings, and points of view to shared phenomena. By adding the third person, Breault, Hackler and (now) Bradley offer a way to build in rigor into the duoethnographic process.

In another example, Norris and Greenlaw (Ch. 4) used an arts-based approach to recalling past writing experiences through the use of cultural artifacts, such as photographs, news articles, poetry, and memories to weave their duoethnographic dialogue. All of the carefully selected examples that Norris, Sawyer, and Lund selected for this edited text furthered the creative and imaginary possibilities of not only how to write and read a duoethnography, but also created a space for imagining new topics. As a result of reading the many and varied approaches to writing a duoethnography, I found each one enabled me to understand the topic being researched in a meaningful way. I was able to situate myself within the dialogues and come to a different understanding of the topic being discussed based on my own past-embodied experiences. This in turn infused my own imagination with ideas for both topics and partners for future duoethnographic consideration.

As I previously mentioned, trust plays a major role in this methodological process. Hence, finding a dialogic partner may provide the researcher with the most difficult obstacle to overcome. At a recent conference proceeding of the Canadian Society for the Study of Education (2013), two doctoral students (one in education and the other in nursing) described the

inception of their duoethnographic partnership. Over the course of an extended car ride to see their favourite NHL hockey team, they engaged in a meaningful conversation about professionalism. At the end of the drive they questioned whether there was a research methodology that could capture what they had just experienced (much like the initial conversation on sexual orientation between Joe Norris and Rick Sawyer [2004], who pioneered duoethnography). *Exploring the Potential of Duoethnography as a Method: Understanding Professionalism* (Woods & Sebok, 2013) helped these two women to reconceptualize professionalism in terms of their own currere within education and nursing. Their initial partnership was formed through their bond as doctoral students and furthered through their love of hockey. In essence, they had already developed a trusting relationship and hence the duoethnography was borne out of that trusting relationship and not the other way around.

After reading *Duoethnography: Dialogic Methods for Social, Health, and Educational Research* in its entirely, I know how to go about conducting duoethnography. I have topics that I want to interrogate with a dialogue partner, such as diversity, gender bodying, and the effect of being a daughter of two mothers and how these lived experiences have affected my teaching and learning practice. I also have potential co-researchers in mind, but I am uncertain whether duoethnographic methodology will suit their way of being. Will my future duoethnographic partner be a person who is willing to allow his/her vulnerabilities to be exposed and possibly challenged? This is why I suggest that duoethnography is not for everyone and that even considering conducting a duoethnography is a way of being.

As mentioned, I came to duoethnography through the self-study and autoethnographic door. Interrogating the self comes naturally to me but I know it does not come naturally for everyone. With this in mind, I believe using duoethnography as a research methodology hinges on the level of trust between the dialogue partners. Their comfort level and willingness to let go of previously held beliefs in order to make room for the reconceptualization of their beliefs, in my opinion, is duoethnography's greatest strength but also the greatest obstacle to overcome. If educational researchers are willing to step over the threshold and fully give themselves over to the duoethnographic process, I believe they would benefit from conducting this type of dialogic research and gain insights that could potentially improve present and future teaching and learning practices. This text can guide them on that journey.

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Hilary Brown is an athlete, teacher, and researcher who strives to live her life from the center of the medicine wheel. She is an Associate Professor at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada. Hilary is an autoethnographer/duoethnographer who encourages her students to delve deeply into the self in order to both expose and reconcile their vulnerabilities while she simultaneously attempts to do the same. The reciprocal nature of this process has the potential to result in the improvement of one's professional practice. With this in mind, Hilary's research is focused on the practical application of holistic and invitational theory.