

Workshop 2: Write your own story (narrative)

Writing project: autoethnography as narrative. 'Lockdown stories'

You should write about a typical day in 'lockdown'. The focus of this story might involve selecting one habit, ritual, practice, or behaviour in lockdown and reflecting upon this, and articulating why and how it has been significant for you (and/or others). Doing so will help you discover what these activities say about you, your personal experiences, and the ways those personal experiences connect to the experiences of others.

Autoethnography is both an easy and a difficult form of writing. It is easy because we are writing about what we know: ourselves. It is difficult because we must communicate the significance of our experience to our audience, making a connection between our own experiences and those of our readers. The event must offer some takeaway value, and the writer who writes about the event must be able to answer the question 'so what?' The answer to this question is the primary insight of the autoethnography.

Autoethnographies are not just chronological narrations of events. They communicate the event's meaning and leave readers with an idea of what it might have been like to experience it themselves.

Requirements

1. You should write about a typical day in 'lockdown'. The focus of this story might involve selecting one habit, ritual, practice, or behaviour in lockdown and reflecting upon this, and articulating why and how it has been significant for you (and/or others)
2. Give your essay a title.
3. Try to aim for between 1000-1500 words in length (although don't be overly concerned about the word limit at this stage).
4. Spend 30-45 minutes writing your story.
5. At the beginning of Day 2 we will share our stories with the group.
6. Please note that the stories and any information they contain should be treated in confidence in the confines of this SRA workshop in order to respect the privacy and confidentiality of the authors.

Example of autoethnography on 'dining out alone'

For an example of autoethnography see the reading included by Jackie Goode (2018) 'Being One's Own Honoured Guest: Eating out Alone as Gendered Sociality in Public Spaces'. *Sociological Research Online*, 23(1): 100-113.