

## Using Autoethnography in Graduate Level Research

I have been allowed the privilege of pursuing an autoethnographic dissertation project in the school of education, which, from all evidence, is the first of its kind at Liberty University. In the 21st century, the field of qualitative research Autoethnography is one of the fastest growing research methodologies. In my proposal, I define spiritual Autoethnography for a Christian as:

A qualitative research method that enables researchers to use their autobiographical and contextual data to gain a hermeneutical understanding of the social context in which personal meaning is formed, and, by focusing on relation to God and others, gain understanding into sociocultural meanings regarding God's kingdom.

Such a method, it is argued, is uniquely suited to exploring areas of human spiritual dynamics, as it allows for an empirical means to meaning formation. Additionally, it is well suited for educational leadership development and self-reflexive capacity. It allows for minority viewpoints to be expressed and voices to be heard; in a secularized environment of academy, this can be of great benefit for Christian thinkers. Finally and most importantly, it is unique in that it allows for empirical study of Christian transformation at the foot of the cross.

Other qualitative methods often suggest circumnavigating the personal trauma, which produces a loss of authentic Christian ethos. Spiritual autoethnography allows *Sitz im Leben* of the transformational encounters to be explored, and the dynamics of the Christian journey to be made explicit in exploration of meaning formation.

Address 4 points of methodology:

1. Historical origins
2. Present use in the field of spirituality in the social sciences
3. Proposed use in applied theology (missiology)
4. Problems and objections

15 minute power point presentation to the faculty and student body of Liberty University followed by being open to questions.

Provide a 10 page example made available of what the work might look like (taken from my prospectus) and reference list of methodical texts which students or faculty could use in designing their own projects.