

Lesley University

DigitalCommons@Lesley

Lesley University Community of Scholars Day

Community of Scholars Day 2018

Mar 28th, 10:10 AM - 11:00 AM

Autoethnographic Inquiry into Identity Transformation and Posttraumatic Growth Following (TBI) and (PTSD)

Dee Phyllis Genetti
dpgenetti@comcast.net

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.lesley.edu/community_of_scholars



Part of the [Education Commons](#), and the [Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons](#)

Genetti, Dee Phyllis, "Autoethnographic Inquiry into Identity Transformation and Posttraumatic Growth Following (TBI) and (PTSD)" (2018). *Lesley University Community of Scholars Day*. 7.
https://digitalcommons.lesley.edu/community_of_scholars/2018/session_c/7

This Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the Symposia and Conferences at DigitalCommons@Lesley. It has been accepted for inclusion in Lesley University Community of Scholars Day by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Lesley. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@lesley.edu, cvrattos@lesley.edu.

Proposal: Autoethnographic Inquiry into Identity Transformation and Posttraumatic Growth
Following (TBI) and (PTSD) P. Genetti

Autoethnographic Inquiry into Identity Transformation and Posttraumatic Growth
Following (TBI) and (PTSD)

Abstract:

Posttraumatic Growth (PTG) is a phenomenon of growth in the aftermath of suffering extreme life adversities that challenges one's core beliefs and worldviews. Psychological well-being may be positively changed in domains of self-perception, relationships, and philosophy of life.

Psychological growth, however, is not inevitable after trauma. My research is an autoethnographic inquiry into my journey of resilience, on-going recovery and identity transformation. I explore the phenomenon of PTG concurrently with my recovery as a survivor of a devastating traumatic brain injury (TBI) and co-occurring posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) from a car crash. In the aftermath of TBI, skills and personal resources necessary to cope with disabilities caused are unavailable to the survivor. My research questions if PTG can occur in a survivor of TBI and PTSD, and if so, how is it characterized. I explore whether TBI and PTSD can co-exist as the question of loss of consciousness arises concerning the validity of the traumatic memory to be etched and recalled, as in flashbacks. I explore whether survivors can derive a coherent narrative into their autobiographical memory base. I also investigate whether PTG, which is growth can co-exist with PTSD, which is distress.

Autoethnography is a qualitative method of research that interrelates the concepts of culture, self and other, culminating into a narrative. Autoethnographies "show struggle, passion, embodied life, and the collaborative creation of sense-making in situations in which people have to cope with dire circumstances and loss of meaning." (Ellis and Bochner, 2000p.433). Stories can move oppressed people to action. I have been compelled to be transparent in the reconstruction and truth telling of my own story/identity transformation and further will use leadership in both

Proposal: Autoethnographic Inquiry into Identity Transformation and Posttraumatic Growth Following (TBI) and (PTSD) P. Genetti

activism and ethical witnessing to the social injustice of the underserved population of survivors of an acquired TBI and consequential PTSD, whom become relegated into the marginalized identity of the TBI disability culture.

Therefore, my objectives for this presentation are: (1) To examine and identify the process of autoethnography; (2) to assess the phenomenon of PTG for the welfare of self and others; and (3) to identify the hybrid diagnosis and efficacy for treatment of TBI and PTSD. As well, to raise awareness of disability identity through the development of this autoethnography.

Interested audiences will be other medical, rehabilitation and mental health professions, researchers, scholars, teachers, as well as advocates, family members, caretakers, friends, and most importantly, fellow survivors. The cultural attributes of the TBI experience has been demonstrated to be universal across all cultures.

My approach to the problem is innovative and original. Very little research has been done on the issues of TBI, PTSD and PTG by insiders. Therefore, I decided to pursue a study involving my own experience as a participant-researcher. Autoethnography portrays the struggle of people to overcome adversity. The fundamental values of autoethnography support product knowledge of normative, transformative, and emancipatory stories, giving voice to those who have unique and challenging experiences, are marginalized, and are vulnerable. Most narratives are accomplished in retrospect, similar to accounts of PTG, and in contrast my account and recovery are concurrent over a ten-year period. Moreover, there are not enough chronicled accounts of or by individuals with TBI and co-occurring PTSD to benefit as role models or case studies.

In conclusion I find that PTG is a paradox whereas losses have generated beneficial and valued gains. However, psychological growth is not inevitable after trauma. Those whose perception

Proposal: Autoethnographic Inquiry into Identity Transformation and Posttraumatic Growth Following (TBI) and (PTSD) P. Genetti

and beliefs are not challenged by extraordinary events report fewer benefits than those experience severe trauma. PTG elicits as a result of the struggle to reconstruct life after a traumatic event. It occurs from the interactions of coping, social support, personality variables and requires reflective rumination. The PTG model is for rebuilding assumptions so “they can move on with their lives, which no longer seems to be wholly defined by their victimization. Victims become survivors” (Janoff-Bulman, 1992, p.169). And “those who try to put their lives back as they were remain fractured and vulnerable. But those who accept the breakage and build themselves anew become more resilient and open to new ways of living” (Joseph, 2012b.p.817).

Short Description of my project:

Posttraumatic Growth (PTG) is a phenomenon of growth in the aftermath of suffering extreme life adversities that challenges one’s core beliefs. Psychological well-being may be positively changed in domains of self-perception, relationships, and philosophy of life. My research is an autoethnographic inquiry into my journey of resilience, on-going recovery and identity transformation. I explore the phenomenon of PTG concurrently with my recovery as a survivor of a traumatic brain injury (TBI) and co-occurring posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) from a devastating car crash.

Dee Phyllis Genetti, LMHC, Ph.D. Candidate
PhD Educational Studies: Individualized Specialization
Lesley University
19 Marcus Rd., Wilmington, MA 01887, 978-658-4191
pgenetti@lesley.edu; dpgenetti@comcast.net

Format: Individual Presentation

Brief Bibliography:

Proposal: Autoethnographic Inquiry into Identity Transformation and Posttraumatic Growth Following (TBI) and (PTSD) P. Genetti

- Belanger, H. G., Kretzmer, T., Vanderploeg, R. D., & French, L. M. (2010). Symptom complaints following combat-related traumatic brain injury: Relationship to traumatic brain injury severity and posttraumatic stress disorder. *Journal of the International Neuropsychological Society*, 16, 194-199. doi: 10.1017/S1355617709990841
- Brown, S.E. (2015). Disability culture and the ADA. *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 35(3).
- Chang, H. (2008). *Autoethnography as Method*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.
- Collier, L. (2016). Growth after trauma. Why are some people more resilient than others – and can it be taught? *American Psychological Association*. Vol. 47, No. 10. Washington, DC.
- Constantinidou, F Wertheimer, J.; Tsnadis, J.; Evans, C. & Paul, D. *Assessment of executive functioning in brain injury: Collaboration between speech-language pathology and neuropsychology for an integrative neuropsychological perspective*. *Brain Injury*, December 2012; 26(13-14): 1549-1563.
- Dekel, S., Ein-Dor, T. & Solomon, Z. (2012). Posttraumatic growth and posttraumatic distress: A longitudinal study. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice and Policy*, 4, 94-101.
- Duan, W.; Guo, P; Gan, P. (2015). Relationships among trait resilience, virtues, posttraumatic stress disorder, and posttraumatic growth. PLOS ONE|DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0125707.
- Ellis, C., & Bochner, A. P. (2000). Autoethnography, personal narrative, and personal reflexivity. In Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.), (733-768). *Handbook of qualitative research*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Holmes-Wickert, L. (2014). *What is Disability Culture?* Inclusion Daily Express, Spokane, WA: Inonit Publishing.
- Janoff-Bulman, R. (1992). *Shattered Assumptions: Towards a New Psychology of Trauma*. NY: Free Press.
- Joseph, S. (2012). *What Doesn't Kill Us: A guide to overcoming adversity and moving forward*. Little, Brown Book.
- Marechal, G. (2010). Autoethnography. In Mills, A. J., Durepos, G., & Wiebe, E. (Eds.), (43-45). *Encyclopedia of Case Study Research*, (1), London: Sage. Retrieved from: www.uk.sagepub.com

Proposal: Autoethnographic Inquiry into Identity Transformation and Posttraumatic Growth Following (TBI) and (PTSD) P. Genetti

Powell, T., Gilson, R., & Collin, C. (2012). TBI 13 years on: Factors associated with post-traumatic growth. *Disability and Rehabilitation, 34*, 461-1467.

Tedeschi, R.G., Calhoun, L.G. & Groleau, J.M. (2015). Clinical applications of posttraumatic growth. In Joseph, S. (Ed.). *Positive Psychology in Practice: Promoting Human Flourishing in Work, Health, Education and Everyday Life*. 503-518. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Triplett, K.N., Tedeschi, R.G., Cann, A., Calhoun, L.G., & Reeve, C.L. (2012). Posttraumatic growth, meaning in life, and life satisfaction in response to trauma. *Psychological trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy, 4*, 400-410.