What makes anguish authentic?

A reappraisal of the critique of auto-ethnography and a claim that there may be greater gain for greater pain

Daniel Clarke
School of Business, Dundee University
d.clarke@dundee.ac.uk

David Weir
Edge Hill University, and
York St John University
weir53@gmail.com

Abstract submitted to
The 10th Annual Liverpool Symposium
University of Liverpool, 25-28th August 2015
The aim of this paper is to expound an argument rather than to present new data. In pursuit of this aim, we draw on a theme of parental loss driving scholarly work that can be regarded as “auto-ethnographic” and argue that despite the strictures of critics like Delamont such work can be classified as nonetheless “authentic” and as no more nor less liable to methodological and ethical critique than more conventionally accepted versions of ethnography. Indeed we essay an argument that pace Delamont’s strictures, ethnographic work that is based or emerges from the experience of anguish can stimulate and be the occasion for substantive and new critical theoretical insights.