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Editorial:

Living Autoethnography: Connecting Life and Research

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Abstract

Combining ethnography, biography, and self-analysis, autoethnography is a qualitative research method that utilizes data about self and context to gain an understanding of the connectivity between self and others within the same context. This introductory article exposes the reader to our own praxis of collaborative autoethnography to interrogate how we navigate the US academy as immigrant women faculty. Before introducing the articles in this special issue, we explore the autoethnography continuum, provide sample areas covered by autoethnographers, and explicate the practice of collaborative autoethnography. We conclude this piece with implications for future use of autoethnography as research method.

Keywords: collaborative autoethnography; autoethnography continuum

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1. Introduction

Research is an extension of researchers' lives. Although most social scientists have been trained to guard against subjectivity (self-driven perspectives) and to separate self from research activities, it is an impossible task. Scholarship is inextricably connected to self--personal interest, experience, and familiarity. Working together on this special issue provided an opportunity for us to candidly reflect on and dialogue about the motivations behind our scholarship. Not surprisingly, at the very onset our dissertation studies were anchored in our personal interests. Ngunjiri (2007, 2010) as a Kenyan woman studied African women leaders; Hernandez (2005, 2006), a Trinidadian who lived and taught in the British Virgin Islands (BVI) prior to coming to the US, studied high school students in the BVI and the US; Chang (1992), a secondary educator, explored the culture of adolescents in a US high school. In spite of this intimate connection with our work, we followed traditional scientific paradigms in conducting and reporting our work. For each of us, there was little room for self-analysis as researcher and participant in the research process. That story remained untold--it had to wait for another day. The emerging recognition of *autoethnography* as research method signals that day has come.

Now, as immigrant women of color in the US academy, we unapologetically claim that we are doing autoethnography. The intersection of our socio-identities and the opportunities and challenges we face in the academy has become our *positionality*; collaborative autoethnography is our method of choice. In this article, we discuss the methodological tenets of autoethnography and the collaborative autoethnography that has drawn us together for the last couple of years. The methodological discussion is followed by an introduction to the articles in this special issue. We are pleased to present 10 highly selective articles discussing autoethnography as research practice. We hope this collection continues to promote dialogue and critical thinking about the scope and future direction of autoethnography as research method.

2. Autoethnography as Qualitative, Self-Focused, and Context-Conscious Method

Autoethnography is a qualitative research method that utilizes data about self and its context to gain an understanding of the connectivity between self and others within the same context. This research method is distinctive from others in three ways: it is qualitative, self-focused, and context-conscious. First, autoethnography is a qualitative research method (Chang, 2007; Denzin, 2006; Ellis, 2004; Ellis & Bochner, 2000). As a research method, autoethnography takes a systematic approach to data collection, analysis, and interpretation about self and social phenomena involving self. This systematic and intentional approach to the socio-cultural understanding of self sets autoethnography apart from other self-narrative writings such as *memoir* and *autobiography*. Second, autoethnography is self-focused. The researcher is at the center of the investigation as a "subject" (the researcher who performs the investigation) and an "object" (a/the participant who is investigated). Autoethnographic data provide the researcher a window through which the external world is understood. Although the

blurred distinction between the researcher-participant relationship has become the source of criticism challenging the scientific credibility of the methodology (Anderson, 2006; Holt, 2003; Salzman, 2002; Sparkes, 2002), access to sensitive issues and inner-most thoughts makes this research method a powerful and unique tool for individual and social understanding (Ellis, 2009). Third, autoethnography is context-conscious. Rooted in ethnography (the study of culture), autoethnography intends to connect self with others, self with the social, and self with the context (Reed-Danahay, 1997; Wolcott, 2004). The focus on self does not necessary mean “self in a vacuum.” A variety of others--“others of similarity” (those with similar values and experiences to self), “others of difference” (those with different values and experiences from self), and “others of opposition” (those with values and experiences seemingly irreconcilable to self)--are often present in stories about self (Chang, 2008). This multiplicity of others exist in the context where a self inhabits; therefore, collecting data about self ultimately converges with the exploration of how the context surrounding self has influenced and shaped the make-up of self and how the self has responded to, reacted to, or resisted forces innate to the context. Ethnographic attention to the socio-cultural context is the foundation of this research method.

Autoethnographers pay varying levels of attention to narration/description and analysis/interpretation of autobiographical data. According to Ellis and Bochner, “autoethnographers vary in their emphasis on the research process (*graphy*), on culture (*ethno*), and on self (*auto*)” such that “different exemplars of autoethnography fall at different places along the continuum of each of these three axes” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p.740). The continuum could be presented as in Figure 1. Wherever one is on the continuum, it represents a mix of artistic representation, scientific inquiry, self-narration, and ethnography. However, we could argue that some forms of autoethnography, particularly in the way they are written and conveyed, lean more toward art whereas others make more purposeful attempts at scientific analysis. Some scholars categorize these differences as *evocative* versus *analytical* (see Anderson, 2006, including other articles in that special issue in response to his view on *analytic autoethnography*). The point at which one lies on that continuum could also be in flux, changing according to the particular writing project and the goals of the researcher.

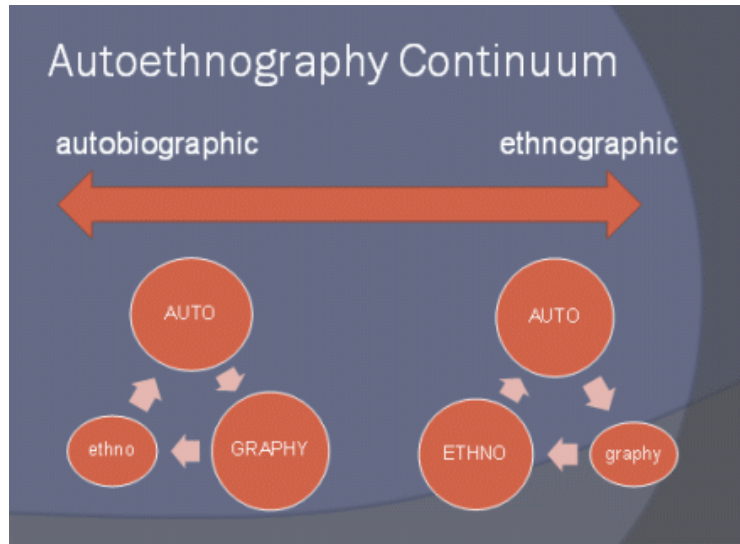


Figure 1. *Autoethnography continuum, adapted from Ellis and Bochner (2000).*

Some of the discussions about the autoethnographic landscape tend to be polarizing, insisting on support for one extreme of the continuum or the other, and sometimes even dismissing alternative viewpoints (again see *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, Volume 35, Number 4, 2006, for critiques of Anderson's analytic autoethnography, some supportive with qualifications, others dismissive and critical). In this regard, Denzin in the mentioned special issue wrote:

Ellis, Bochner, Richardson, St. Pierre, Holman Jones, and their cohort want to change the world by writing from their hearts . . . the writers in the Third Chicago School [the one that Anderson supports] want none of this . . . ethnography is a [sic] not an innocent practice. Our research practices are performative, pedagogical and political. Through our writing and our talk, we enact the worlds we study . . . the pedagogical is always moral and political; by enacting a way of seeing and being, it challenges, contests, or endorses the official, hegemonic ways of seeing and representing the other. (2006, p. 423)

Ellis and Bochner (2006) try to be more conciliatory, though they worry that analytic autoethnography per Anderson is simply a genre of realist ethnography as opposed to an alternative ethnographic practice. Vryan (2006) is more supportive of analytic autoethnography, but argues against the limits that Anderson placed on it by insisting that autoethnography must include data from others. Vryan argues that this should not be a precondition for naming one's practice analytic autoethnography. Instead,

What Anderson discusses as AA is one way to employ self-study; specifically, it is a way to conduct traditional ethnography with significantly enhanced researcher visibility and reflexivity and a strong member role. I have no problem with the research strategy he suggests--I find great value in

traditional ethnography and the version of it he proposes--but I believe we can more usefully establish what AA is and can be. There are many ways analysis via self-study may be accomplished, and the term analytic autoethnography should be applicable to all such possibilities. (2006, p. 406)

Further, he recommends that “the necessity, value and feasibility of such data will vary according to the specifics of a given project and the goals of its creator” (p. 407). Continued dialogue provokes us to interrogate the assumptions and processes that define this research method. Ironically though, in defending our own understanding of autoethnography, the dialogue is richest when method takes precedence over personality--when autoethnography continues to serve the purposes of diverse authors, telling different tales in different ways.

3. A Variety of Autoethnographic Tales

Autoethnographers explore a wide range of experiences, some purely personal and others in relation with/to other participants of research projects. Professors have explored their experiences within the academy as instructors in addition to how they navigate the classroom as minority faculty (Rodriguez, 2009), the development of the faculty identity in a Spanish university (Hernandez, Sancho, Creus, & Montané, 2010, in this special issue), unique experiences of academic culture (Pelias, 2003; Walford, 2004), experiences with teaching qualitative research or other subject matter (Borochowitz, 2005), and spirituality in higher education (Chang & Boyd, forthcoming, Cozart, 2010). Emotional experiences are particularly popular topics within which faculty explore their “lived experience” of specific phenomena including depression (Jago, 2002). Autoethnographers have also explored their experiences with grief (Lee, 2006), dealing with loss and illness (Ellis, 1995; Lee, 2010) and other areas related to health. Jago (2002) deals with depression in the context of the academy, even though some of the sources of her depression had to do with personal relationships outside of work. She is concerned with telling the story of how depression impacted her experience at work, including how she cancelled classes and eventually took a medical leave. Upon her return to work, she writes about how others seemed to view her or how she thought they viewed her because of having suffered with/from depression. It is a story of vulnerability in the academy relating to the tenure and promotion processes as well as to relationships with students and colleagues.

Various autoethnographers have explored their own identity and its development within given socio-cultural contexts, some of them being directly related to the academy as professors, others in relation to conducting research in the field. Stories of coming out in the academy (Ettorre, 2010) and how sexuality, particularly homosexuality, is experienced within the higher education environment abound (see also Mitra [2010] and Mizzi [2010] in this special issue). Gender identity is also explored by various autoethnographers, sometimes in relation to other aspects of their social identity, other times in isolation. For instance, masculinity (Drummond, 2010) in relation to sports, femininity (Averett, 2009), and Black masculinity (Alexander, 2004) serve as examples of explorations of identity using autoethnography.

White privilege has also been a topic of personal autoethnographic exploration at the individual level of analysis (Boyd, 2008; Warren, 2001) as well as within a dialogic framework (Toyosaki, Pensoneau-Conway, Wendt, & Leathers, 2009). Others have looked at their racial and/or multiracial identity (Gatson, 2003; Alexander, 2004), including the impact this has on research (Pompper, 2010, in this special issue) and on life in the academy (Pathak, 2010, in this special issue).

Other autoethnographers look at family drama and relationships, including father-absence and family secrets (Jago, 2006; Poulos, 2009). Jago's autoethnography is both about her own experiences as well as those of her participants with absent fathers. Dealing with such stories where one is both researcher and research subject along with other participants may help the researcher to gain empathy with the respondents. Class consciousness is also a topic of autoethnographic exploration (McIlveen, Beccaria, Preez, & Patton, 2010).

These are a fraction of published autoethnographers as books, chapters, articles, and dissertations. For more examples of full length autoethnographies, see Chang's (2008) book and explore the *Qualitative Inquiry* journal which publishes autoethnography articles.

4. Collaborative Autoethnography

Most autoethnographies published so far have been the works of solo authors. However, more autoethnographies co-conducted by two or more researchers have been appearing in publications. For example, Norris, who invented "duoethnography," engaged another researcher to co-construct their common and differing experiences as a gay and a straight male in a dialogic format (Sawyer & Norris, 2004). Toyosaki et al. (2009) explore their White privilege in the sequential process also resulting in a co-constructed dialogue. Unlike the duoethnography, their research process, self-labeled as "community autoethnography," involved four individuals. Two of the articles published in this special issue are collaborative autoethnographies (discussed later). Their studies involved more than two researchers and the final products do not take on the dialogical format. Irrespective of the number of researchers who participated in the co-construction process, their interactions produced a richer perspective than that emanating from a solo researcher autoethnography. One researcher's story stirred another researcher's memory; one's probing question unsettled another's assumptions; one's action demanded another's reaction. All collaborative autoethnographers as participant-researchers not only made decisions about their research process but also kept themselves accountable to each other.

Collaborative autoethnographers adopt various models of collaboration. Some collaborate fully at all stages of research process. Others collaborate at certain stages and work individually in other stages of research. Whether collaboration is done fully or partially, cooperative data collection is a key to collaborative autoethnography. In this stage, some research teams may adopt a sequential model, in which one autoethnographer writes about his/her experience, passes his/her writing to the next person who adds his/her story to the previous writing, and passes it along to the next person for further addition of

stories. Toyosaki et al. (2009) followed this model. Others use a concurrent model in which autoethnographers select topics for data collection, independently collect autobiographic data, and gather to share and review their stories and probe each other to extract further data. Geist-Martin et al. (2010) in this issue followed the concurrent format although they did not initially intend to do collaborative autoethnography beyond sharing stories and looking for common themes as a conference presentation. Methodological discussion of collaborative autoethnography is further advanced in our forthcoming book on this method. In this article, we will introduce a collaborative autoethnography we have engaged in for the last 2 years.

In our own work, we have adopted a full concurrent collaboration model in which we collaborated at all stages of research--data collection, analysis, and writing. This model of full and concurrent collaboration could be logistically challenging because the research team needs to converge frequently to make collective decisions along the research process. Taking advantage of the physical proximity as colleagues at the same university, we set out to explore our common experiences as immigrant women of color in US higher education. We further characterize our collaborative autoethnography as dialogical and ethnographic. The collaboration process was dialogical because our independent self-exploration and collective interaction were interlaced in the process. Figure 2 provides a visual representation of this model.



Figure 2. Collaborative autoethnography--a concurrent collaboration model.

We began our collaboration by collectively deciding on the general direction of the research and topics to explore for the beginning stage of data collection. This initial converging step was followed by the diverging step of individually writing out our experiences. Whereas the “convergent” step enabled us to shape the path of our research together, the “divergent” step created the space for us to reflect and collect our autobiographic data free of one another’s influences. Then, we shared our writings with each other, reviewed them, and posed probing questions to each other. At this convergent

step, we exposed ourselves to each other for further exploration and collectively conducted preliminary data analysis on the basis on which further steps of data collection were decided. Our convergent sessions were audio-taped, which was added to our pool of data. We iterated between individual (divergent) and collaborative (convergent) activities at several times in the process. The collaboration process was grounded on the ethnographic intent of understanding the interplay among the forces of our developmental, personal, and socio-cultural identities.

Ethnographic methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation were employed as well. The data were analyzed in a three phase process: preliminary exploratory analysis, open coding, and development of themes. For us, collaborative autoethnography has been a transformative process whereby we were able to create community, advance scholarship, and become empowered to effect change at our institution.

5. Challenges and Opportunities of Autoethnography as Method

Autoethnographers recognize several challenges and concerns in using autoethnography as their chosen research method. One of the primary concerns discussed in the literature has to do with ethics. Specifically, researchers have discussed the challenge of telling their stories in light of representing others in that story--such as stories of pain, hurt, betrayal, family drama, and loss that may include other actors such as parents, siblings, and colleagues. Ellis' (2007) article on relational ethics assists autoethnographers in grappling with that kinds of concerns. Medford (2006) also deals with issues of ethics and accountability in autoethnographic work.

Another concern has to do with writing about oneself while dealing with sensitive issues that may cause self-disclosure/exposure. Vulnerability is part of what makes reading autoethnographic works so compelling, as researchers expose their pains, hurt, loss, grief, heartbreaks, and other emotions experienced as they travail through events in their lives. In this respect, Chatham-Carpenter (2010, in this special issue) explores the ethical dilemma involved in using her own life experiences with an eating disorder. She shares the lessons she learned on how to protect oneself even as she urges autoethnographers to write through their pain. Similarly, Pearce (2010, in this special issue) discussed the "crises and freedoms" involved in using one's own life as the source of data for research. She warns of the emotional vulnerability that an autoethnographer may experience when researching her own life.

Despite the concerns, researchers have found that autoethnography provides them with opportunities to study subject areas that would not be as easily and profoundly expressed with other methods, including those discussed here (loss, pain, grief, depression, eating disorders, family drama, etc.). Whereas such topics can be studied using ethnographic, phenomenological, and other qualitative approaches, autoethnography allows researchers to dig deeply into their own experience, including the attendant emotions in ways that may not be possible if they were being interviewed by someone else. Similarly, sharing one's own story of loss, pain, and the like with research participants may create more empathy, which engenders more openness. Chang (2008) resonates with this sentiment

when she discussed that this method is friendly to researchers and readers. The method not only enables researchers to access personally intimate data with ease but also to reach readers with their vulnerable openness. This open relationship grounded on emotional and cognitive resonance has potential to increase the understanding of interconnectivity between self and others across socio-cultural differences and “motivate them to work toward cross-cultural coalition building” (p. 52). The broader implication of the method needs to be continuously examined. We believe that our contributing authors add their insights to this endeavor.

6. Introduction to the Special Issue Articles

The authors in this special issue cover many of the areas that we have discussed in the preceding pages. Here we introduce each article. We begin these introductions by looking at issues of ethics in autoethnographic research. The authors writing about ethics look at protecting themselves as the subject of their own research, even as they protect other participants involved or implied in their stories.

The special issue starts with an article by **April Chatham-Carpenter**, Associate Professor of Communication at University of Northern Iowa, USA. Chatham-Carpenter (2010) is concerned with protecting the researcher as the object of her own study, as an extension of the discussions regarding protecting participants in research with others. She argues that, especially when writing about topics that are painful and potentially exposing, the researcher should write through the pain, yet be careful to protect herself as well as those implicated in her story, reminiscent of the arguments made by Chang (2008), Ellis (2007), and Tillmann-Healy (1996). The difference between Chatham-Carpenter’s and Tillmann-Healy’s arguments and those from Chang and Ellis is the focus on “do thyself no harm” (Chatham-Carpenter, 2010).

Following Chatham-Carpenter is an article by **Carolyn Pearce**, an independent scholar from the United Kingdom who writes about the sense of heightened vulnerability that awakened in her while doing research with girls who had experienced the loss of their mother. She discusses how this exposed her to renewed grief at the loss of her own mother, even though it had happened almost 2 decades prior to the research study. She details how she used her vulnerability and grief as part of the research material, recognizing that she could not completely separate her experience from those of the young women she was studying. Pearce (2010) then explains the lessons she learned through that research process on “the crises and freedoms of researching your own life.” While some may argue that her study of the girls is not autoethnographic in a strict sense, her approach to research has potential to grow into a form of collaborative autoethnography such as that which Smith (2005) conducted as she investigated healing experiences of brain injury patients that included herself.

We move away from ethical concerns to an article by **Robert Mizzi**, a doctoral candidate at York University, Canada, who introduces us to *multivocality* in autoethnographic work. Mizzi (2010) defines multivocality as “providing representational space in the autoethnography for the plural and sometimes contradictory *narrative voices* located

within the researcher.” Using vignettes from his experiences as a teacher in Kosovo, he demonstrates how multivocality helps to expose the variety of voices as these voices respond to an event—including where the voices demonstrate tensions within the actor as he thinks through and responds to what is happening to him. Mizzi recommends multivocality as a tool towards decolonizing and enriching autoethnographic practice. His article also delves into issues of identity and the vulnerability that being “the other” can have, in this case, the otherness of the researcher himself living within a foreign culture and in a work situation where being “out” as a gay man might be disadvantageous to his continuing contract.

Rahul Mitra, a doctoral student at Purdue University, USA, follows with his article interrogating how autoethnography can be used to expand knowledge as a form of scholarship. Mitra’s (2010) incisive article argues against what he regards as the false dichotomy between the doing of research and being a researcher, observing instead that the two are dialectically connected: “doing is located within the ethnographer’s very being.” Mitra provides an example from his own research process. His piece also involves issues of identity, specifically gay and immigrant identity within the US academy, demonstrating how these positionalities offered him a starting point and standpoint for his research topics and interests.

Expanding on the issues of identity in autoethnographic research practice is **Elena Maydell**, a doctoral candidate at the Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. Maydell (2010) explicates her experiences as a researcher amongst Russian immigrants to New Zealand, and realizes that her insider perspective as a member of the same immigrant group is the most important tool in her repertoire as she interpreted and represented their stories. Being an immigrant from Russia herself meant that as she interviewed participants and interpreted their stories of identity formation, she was questioning and analyzing herself too; thus, autoethnography became an important process, one she described as being “an invisible but inseparable part of my research undertakings, both theoretical and empirical.” Maydell realized the usefulness of finding an appropriate theoretical and methodological framework to use in interrogating and understanding the construction of self-identity for herself and the participants.

Donnalyn Pompper, Professor of Communication Studies at Temple University in Philadelphia, USA, interrogates how her identity as a White woman academic impacted participants in her research studies—participants who were African-American, Asian, and Latina. Using autoethnographic reflection, Pompper (2010) revisited her earlier research study to explore the researcher-researched relationship as far as racial-matching is concerned. Using a non-representative sample, Pompper sought to find out how some of those participants felt about her. She found out that the participants did not have problems with her race and appeared to appreciate having the opportunity to air their opinions about the field of Public Relations. Whereas Pompper does not raise this, it is also possible they felt a connection to her by virtue of gender and common interest in Public Relations. The article demonstrates the need to be cognizant of one’s social identity in researching those constructed as “other,” especially in view of the earlier issues of “crisis of representation” (Lengel, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 2000).

In one of two articles focusing on motherhood, **Patty Sotirin**, Associate Professor of Communication Studies at Michigan Technological University, USA, explicates the similarities between evocative autoethnographic mother-writing and “momoirs,” that is, popular memoirs about motherhood. Sotirin (2010) argues that, whereas there are some similarities between the two genres, evocative autoethnographic writers should employ what she terms “radical specificity” to think creatively about personal experiences and cultural relations beyond what can be communicated as shared experience.

Next is an article by **Fernando Hernandez, Juana Maria Sancho, Amalia Creus, and Alejandra Montané** (2010), education faculty at the University of Barcelona, Spain, who provide the first of two articles in this special issue that employ collaborative autoethnographic methods. Hernandez and colleagues’ article focused on how university faculty constructed their professional identities. The article recounts the individual writing process, as well as the dialogical data analysis used in their original study. Issues such as relationships with colleagues, their early experiences as students, the beginning of their professional careers as faculty, and the effect of gender on all these experiences are discussed as contributing to their professional identity. Hernandez and colleagues then engage in discussions on the process and the lessons learned in the collaborative autoethnographic research process: three lessons that are well worth the read.

The article by **Patricia Geist-Martin** and colleagues, communication studies scholars from various institutions in the US, focus on motherhood stories; either their experiences as mothers, as children, or a juxtaposition of both. Professor Geist-Martin (San Diego State University), **Lisa Gates** (Associate Professor, San Diego Christian University), **Liesbeth Weiring** (Instructor, Cuyamaca College), Professor **Erika Kirby** (Creighton University), **Renee Houston** (Associate Professor, University of Puget Sound), **Ann Lilly** and **Juan Moreno** both students at San Diego State University, offered an excellent example of collaborative autoethnographic practice. Their collaborative autoethnography started with individual narratives about mothering and/or being mothered, which they presented at a conference. During that presentation, they began, and continued afterwards, to look for common themes and later to interrogate their participation in hegemonic constructions of motherhood using feminist critic. The article demonstrates the benefits of collaborative autoethnographic method in helping researchers to explore the depth of individual and shared experiences, such that sharing the stories unearthed insights into mothering that no one story in isolation could have done.

To conclude this special issue, **Archana Pathak** (2010), an instructor in the Women Studies department at Virginia Commonwealth University, USA, examines how autoethnography combined with postcolonial theory can aid researchers in disrupting the colonial enterprise. Pathak’s essay provokes the reader to use autoethnography to further a social justice agenda in the academy. It provides an excellent parting shot as she uses her own experience in the academy in relation to race—her own and that of her students and colleagues—and how her race was sometimes used to judge her abilities and whom she could advise. Pathak also discusses how discovering autoethnography helped her to finally tell the stories that she had been longing to read/hear, stories that reflected her

own experience, even as she struggled with whether telling such stories could really be “research” and not merely “me-search.”

7. Implications for Future Research Practice

As self-focused writings gain more recognition as scholarly endeavor, we can only imagine that production of autoethnography will increase because the easy access to the source of data will encourage scholars under pressure of “publish or perish” to use their own lives as source of data for research. As scholars continue to engage in scholarship that blurs art and science, we imagine that autoethnographers as social scientists will face more pressure to defend our efforts converging these traditionally dichotomous elements—art and science. Autoethnographers may respond to the pressure in three different ways.

First, autoethnographers may continue to ride on the back of postmodern defiance against the conventional dichotomization between science and art. Whether they position themselves closer to the “ethnography” pole or to the “autobiography” pole in the autoethnography continuum presented in Figure 1, they will continue to mix scientific inquiry and self-exploration and to express the mixture in descriptive-realistic, analytical-interpretive, confessional-emotive, or imaginative-creative writing. The descriptive-realistic and analytical-interpretive writing is more supported by the traditional scientific approach whereas the confessional-emotive and imaginative-creative writing is closer to artistic presentation. In the spirit of transcending the dichotomization, it is possible for autoethnographers to mix different styles of writing and presentations of inquiry in the final products of their autoethnographic writings.

Second, autoethnographers may swing back to a more conventional scientific inquiry in reaction to the ever-increasing production of self-introspection that lacks methodological transparency. Although the voice of defense for self-exploration as part of scientific inquiry has become stronger, the community of scientific inquiry is not likely to disappear in the face of growing interest in autoethnography. Their love affair with systematic methodology may demand more methodological transparency than what most autoethnographies have offered in confessional-evocative or imaginative-creative writings. Although Chang (2008), Anderson (2006) and others on the analytical end of the continuum stand in contrast to Ellis (2004), Denzin (2006) and those on the more evocative end in terms of the defense of the systematic methodology of autoethnography, their efforts to explain the research process of autoethnography have been instructive for novice autoethnographers in pursuit of this new methodological adventure. In addition, such apologia has helped to defend autoethnography as a legitimate research method. It is unlikely that autoethnographers will fully succumb to the pressure to turn their writing into dry academic discourse. However, it is possible that more and more autoethnographers would present their methodological discussion as part of their autoethnographic product especially in theses and dissertations.

Third, autoethnographers may construct autoethnography collectively as we discussed earlier in the section on collaborative autoethnography. Collaborative interrogation could enable researchers to explore self in the presence of others to gain a collective

understanding of their shared experiences. Critical probing of one another, a vital step in the collaborative process, can potentially keep them from settling too soon in their own grove of perspectives and evoke new insights beyond their own. With different models of collaboration--full or partial, sequential or concurrent--more autoethnographers may enter into self-exploration with others.

How autoethnography will develop within the next decade depends on how we will respond to the changing trend of scholarship and the fate of postmodernism. With the opportunities and challenges that this unique and powerful methodological tool presents to social scientists, researchers are called to examine this methodology with critical eyes so that it enhances the understanding of humanity--self in social-cultural context. Contributors to this special issue are doing precisely that and we as editors and fellow autoethnographers are grateful for their efforts.

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