Autoethnography

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abstract Autoethnography, an alternative method and form of writing, can make for uncomfortable reading. A transgressive account in the context of professional practice opens out a professional's life, remaking power relations in the process. Relational ethics is an emerging growth area for autoethnographers, given the ethical implications for everyone represented in a transgressive telling. Future directions include fresh juxtapositions of layered autoethnographic texts and collaborative accounts that break with the self–other dichotomy.

keywords autoethnography ◆ relational ethics ◆ remaking professional practice ◆ transgressive writing

Autoethnography is 'an alternative method and form of writing' (Neville-Jan, 2003: 89) falling somewhere between anthropology and literary studies. Some social science researchers have an interpretive literary style and others have been 'trained to write in ways that use highly specialised vocabulary, that efface the personal and flatten the voice, that avoid narrative in deference to dominant theories and methodologies of the social sciences' (Modjeska, 2006: 31). The complex relationship between social science writing and literary writing has led to a blurring 'between "fact" and "fiction" and between "true" and "imagined" ' (Richardson, 2000b: 926). Autoethnographers often blur boundaries, crafting fictions and other ways of being true in the interests of rewriting selves in the social world.

Writing both selves and others into a larger story goes against the grain of much academic discourse. Holt foregrounds the challenge that autoethnographers issue to 'silent authorship':

> By writing themselves into their own work as major characters, autoethnographers have challenged accepted views about silent authorship, where the researcher's voice is not included in the presentation of findings. (2003: 2)

Yes, autoethnography is a contested field. The introspective and subjective performances that are, to a greater or lesser extent, inevitable parts of the autoethnographic act still raise questions about the value of each autoethnographic account and which accounts are to be published and counted as research. Journals such as *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *Qualitative Inquiry*, *Sociology of Sport Journal*, *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* and *Disability and Society* regularly publish autoethnographic research.

Moreover, autoethnographic writing has become increasingly common in a range of disciplines, including those drawn on in professional practice. An autoethnography written within/against a profession (Evetts, 2012; Lather, 1991) may destabilize boundaries between a professional's work and the rest of their life and break through the dichotomy between selves and others (Reed-Danahay, 1997).

In this article I am thinking sociologically about doing and writing autoethnography in contexts of professional practice. My autoethnographic doctorate, entitled 'Writing the ordinary: Autoethnographic tales of an occupational therapist', comprised fictional tales of practice written in direct dialogue with selected publications from my body of work. These twice-told tales of sexuality, food and death contained vulnerable, embodied representations of moments of practice (Denshire, 2010, 2011a, 2011b).

My discussion in this article is grounded in over 30 years' experience as a practitioner-researcher of

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occupational therapy. Practitioners in this little known health profession typically attend to the meanings of activities in a client's everyday life, recording moments from a client's life narrative as part of their practice. I find the interdisciplinary field of occupational therapy a productive space from which to interrogate work and everyday life. Later in the article I consider autoethnographic examples of embodied accounts from health and disability studies against evaluation criteria derived from ideas of 'narrative truth'.

The article begins with a theoretical overview of autoethnography. Then I show how an autoethnographer writing within/against a profession may begin to rework representations of power circulating between intimates, friends, clients and colleagues using selected accounts from health and disability studies. In this way, I foreground relational ethics (Ellis, 2007) as a growth area for autoethnography and social relationships and responsibilities that may have implications for everyone identified in one or more telling(s). Finally, I touch on future directions for writing autoethnography in terms of the social implications of telling a story from more than one point of view and the scope for unexpected collaborations in autoethnography with previously silenced authors.

An overview of theoretical approaches

This section begins with the point that autoethnography goes beyond the writing of selves and notes some of the early autoethnographies that were written in an anthropological tradition. Contemporary autoethnography is informed by a range of disciplines. Writers of these accounts address social questions of difference and becoming that may enable voices previously silenced to speak back. I note the binary distinction made between evocative and analytical autoethnography in a special issue of the *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* and then show how Reed-Danahay (1997) and others go beyond this distinction. Some ideas on writing in different voices and giving fictive accounts in autoethnography are presented here. Finally, the section gives a précis of feminist scholarship on writing within/against, writing as knowing, postmodern emergence and a perceived reluctance to write professional practice differently.

Beyond the writing of selves

While autoethnography contains elements of autobiography, it goes beyond the writing of selves. Writing that crosses personal and professional life spaces goes further than autobiography whenever writers critique the depersonalizing tendencies that can come into play in social and cultural spaces that have asymmetrical relations of power (Brodkey, 1996). Potential contact zones in schools (Brodkey, 1996) and health settings can be social spaces (Pratt, 1991) where 'strangers … meet and interact' (Brodkey, 1996: 27). Autoethnographic writing that shows interactive moments from these social and cultural spaces can be 'the currency of the contact zones' (Brodkey, 1996: 28):

> … auto-ethnography invites writers to see themselves and everyone else as human subjects constructed in a tangle of cultural, social and historical situations and relations in contact zones. (Brodkey, 1996: 29)

Some early autoethnographers

A blurring of selves apparent in the early uses of the term 'autoethnography' has had a productive trajectory. *Facing Mount Kenya* written in 1962 by Kenyatta, the first president of independent Kenya, is recognized as the first published autoethnography and has been criticized for being too subjective and uncritical (Hayano, 1979). Anthropologist Karl Heider introduced the term 'autoethnography' in 1975 in the context of Dani autoethnography (Chang, 2008). This autoethnography consisted of cultural accounts of sweet potato growing by the Dani people, a Papuan culture in the highlands of Irian Jaya who were the *informants* for Heider's doctoral research (Heider, 1975, 2006). A few years later, Hayano (1979) used the term 'autoethnography' in a different way to refer to the study of an ethnographer's 'own people', in the context of him-*self* as a card playing insider. The culture of card playing in Southern California was his 'autobiographical connection to the ethnography' (Chang, 2008: 47).

Disciplines, boundaries, borders

Communication scholars Carolyn Ellis, Tony Adams and Art Bochner delineate autoethnographic method 'as both process and product', reiterating that 'a researcher uses tenets of autobiography and ethnography to do and write autoethnography' (Ellis et al., 2011: 273). Social science autoethnographers, writing in a range of genres in literary and performance studies, social and political sciences, higher education, communication studies, disability studies and health and social care, are starting to challenge the discourses dominant in professional lives. In order to write autoethnography you can't feel completely at home in your discipline (Burnier, 2006) and the discomfort experienced at stepping outside your own received frame is part of the autoethnographic task. Indeed, autoethnography can provide 'vehicles for talking to each other often, across the

borders of discipline and identity locations' (Burdell and Swadener, 1999: 25).

Autoethnography 'opens up a space of resistance between the individual *(auto-)* and the collective *(-ethno-)* where the writing *(-graphy)* of singularity cannot be foreclosed' (Lionnet, 1990: 391). Autoethnography has also been interpreted as a critical approach necessitating a privileged speaker who 'sometimes seem[s] to want to study everybody's social and cultural construction but their own' (Alcoff, 1991: 21) to no longer speak for others routinely, but rather to sometimes 'move over' and listen as a messenger would, to self interrogate and 'deconstruct [their] own discourse' (1991: 3), bringing their privilege into question. Otherwise:

> When … researchers' bodies remain unmarked – and hence naturalized as normative – they reinscribe the power of scholars to speak without reflexive consideration of their positionality, whereas others' voices remain silent or marginalized by their marked status. (Ellingson, 2006: 301)

So how might researchers in the social sciences understand writing as a site of moral responsibility where authors acknowledge and celebrate previously silenced actors (Richardson, 1997)?

> Wherever text is being produced, there is the question of what social, power and sexual relationships are being reproduced? How does our writing … reproduce a system of domination and how does it challenge that system? For whom do we speak, and to whom, with what voice, to what end, using what criteria? (Richardson, 1997: 57)

Evocative/ analytical distinctions?

Different approaches in autoethnography can be characterized in terms of different relationships between the personal and the wider social and cultural world the writing seeks to enquire into. Ellis and Bochner (2006) have classified these differences in terms of 'evocative' and 'analytical' approaches, where evocative autoethnography foregrounds the writer's personal stories and analytical autoethnography connects to 'some broader set of social phenomena than those provided by the data themselves' (Anderson, 2006: 387). These two different approaches are extensively explored in a special issue of the *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*.

This binary classification is useful as an initial way of making visible the variation in how autoethnographic writers integrate the strands of self and culture in their writing. Ellis and Bochner's (2000) preliminary definition, grounded in the writer's personal experience has been particularly influential:

> I start with my personal life. I pay attention to my physical feelings, thoughts, and emotions. I use what I call systematic, sociological introspection and emotional recall to try to understand an experience I've lived through. Then I write my experience as a story. By exploring a particular life, I hope to understand a way of life. (Ellis and Bochner, 2000: 737)

In emphasizing the centrality of the personal, this account arguably backgrounds the social or cultural world in which the writing occurs, or, rather, reads the social and cultural through the personal. A consequence of this is that a fine dissection of a particular personal experience that the writer has lived through will frequently mean sacrificing opportunities to craft a broader ethnographic account that may also be autobiographically reflexive (Atkinson, 2006; Delamont, 2009).

In the analytical tradition, on the other hand, a sense of objectivity is valued. Anderson sets out the following 'key features' for analytic autoethnography: '(1) complete member researcher (CMR) status, (2) analytic reflexivity, (3) narrative visibility of the researcher's self, (4) dialogue with informants beyond the self, and (5) commitment to theoretical analysis' (2006: 378). In the same special issue of the *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* mentioned above, Atkinson has endorsed Anderson's 'analytical, theoretical and objective approach to autoethnography' (Chang, 2008: 46).

Writing both self and culture

Beyond the binary distinction of evocative and analytical forms, the question of what is ethnographic about autoethnography requires a reflexive examination of conceptions of both self and culture in terms of writing. In this regard, Deborah Reed-Danahay suggests that auto/ethnography:

> … synthesizes both a postmodern ethnography, [with] the realist conventions and objective observer position of standard ethnography … and a postmodern autobiography, in which the notion of the coherent, individual self [have] been … called into question. The term has a double sense – referring either to the ethnography of one's own group or to autobiographical writing that has ethnographic interest. (1997: 2)

This synthesis requires a reassessment of how the self and culture are conceptualized and written (Denshire and Lee, 2013). In these ways, autoethnographic writing can be simultaneously

personal and scholarly, evocative and analytical, descriptive and theoretical (Burnier, 2006).

Writing and performing an autoethnography

Holman-Jones describes autoethnography as 'a blurred genre … [that] refus[es] categorization … believing that words matter and writing toward the moment when the point of creating autoethnographic texts is to change the world' (2005: 765). She discusses the act of balancing with respect to autoethnographic writing. That is, the balance between, first, telling versus showing – how much of ourselves do/should we include, and what should we leave out? And then she writes about and holding together the/a self and culture in a world that is constantly in flux.

Autoethnography is a fictive tradition. Tensions exist between autoethnography and literary traditions, with stories being put together using composite characters and sources (Clough, 1999). Literary tales make use of conventions such as dialogue and monologue to create character, calling up emotional states, sights, smells, noises and using dramatic reconstruction. Oral traditions are also an important part of recovering the ordinary-everyday of practice. Impressionist tales are open to multiple interpretations and the writer has a degree of 'interpretive authority' when choosing the story in question. There is a freshness and spontaneity at work in the live performance of an impressionist tale. It is 'a tall order' to 'communicate in writing less of the cold ambition that come[s] from print and more other truths and intimacies that come from speech' (Tyler, 1986: 123).

Autoethnography is usually written in the first person (Ellis and Bochner, 2000). An autobiographical defence of personal narrative in sociology will intentionally use the second person 'you' to address any charge of self-indulgence, name the work as self-involved and point out those neutral, disembodied conventions of a traditional masculine academic discourse (Mykhalovskiy, 1996). And writing in the third person, as 'she' or 'he', distances the self to become just another figure/character in the drama. This is a methodological decision so that the story becomes more fictive, a rationale drawn from collective memory work (Crawford et al., 1992) for writing all self-stories in third person rather than the dangers and risks of remaining in first person. Telling a story in the first person can run a risk of too much attachment to self and a certain set of memories.

Feminist bodies of work

In *Getting Lost: Feminist Efforts toward a Double(d) Science,* Patti Lather (2007) revisits the earlier publications that mark her trajectory as a feminist methodologist, inserting what she calls an 'Interlude' between each of the existing texts in her book. In folding her new and old writings both forward and back, she achieves a polytemporality. Situating feminist research both within and against traditional approaches to social science 'makes it possible to probe how feminist research re-inscribes that which it is resisting as well as how it resists that re-inscription' (Lather, 1991: 27).

In *Fields of Play: Constructing an Academic Life*, Laurel Richardson explores these two questions: 'How do the specific circumstances in which we write affect what we write? How does what we write affect who we become?' (1997: 1). Her reflections on the co-authored ethnographic drama 'The Sea Monster' gave rise to the 'writing-story' genre, the story of how a text is constructed. She found the power of this genre by writing the story of co-authorship as *her* story, 'not allowing another voice to penetrate the text' (1997: 74). Each representation or 'writing-story' that she produced, on rereading an existing piece of writing, becomes increasingly evocative, 'illuminat(ing) a different facet of the complexity of a writing-life' … as 'Forewords' or 'Afterwords' (1997: 5).

The idea of writing as a method of enquiry (Richardson and St Pierre, 2005) has been recently extended into a 'new theory of representation' (Somerville, 2007: 225) that articulates 'the common elements of these alternative approaches to research so that each individual and each research project is not an isolated effort to break through the unsayable to new knowledge' (Somerville, 2007: 225). Spurred on by Indigenous colleagues, Somerville has gone further than deconstruction to the idea of hope. Her new theory of representation is cyclic, focusing on 'creation of meaning from the relationship between the parts … creation from working the space in between' (2007: 239).

These foregoing bodies of work are relevant to autoethnography in several ways. First, through deconstructive notions of doubled writings and tellings published in a single volume (Lather, 2007); second, using writing as a method of enquiry (Richardson and St Pierre, 2005); and third, in terms of postmodern emergence, both 'becoming self' and 'becoming-other' (Somerville, 2007) as a vulnerable observer (Behar, 1996).

Transgressive accounts of (professional) practice

In her autoethnographic doctorate on learning and becoming in the field of academic development, Tai Peseta has posed the following question at the University of Sydney where a palpable sense of

apprehension and reluctance circulated about writing practice differently and critically:

> What is it about the labour and organization of academic development that effaces such expressions of difference; that very often stifles our ability to creatively represent our work when we come to write of it? (2005: 114)

And in an unpublished presentation entitled 'Academic development as the practice of "thinking otherwise" ' at a conference symposium on autoethnography in three professions, Peseta suggests that 'autoethnography opens a door for those of us interested in offering accounts of professional practice that are committed to acknowledging a humanness to the work'. She continues:

> While criticisms of autoethnography throw up the 'auto' of the researcher as an aspect of the approach that warrants caution (Fine, 1999; Gans, 1999; Ryang, 2005), there are now so many accounts of 'life' that have been enabled by autoethnography and more generally, the literary turn within the social and health sciences (Ellis, 1995; Behar, 1996; Sparkes, 1996; Bochner, 1997; Denshire, 2009). Without these intimate and detailed evocations of life and professional practice, our knowledge of those worlds would be severely diminished. (Tai Peseta, pers. comm., May 2012)

Transgressive accounts go beyond 'the proper' to trouble the ethical relations of self and other in order to break through the dominant representations of professional practice, creating new knowledges. Dominant discourses are being challenged by scholars such as Ruth Behar in anthropology; Collette Granger, Linda Brodkey, Peter Clough, Tai Peseta in education; DeLysa Burnier in political science; Barbara Jago in communication studies; Jodi Hall and Tessa Muncey from nursing; and Ann Neville-Jan, Anne Kinsella, Rachel Thibeault and Nancy Salmon in occupational therapy. I have come to consider these accounts transgressive autoethnographies of (professional) practice and now go on to evaluate several exemplary texts in the next section.

Empirical evidences and assessment of research

Setting out to write an autoethnographic account felt somewhat daunting to me at the start. Reading the work of others enabled me to learn about autoethnography 'by example' (Wall, 2006: 6). Embodied representations, both published by nurses, of mental illness, addiction and the crisis of visibility (Bruni 2002) and an insider account of back pain (White, 2003), and forbidden social work narratives about having a breakdown (Church, 1995) were initially troubling to read. Initially, reading very personal accounts written within/against feminized professions and hearing autoethnographic narratives such as these positioned *within* the authoritative discourse (Bakhtin, 1981) seemed too self-disclosing and exposing of the writers' lives.

Until I started to read *against* the discourse 'interrupting comfortable reflexivity' (Pillow, 2003: 187), I have to confess that I was as likely as not to classify some of these embodied personal narratives as autoethnographies of affliction. Gradually though, the viscerality and the pain expressed by these authors persuaded me to somehow start writing my body-self as part of my autoethnographic research, even though lived bodies have been strangely absent from healthcare research (Ellingson, 2006).

Writing and reading autoethnographic accounts threw me around emotionally, stirring up unresolved grief and questions to do with class beginnings, gender and belonging. Making opportunities to de-brief after dealing with confronting materials is important. Given the possibility that 'abandonment is … a common practice of the would-be autoethnographer' (Bruni, 2002: 32), it is necessary to become aware both of the risks in using the self as the only source of data (Holt, 2003) and of the 'resilience and conviction' (2003: 19) vital to writing in this genre. Establishing a warrant for autoethnography is pivotal to carrying out this kind of research.

Selected autoethnographic accounts from health and disability studies

Various professional fields have worked within particular conceptions of the domain of health that have largely excluded the extensive field of disability studies (Hammell, 2006). Now autoethnographic writing from disability studies (Richards, 2008), anthropology (Behar, 1996), occupational therapy (Kinsella, 2006; Neville-Jan, 2003; Salmon, 2006) and nursing (Muncey, 2005; Wall, 2008) is challenging the dominant discourses in health that define experiences of illness and wellness, self and other. I have selected autoethnographic accounts by Rose Richards, Nancy Salmon, Anne Kinsella and Ann Neville-Jan in which these authors each critically reflect on embodied experiences of health and disability, challenging existing power relations and raising ethical issues.

First, a well-developed example of the power of autoethnography to represent about illness and disability is a compelling insider account of kidney failure, transplantation and recovery (Richards, 2008). Richards's account resists 'any notion of authorial

omniscience and objectivity' (2008: 1720) and shows the layered complexity of 'different points of view and different positionings in a given situation' and the 'underlying theoretical assumptions that inform the positions being examined' (2008: 1725).

While testimony can disrupt and emancipatory discourses break the silence, destabilized narratives may be the most effective type of autoethnography (Richards, 2008) because they 'problematise representation', inviting readers to 'co-create meaning and discover what his or her own positioning is in a given context' (Richards, 2008: 1724). Rose Richards's account about 'writing the othered self' challenges existing power relations between the users and providers of health services, raising ethical considerations about relations between selves and others in health, disability and disease.

Second, Nancy Salmon (2006) portrays an intense personal relationship between mother and daughter, conveying the strangeness both of having dementia and of caring for someone with dementia, in the process highlighting some of the inequities of care-giving in Canada and the lack of respite. Her autoethnographic narrative of care-giving used diary excerpts, reflective writing and poetry to evoke the transit zone both women must inhabit, flipping the viewpoint of a care-giving daughter who is also a health professional (Salmon, 2006). This account foregrounds her authority as a care-giving daughter on her mother's last night in the family home and raises poignant ethical questions of loss and change, pushing Salmon's professional identity into the background.

Third, Anne Kinsella looks back after 10 years on an experience of 'lingering discomfort' (2006: 40) as an occupational therapist reflecting on how the objectivity expected of her silenced her emotions. The following telling excerpt from her poem 'Professionalism' is dedicated to Louise, a 26-year-old woman living with a progressive brain tumour:

> … Your body's disappointments I know
> Of necessity
> It is my job
>
> I transgress by visiting
> Your family in the evening
> On occasion
> In emergencies …
>
> Your last Christmas
> I keep the gift in my bottom drawer
> Guilty … (2006: 42)

Poetry has the potential to disrupt the taken-for-granted (Kinsella, 2006). Here Kinsella reflects critically on the inner conflict she experienced in curbing the human drive to exchange gifts, feeling that 'professionalism' only allowed her to accept a present from another and not to reciprocate with the gift of a small carefully chosen sculpture. Her poem resists the usual professional language, by 'beginning with the life world [dimensions] of the practitioner' (2006: 43) that are so frequently 'disregarded or repressed' (2006: 44). She suggests that it is not uncommon for practitioners to experience tensions around the phenomenological aspects of practice. Her account also challenges the received clinical binaries of client and therapist, raising important ethical questions around making room for gestures of mutuality and reciprocity in healthcare interactions.

Finally, Ann Neville-Jan, autoethnographic researcher and occupational therapy academic, takes an 'embodied perspective of disability' (2004: 116) as a woman living with spina bifida, by using the term impairment 'to draw attention to the bodily struggles involved in participation in everyday activities' (2004: 115). She preferred to publish her second autoethnography, a moving account of her quest for a child, in *Disability and Society* (Neville-Jan, 2004). And she speaks out as a woman living a 'preventable' condition (Neville-Jan, 2005).

When Ann Neville-Jan (2003) looked back on her symposium paper that was ostensibly about potential connections between biology and occupation, she realized that, actually, the take-home message of the paper was about her *encounters with practitioners* (italics added). Current accounts of impaired bodies focus productively on 'the reflexive relationship between the bodily and the social' (McDaniel, 2011: 3) and how 'the body literally is conceptualised as embodying the social' (2011: 7). Perhaps Neville-Jan publicly came to know the spaces of both 'self' and 'other' as a woman living with spina bifida who is also an occupational therapy academic and an autoethnographer. Ann Neville-Jan inhabits these life spaces simultaneously in her body of work. She challenges power relations and raises ethical questions about the authority of embodied experiences of disability.

In my view, the foregoing autoethnographic accounts satisfy both Richardson's (2000a) factors for reviewing personal narrative (substantive contribution, aesthetic merit, reflexivity, impactfulness and expresses a reality) and Bochner's (2000) concrete details, structurally complex narratives, qualities of authenticity and honesty, a standard of ethical self-consciousness and a moving story. The conventions of the authoritative discourses of science and medicine will 'support masculine hegemony and heterosexist power' (Butler, 2006: 46). Embodied autoethnographic accounts of professional practice

in health and disability studies, such as these, can reconfigure power relations, opening out disembodied renderings of experience and remaking practice interactions.

A growing area of interest

In the context of health and disability studies, autoethnographic writings can create discomfort through their challenges to traditional realist modes of representation. They can also bring new visibilities and awarenesses, however.

In the context of writing about clinical practice, for example, autoethnographic accounts may necessitate questioning and reworking received clinical binaries such as patient–therapist and client–practitioner. Putting the self into the picture at all is challenging enough in this context, but putting the very notion of a self at risk opens up places of vulnerability that can also be opportunities for radical reworking of categories of thought and action, including those that cross boundaries between fields or professions (Denshire and Lee, 2013).

Implications of relational ethics

The relational ethics of a professional's practice, that is to say 'the interpersonal ties and responsibilities researchers have to those they study' (Adams and Ellis, 2012: 189), is emerging as a growing area of autoethnographic interest with implications for all those members of the researcher's social network whether they are intimates, clients or colleagues who are identified as characters in a telling (Ellis et al., 2011). Devices that are intended to protect participants' identities in autoethnographic accounts include fictionalizing (Clough, 2002) and the use of symbolic equivalents (Yalom, 1991). Protective writing devices such as a nom de plume (Morse, 2000), composite characterization (Ellis, 2007) and pseudonyms (Chang, 2008) used to respect the privacy of those portrayed in an autoethnographic narrative are put under scrutiny in a recent critique of current autoethnographic practice (Tolich, 2010).

Autoethnographic studies of grief, illness and disability such as Ellis (1995) and Sparkes (1996) arguably intersect with experiences of professional life. There may also be a distinction in that the former often represent more individual, private and intimate experiences while the autoethnographies of professional practitioners may be more public and overtly relational and deal with different types of experience. The power relations are different and the expressive needs are different too. If one is speaking from a position of a vulnerable and somewhat voiceless minority however, 'speaking back' to power (Pratt, 1991), then one might focus more on conveying one's own experience and foregrounding it, while relegating the social and relational to the background.

My portfolio of tales of sexuality, food and death that dramatized 'paradigmatic scenes' from a remembered world of occupational therapy at Camperdown Children's Hospital is an example of an autoethnography of a professional's practice that also featured fictionalized accounts of previously silenced others. These fictional tales were twice-told, first, by an Anglo-Australian occupational therapist in her thirties and then by girls of Pacific Islands, Aboriginal and Turkish heritage. Crafting such fictional accounts may have ethical implications for (re)presenting something of the intimacy and viscerality of interactions between all the actors involved in moments of practice (Denshire, 2009).

Future directions

Postmodern conversation around truths and fictions (Smith, 1996) continues to inform critical understandings of the value and versatility of contemporary autoethnographic writing in the social sciences (Reed-Danahay, 1997; Somerville, 2007). Understanding the cultural features of the group in question – their beliefs, their reasoning and communication – remains necessary in writing any form of ethnography (Van Maanen, 1988). New representations are overdue in research in the social sciences, as Peter Clough points out:

> There are new maps to draw in the making of 'fictional' characters, maps to help us in the task of writing *people* into narrative. Translating life's realities as lived by men and women into story, and doing in such a way as still to be believed, is the ethnographic challenge. (Clough, 2002: 64)

Topical categories of autoethnography include: indigenous autoethnography, narrative ethnography, reflexive interviews, reflexive ethnography, layered accounts, interactive interviews, community autoethnography, co-constructed narratives and, contentiously, personal narratives that stand alone (Ellis et al., 2011). Hence I have selected two new directions to discuss for the production of autoethnographic texts. Both these new directions are discussed in turn with examples.

The first is the trend to freshly juxtapose autoethnographic texts that have been written from more than one point of view. A 'layered account' (Ronai, 1995: 395) is one that shows connections among 'personal experience, theory, and research

practices' as the writer moves 'back and forth between narratives and reflections on those narratives or their content' (Goodall, 2008: 68) and challenges a single telling from just one viewpoint. Layered accounts may proliferate in future, juxtaposing multiple tellings from more than one point of view, especially via new media and performance autoethnography (Spry, 2011).

The associated concept of *assemblage* includes but goes beyond the literal bringing together of a range of heterogeneous elements in different modalities to offer different perspectives on a phenomenon. Assemblage challenges and displaces boundaries between the individual and the social through a focus on practice, which offers a new 'ontology of the social' (Denshire and Lee, 2013). Through successive displacements of the self as the primary site of experience and meaning we seek to contribute new understandings about the potential for autoethnography to engage with professional practice as a space of multiplicity.

The second new direction I am proposing is the production of collaborative accounts by previously silenced voices. There is potential for remaking somewhat tired traditional professional attributes, such as 'professional expertise' and 'professional detachment', into something more negotiated, to enable co-produced moments of practice in a world in flux. In this way, producing collaborative texts that are co-authored both with and by previously silenced others (Richardson, 1997) is another future direction for autoethnography in contexts of professional practice that necessitate redistributing power between service users/co-researchers and service providers.

These collaborative texts may take the form of interactive interviews, community autoethnography or co-constructed narratives written by two or more authors (Adams and Ellis, 2012; Ellis et al., 2011). These transgressive texts go beyond 'the proper' to trouble the ethical relations of selves and others in order to break through dominant discourses, creating new knowledges. A collaborative account of professional practice would enable power to circulate between all the actors involved in the interests of service users 'speaking back' and moving in from the margins to productive interaction with practitioners.

But writing body-selves back into autoethnographic accounts is difficult to accomplish when lived bodies have been strangely absent from healthcare research (Ellingson, 2006). Quarantining the resources necessary to craft collaborative accounts, such as time to write and institutional support, will remain complex to secure, however, within largely unreflective and over-regulated practice settings. Some collaborative autoethnographic writing projects have been completed within supportive higher degree research settings. An example of interactive interviews within a critical autoethnography from the University of Western Ontario follows.

Examples of new directions

I consider Jodi Hall's (2012) doctoral dissertation, 'Okay, so remember, this is a *drape* not a sheet: A critical autoethnography of performing the practice(d) body of a Gynaecological Teaching Associate (GTA)', as characteristic of the new directions for autoethnography, employing both layered writing interspersed with voices of silenced others. Her doctoral thesis, awarded from the University of Western Ontario, addressed the interactions and agendas of all the human and non-human actors and texts circulating in a pelvic teaching programme (GTAs, medical students, programme administrators, material objects) in original, multi-perspectival ways.

The sociopolitical processes and products of social and affective change in this study speak right back to the critics of autoethnography who complain of researcher self-obsession. The study has intricate methodological strands, artfully woven through performances of both selves and fictional composite others. Her research offers powerful views into silenced experiences of pelvic teaching, successfully risking researcher self-disclosure in the process. The literature reviewed lays out ethical dilemmas in the field of pelvic teaching from the viewpoints of everyone involved, exposing gynaecological practices that were (and may still be) dubious and unethical, and reconfiguring gendered knowledges for the education of health professionals.

Hall is a qualitative researcher, doula and women's health advocate. Her critical perspectives are highly original and unrelenting, (re)sensitizing readers to women of all ages and our bodies, and restoring the authority of women's experiences while critiquing normative discourses of gender performance. Her grasp of the autoethnographic genre enabled her to present intimate aspects of her own layered experiences right up front to participants without any charge of self-indulgence, describing multiple pelvic examinations that show the discursive tensions in pelvic teaching and 'how to (not) talk the body'.

Meanwhile, nursing scholar Tessa Muncey (2005) has skilfully juxtaposed 'the snapshot, metaphor, the journey and artifacts, in combination in a published autoethnography', problematizing her memories of becoming pregnant at a young age to 'demonstrate the disjunctions that characterise people's lives' (2005: 69). Further, writing from cultural studies, Uotinen (2011) has expanded the conceptual terrain of autoethnography through her enquiry

into 'bodily and unbeknown knowledge', where autoethnographic writing can excavate 'those practices that have become invisible because of their ordinariness or repetitiveness' (Uotinen, 2011: 1309).

Conclusions

In these ways, autoethnography demonstrates the potential to speak back (and perhaps differently) about professional life under prevailing conditions of audit culture so as to make and remake ethical relations in contexts of professional practice (Denshire et al., 2012). Autoethnography continues to occupy 'an intermediate space we can't quite define yet, a borderland between passion and intellect, analysis and subjectivity, ethnography and autobiography, art and life' (Behar, 1996: 174). The foregoing vulnerable, embodied accounts derived from 'reflexivities of discomfort' (Pillow, 2003: 187) open possibilities for:

> A more embodied field of qualitative … research [that] would maintain more permeable boundaries, be more difficult to categorize, and offer less certainty and more vulnerability. Researchers would have to address our fears of illness, death, and bodies out of control instead of staying detached and ignoring our bodies (and others' bodies). (Ellingson, 2006: 308)

Despite the challenge, discomfort (and occasional joy) of writing autoethnography it is important to press on with the autoethnographic project. That is, to destabilize and redraw the boundaries between a professional's work and their life to benefit previously silenced actors. There is an ethical need in both teaching and research contexts for autoethnographic texts that expand practice interactions to include all the actors involved, and (re)present moments of professional practice from more than one viewpoint.

Annotated further reading

Behar R (1996) *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology that Breaks your Heart*. Boston: Beacon Press.
The qualities of a 'vulnerable observer' who is able to disrupt the taken-for-granted are powerfully conveyed in this acclaimed collection of poignant fieldwork essays (translated into Chinese in 2010) by Ruth Behar, the well-known cultural anthropologist, writer and film-maker. Her very personal essay, entitled 'The girl in the cast', describing how '[t]he body doesn't forget' (p. 118), details the ways her anthropologist self was subsequently affected by being immobile for close to a year when she was 11. Ruth Behar's poignant embodied account describes the consequences of physical and psychological constraints put on her in the year after her accident, taking social issues of ethnicity and class into account. Her website is at: http://www.ruthbehar.com/

Denzin N, Lincoln Y and Tuhiwai-Smith L (eds) (2008) *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies.* Los Angeles: Sage.
Both Indigenous ethnographic accounts by Native Americans, Hawaiian, Maori, African and First Nations peoples and (auto)ethnographies by feminist, queer and critical race theorists are now available in the *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies* edited by Norman Denzin, Yvonna Lincoln and Linda Tuhiwai-Smith. An important take home message from this handbook is that resistance and possibility are embedded within the *local*.

Ellis C, Adams T and Bochner A (2011) Autoethnography: An overview. *Historical Social Research* 36(4): 273–90.
This recent journal article by communication scholars Carolyn Ellis, Tony Adams and Art Bochner provides an up-to-date overview of the field of autoethnography. There is a shift apparent from most of Ellis and Bochner's earlier work on the evocation of personal experience to now clearly articulating the potential of autoethnography for social justice initiatives using both analytical and evocative writing.

Richards R (2008) Writing the othered self: Autoethnography and the problem of objectification in writing about illness and disability. *Qualitative Health Research* 18(12): 1717–28.
This insider account of the under-documented experience of kidney failure, transplantation and recovery is a compelling example of the power of autoethnography to represent about illness and disability. Author Rose Richards, a doctoral candidate in South Africa who is living with end-stage renal disease, resists objectification and identifies three types of illness autoethnography: testimony, emancipatory discourses and destabilized narratives. Highly recommended.

Sikes P (ed.) (2013) *Autoethnography*, Vols 1–4. London: Sage.
Reading the table of contents for this upcoming publication I note there are 80 benchmarked articles from the field included in the impressive four-volume set edited by Pat Sikes from the University of Sheffield. This collection will prove an invaluable resource for scholars in the field wishing to review the literature. All of the authors I have suggested for further reading as well as many autoethnographers I have already referred to here are included in this set of scholarly volumes.

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résumé L'Auto-ethnographie, qui est une méthode et une forme d'écriture parallèles, peut produire de la lecture désagréable. Un récit transgressif dans le contexte de pratique professionnelle réveille la vie d'un professionnel, refaisant les reports de force au passage. L'éthique relationnelle est un secteur en expansion émergent pour des autoethnographes, étant donné les implications éthiques pour chacun qui est représenté dans un récit transgressif. Les directions futures incluent des juxtapositions nouvelles des textes auto-ethnographiques superposés et les récits collaboratifs qui rompent avec l'auto-autre dichotomie.

mots-clés auto-ethnographie ◆ écriture transgressive ◆ éthique relationnelle ◆ refaisant pratique professionnelle

resumen La autoetnografía, que es un método y una forma de escritura alternativo, puede producir lectura desagradable. Un reporte transgresivo dentro del contexto de la práctica profesional despliega la vida de un profesional, rehaciendo relaciones de poder en el proceso. La ética en las relaciones forma un área emergente en crecimiento para autoetnógrafos, considerando las implicaciones éticas para cualquiera representado en una narración transgresiva. Los rumbos futuros incluyen las yuxtaposiciones nuevas de textos autoetnográficos estratificados y los reportes colaborativos que rompen con la dicotomía del mismo-otro.

palabras claves autoetnografía ◆ escritura transgresiva ◆ ética de relaciones ◆ rehaciendo práctica profesional