Introduction

I love the power of stories, especially tales told within circles of attentive listeners. Sharing our experiences, viewpoints and values is essential to creating (just) community, especially where these are stories of resistance and survival (Solinger, Fox & Irani, 2008). Autoethnography inspires me because it creates a virtual circle for sharing narratives and offers me a platform to, in my own voice, speak to my unique insights and realities. Because I am a reflexive social work practitioner and researcher and am motivated to delve deep into my professional encounters, capture these and make sense of them, I am encouraged that there is a research methodology that allows me to translate these (self)discoveries into an academic framework, and permits me to unashamedly connect the personal and professional. This is especially important to me as an individual that seems constantly and consistently to be spanning but also questioning (personal, professional, racial, religious, national . . . ) boundaries. I am also excited that this heuristic approach challenges me to create meaning within a frame of social justice. Recognising that academia often excludes and marginalises, I appreciate that autoethnography is a potential gateway for those with subordinated, subjugated identities to have voice and to express unheard, silenced, perhaps taboo-ised stories. I am thrilled to be able through this chapter to explicate a form of research that facilitates inclusion and allows for multiple voice(s) and knowledge(s) and thus adds to our collective, multifaceted understanding of South Africa. I took on the writing of this chapter because I want you, the readers, to explore the lesser-told, hidden stories of your lives and to contribute these to our South African complexity.

Do I disclose now that I am a white, middle-aged, married, South African woman who has lived outside of the country for the last two decades? How does that disclosure affect (for you) the legitimacy of what I have to say?
Autoethnography is a qualitative, interdisciplinary research methodology and method that upends conventional, traditional understandings of the research process and knowledge creation. This method uses the individual reflexive narrative to creatively highlight undisclosed, untold and potentially subversive texts. It is a deeply personal research approach, linking identity and culture, as well as the individual and social, and so simultaneously contextualising the research and the researcher. Autoethnography facilitates the discovery of and connection with other (hidden) stories (Ferdinand, 2009). It is relevant where issues of identity exist, placing the local, parochial and indigenous in the foreground (Grant, Short & Turner, 2013) while promoting global points of connection. Because it can facilitate self-awareness within the researcher, it is a useful teaching tool, enabling students to identify taken-for-granted assumptions and to theorise the personal, the relational and the cultural (Anderson, 2006; Boylorn & Orbe, 2013; Ellis & Bochner, 2006; Hopper, 2014; Hughes, 2008; Woods, 2011).

This chapter describes the influences leading to the emergence of autoethnography and the philosophical orientation, advantages and praxis of autoethnography. It also identifies the relevance of this approach to lifting out lesser-told South African stories.

The emergence of autoethnography
A series of influences contributed to the emergence of autoethnography. It is in part shaped by how it is distinguished from traditional ethnography. The latter promotes the notion of an invisible, neutral observer, who, through long-term immersion, interprets the interactions and behaviour of a community. In 1979, Hayano noted that ethnographers cannot avoid inserting themselves into their research to at least some extent, and identified the value of connecting autobiographical introspection with an analysis of the author's social contexts (Anderson, 2006; Denzin, 2013; Walford, 2004). Unlike more recent ethnographical methods, which construct subjects as co-participants or co-creators of knowledge (Harper, 2009), orthodox ethnographic processes risk both ‘othering’ those studied and promoting colonising approaches (Anderson, 2006; Denzin, 2013; Grant et al. 2013; Ponterotto, 2006). Pratt (1992) suggests that autoethnography offers a critical counternarrative, allowing those who have been subordinated to represent themselves. A further influence towards the development of autoethnography has been life history research (Atkinson, 2006), which captures the life story of one person without attempting to compare or contrast this with the experiences of others. Additionally, postmodern and poststructural ideas are reflected in the attention paid to reflexivity, the portrayals of the experiences of the self/ves and the highlighting of different forms of knowing (Anderson & Glass-Coffin, 2013; Reed-Danahay, 1997). While its precise ontology is unclear, the specific intent of autoethnography is to go beyond the purely autobiographical to investigate the meaning of individual experience(s) (Chang, Ngunjiri & Hernandez, 2012).

Philosophies of autoethnography
Autoethnography is the study of one's particular place in the world at a specific point in time. It has a distinctive philosophical orientation, although what
is essential to autoethnography is contested (Denzin, 2006). Anderson (2006, p. 381) speaks of analytic autoethnography, in which the agenda is to develop ‘trans-contextual’ empirical information through the examination of individual experience. There are clear commonalities with ethnography, both research methodologies viewing the researcher as closely connected to and familiar with the culture under study and aiming to develop theory through ‘gain[ing] insight into social phenomena’ (Anderson, 2006, p. 387). However, Ellis and Bochner (2006) suggest that rather than being an alternative form, analytic autoethnography is a subcategory of ethnography. Evocative autoethnography is a postmodern approach that resists expanding dominant discourses (or grand master narratives) through ‘rationally acquired data’, and instead, by validating subjective reality and finding meaning in compelling, emotive accounts, adds to minor and marginalised narratives (Grant et al., 2013, p. 11). The aesthetic value and the emotional authenticity of the narrative stand in the foreground (Ferdinand, 2009). Because the story produced is privileged above method, evocative autoethnography may be non-directive and may resist offering conclusions, often remaining open-ended (Anderson & Glass-Coffin, 2013; Grant et al., 2013). The debate regarding key characteristics of autoethnography highlights disagreements in defining autoethnography, particularly regarding the proximity to ethnography, processes of knowledge production and critiques of power relations. Despite these tensions, one can agree that autoethnography essentially privileges the individual researcher/subject’s voice, valorises the subjective experience, is heuristic and seeks connections. It may also challenge power.

Thus, in autoethnography, instead of investigating the stories of others, autoethnographers reflexively share their own story, their voice being placed in the foreground (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011). Autoethnography goes beyond postmodern research which blurs the boundaries between the objective and the subjective, to erasing the object(ive) and subject(ive) binary (Anderson, 2006; Hopper, 2014). Indeed, the observer and subject are collapsed into each other: the viewer is also the viewed; the teller is also the tale; and the insider is the outsider (Anderson, 2006). Moreover, the notion of the expert researcher is rejected and it is assumed that by having access to data unavailable to other researchers, the researcher of the self makes a distinct research contribution, validating the told story (Chang, 2014).

Second, autoethnography studies cultural and social life, specifically the researcher’s unique historical, social and political context. It affirms the value, worth and meaning of the individual experience and validates the subjective reciprocity of the self and her/his social context (Anderson, 2006; Boylorn & Orbe, 2013; Butz & Besio, 2009; Chang, 2014; Ellis et al., 2011; Grant et al., 2013; Whitinui, 2014). Whether such experience is broadly generalisable or not, it is the proximity to lived reality that must be articulated and presented directly to the audience. Indeed, a thick account – a narrative that is deep and profound, that explores the multilayeredness of life and taps into the wisdom of the individual – is sought. As such, through the reflexive process, researchers explore the various subjectivities expressed in their social location (Boylorn & Orbe, 2013; Grant et al., 2013). Autoethnography appreciates that there may be a particular voice associated with
each subjectivity and that each person therefore also is multiphonic. Because autoethnography prizes the authentic individual idiom, lexicon and talk, the story is rooted in the individual person’s own words, tongue and style.

Third, as a qualitative approach, autoethnography aims to extend observations and conclusions beyond quantitative constructs, fixed information and objective fact to examine the detail, variety and nuance of researched experience. It is thus at its core heuristic, relying on the rigorous, repetitive, multilayered reflexivity (Haynes, 2011) and interpretation of the researcher to attribute meaning to what is observed. Because it intends to question and assert holistic, multidimensional and ever-changing ways of being within a cultural milieu (Grant et al., 2013), interpretation is not necessarily stable. As such, the degree to which the self is visible shifts from researcher to researcher (Anderson & Glass-Coffin, 2013). Also, the autoethnographer may use a particular (authentic) voice to portray an image of their identity specific to a point in time (Hughes, 2008).

Next, autoethnography places importance on the connectivity of stories and the interrelatedness of unique experience. Autoethnography, although enriching the world through individual accounts, is not an individualised approach but is relational (Ellis, 2014). Solo experiences become part of a broader orchestra of telling, the researcher’s own words joining up their experiences with their culture and the experiences of others (Hughes, 2008). Autoethnography aims to gather and include silenced or minor voices without expecting such contributions to conform to one another or to a dominant tone. Indeed, the goal is to enhance and ultimately transform the music by incorporating the variety of ignored and overlooked sounds, noises and songs, and so to grow community. Precisely because autoethnography intends to facilitate connection and to make links where these have not before occurred, it can valorise stories not commonly told or not conforming to dominant discourse. Such processes may facilitate social activism by inviting the reader into the experience of the so-called other (Boylorn & Orbe, 2013; Ellis & Bochner, 2006; Grant et al., 2013). Thus, autoethnography affirms minority narratives, creates spaces of solidarity with others sharing this experience, and introduces overlooked texts into the academic arena.

Indeed, (especially evocative) autoethnography promotes critical assessment of the social milieu and consciously advocates for the disruption and disturbance of power as expressed in assumed norms, practices and relations of power (Grant et al., 2013). Autoethnographic analyses adopt Foucauldian notions of power. In such conceptions, power is viewed not as fixed, stable or located in particular individuals or institutions but instead as fluid, shifting and dispersed (Gallagher, 2008; Power, 2011). In autoethnography, the links between the personal and political are illuminated (Grant et al., 2013). Hegemonic notions of power and misrepresentations of subjectivities are challenged and deconstructed when certain unheard discourses are asserted (Boylorn & Orbe, 2013; Grant et al., 2013; Pratt, 1992). Through reflexivity, the personal narratives allow for an examination of mechanisms and experiences of privilege and oppression in society, facilitating social critique and interrupting dominant discourses (Chang, 2014; Denzin, 2013; Hughes, 2008).
One can therefore conclude that autoethnography intends for persons, particularly but not only those disempowered (Hughes, 2008), to employ their unique voice to describe their temporal standpoint and thus to possibly expose and unsettle stereotypical views of oppression, suppression and subordination.

Advantages and use of autoethnography

A researcher may select autoethnography as the preferred method for a number of reasons. Primarily, autoethnography is chosen because it allows for the complex, intricate examination of personal, subjective experience(s) (Hughes, 2008). It facilitates the profound exploration of identity and diversity (Boylorn & Orbe, 2013) and the ways in which these may be compromised through social structures and meanings (Grant et al., 2013). It thus makes room for indigenous, subjugated and marginalised voices. Autoethnography becomes the research methodology of choice when the researcher plans to access insider meanings (Ettore, 2008); wishes to offer complex, textured accounts; aims to lift out the interrelationships of culture, communication and power (Boylorn & Orbe, 2013); feels the need to develop an alternative view (Hopper, 2014); or seeks customised, responsive interventions rather than standardised ones (Boylorn & Orbe, 2013). Further, employing the self as the subject of study potentially avoids othering (Grant et al., 2013). Another advantage of autoethnography is that the researcher is able to work at a pace that is suitable for themselves (Hopper, 2014). A wide range of topics can be studied: for example, the examination of cross-cultural representation (Biesele & Hitchcock, 2008), white privilege (Boyd, 2008), working as a maid (Limes-Taylor & Kaufmann, 2014) or being a mental health survivor (Liggins, Kearns & Adams, 2013). Hence, autoethnography has particular power when used to amplify the voices in the dark, bring into the foreground stories that have been relegated to the background, and assert standpoints that have been marginalised.

Praxis of autoethnography

While autoethnography is a form of critical discourse, it also is essentially tied to critical practice. Hence, it can be identified as a form of praxis, directed by ongoing, rigorous and reflexive analysis of documented (self-)observations (Anderson, 2006; Chang, 2014; Grant et al., 2013). This iterative process can be confusing for a person new to autoethnography, but improvisation and experimentation are encouraged (Anderson & Glass-Coffin, 2013). It is also useful to slow down the process, recognising that the reflexivity inherent in producing a text is ultimately more important than the written product (Dutta & Basu, 2013).

The successful autoethnographer identifies a relevant and novel incident/story and courageously chooses to reveal the ignored, repressed, tabooed story (Grant et al., 2013). The researcher may choose to work in collaboration with other autoethnographers (Cann & DeMeulenaere, 2012; Chang et al., 2012). Once the process is decided upon, the researcher, through emotional recall,
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collects autobiographical data and then documents this information, the various steps in the process, as well as shifts in their thoughts, feelings and insights (Whitinui, 2014). Such researchers understand the subjectivities at play, making sense of themselves both as researcher and subject; are familiar with heuristic tools; provide a textured and deep analysis of the occurrence/s; and use appropriate, authentic, persuasive, aesthetic and evocative language to produce a discursive text (Anderson & Glass-Coffin, 2013; Berry & Patti, 2015; Boylorn & Orbe, 2013; Chang, 2014; Denzin, 2013; Ellis, 2014; Hopper, 2014; Johnson-Mardones, 2014; Richardson, 2000). The final text expands contemporary knowledge and challenges the boundaries of assumed expertise while potentially addressing social justice issues (Ellis & Bochner, 2006). Ultimately, for an autoethnography to have value, the selected topic is relevant; the reflection contributes to understanding social life; the reflexivity is substantive; and the text presents well aesthetically (Richardson, 2000; Walford, 2004).

I would like to illustrate some of these autoethnographic processes by drawing on my own experience. While completing my doctorate, I was prompted to write about the impact of social location in South African social work research because I observed that I was perceived as a foreigner (having lived outside of South Africa for some years) rather than as South African (my preferred identity) (Schmid, 2010). I had not anticipated this additional distance between myself and the persons providing information, and being disturbed by this interaction, wished to interrogate this experience more closely. I maintained a diary throughout the research process which I then reviewed to isolate issues regarding social location. My notes highlighted the instances where I experienced greater discomfort and some of the strategies I tried out to address the gaps between myself and the research participants. I also captured discussions I had with others about my role as researcher in this study. In developing the autoethnography, I was continually challenged to probe more deeply and to not accept my reflections at face value. I recalled both my experiences as a white person under apartheid as well as my interactions with racialised persons outside of South Africa. I reviewed existing scholarship on factors impacting research processes such as being an insider/outsider. I also read about white privilege and what this meant in a post-apartheid and postcolonial context. For me, reading how others had articulated the circulation of power in the research context allowed me to compare my experience and to identify what processes had been playing out. I also investigated the extent to which other social service researchers in South Africa had positioned themselves within their reported research and attempted to reflect on the political and cultural dynamics influencing their choices to typically mask their social location while I was choosing to be explicit. I drew on both my autobiographical research and previous academic interrogation of the issue of social location and white privilege in research processes. In the autoethnography, in response to my assumed Canadian identity being placed in the foreground, I amplified and attempted to reclaim my
South African voice. In selecting such voice, I was reminded of my struggle to remain attached to my ‘South Africanness’. I continue beyond the completion of the autoethnography to further explore why I want(ed) to be associated with a South African rather than a Canadian identity.

I have also attempted to write an autoethnography regarding vicarious traumatisation in oncological social work in Switzerland. In preparation, I tracked the points at which I became more and more convinced that vicarious trauma needed to be addressed within my agency and paid attention to my co-workers’ experiences. I also began listening more carefully to client accounts and charted these, realising that many were traumatised not only by the trajectory of cancer, but also by other events. Such cumulative trauma would potentially increase the possibility of vicarious trauma for a counsellor. In preparing my draft article, I first traced my personal intersections with cancer, trauma and vicarious trauma so as to shed light on why this issue preoccupied me. I also wanted to understand what had been asserted academically regarding oncological social work and vicarious trauma. Additionally, I wanted to understand the Swiss social work and oncological context as I sensed that the Swiss meaning-making regarding illness impacted the nature of discussions relating to vicarious trauma in oncology. As this clashed with my own assumptions, I needed to understand this dynamic better. My oncological article remains a draft, despite various submissions and significant rewriting. In formulating this chapter, I have become aware that this is perhaps because the form chosen did not seem to fit neatly into any of the journals I approached. Moreover, I remained quite attached to the theoretical literature, but struggled to fully understand and conceptualise my own experience. In some ways I am still un/dis-covering my story: Why do I feel so strongly that vicarious traumatisation is under-discussed in oncological social work? Why does this impact me so when I seem to have avoided such secondary traumatisation myself? And can I speak legitimately about attending to vicarious traumatisation in oncology if I have not myself experienced such traumatisation? Finally, for an autoethnographic piece, I also am not yet presenting an evocative, compelling account (Ellis, 2014). Perhaps it requires further attempts!

Ethical considerations

An autoethnography, like any responsible research, requires ethical review in addition to the process outlined above. However, what ethical considerations mean in autoethnographic study is debated, partly because the discursive product is often a retrospective reflection and partly because it is focused on the self. Tullis (2013) warns that the ethical issues faced in autoethnography may be quite complex: they must go beyond the traditional expectations of ensuring that participants provide informed and voluntary consent, knowing how,
where, with whom and when their data are being shared, and expecting that the information is shared in an accurate, trustworthy representation. In autoethnographic research, the researcher must consciously reflect on, first, their own participation in the story; second, which persons’ voices other than that of the author are intentionally or unintentionally reflected in the story; and third, who else may be impacted by the presented narrative. These issues must be considered throughout the data collection, analysis and formal production of the autoethnography (Ellis et al., 2011).

Hence, while all researchers need to be cognisant of unintended (personal) consequences of publication, autoethnographers need to exercise particular caution because they are revealing intimate aspects of their subjectivity/ies. Noting that the autoethnographic record may become a permanent one, researchers should begin by carefully assessing their own vulnerability and ensuring their rights are protected (Chang, 2014; Tullis, 2013). This is vital, especially in politicised environments where autoethnographers must be sure that they wish, even in the long term, to stand by their reflections.

In trying to unravel the meaning of my social location as an émigré South African researcher, and articulating perspectives that did not necessarily intersect with prevailing understandings of race and the performing of whiteness, I risked alienating both South Africans and Canadians (academics) and potentially impacted future employment opportunities.

Autoethnographers need not only to reflect on their own vulnerability, but also, noting their connection with a range of networks, to appreciate the inherently relational aspects of autoethnography (Ellis et al., 2011). Persons who may be inadvertently exposed include those with close intersections with the researcher, such as family members, partners, neighbours or colleagues, and the communities of which the autoethnographer is part (Tullis, 2013). The autoethnographer should therefore take into account the degree to which the revelations may have unintended consequences for these persons (Ellis et al., 2011; Tullis, 2013). Further, the autoethnographer should minimise any opportunities for the identification of those involved in the story and protect confidentiality, though this is often difficult to ensure (Tullis, 2013). If possible and appropriate, the researcher must seek informed, voluntary and autonomous consent from others implicated in the narrative (Chang, 2014; Tolich, 2010). In traditional research, this is sought prior to any research study. In autoethnography, participants should be able at all points of the process to confirm their ongoing participation. However, those implicated may only become evident once a text is formally constructed, and thus the autoethnographer must be aware that seeking consent from such participants may be seen as coercive (Tullis, 2013). It also may no longer be possible to access consent, depending on how historical the reflection is. Moreover, the autoethnographer must ensure that any risk is minimised and benefits maximised, and address this equally for all participants (Tullis, 2013). Additionally, those implicated by the story should have the opportunity to respond and interact with the material (Ellis et al., 2011) through member checking and dialogue between the researcher and participant (Tullis, 2013). Other considerations relate
to whether information or voice has been appropriated from persons implicated in the research (Biesele & Hitchcock, 2008). Such concerns are particularly pertinent in the South African context where, through colonisation and apartheid, indigenous knowledge has been both systematically appropriated and marginalised (Bannister & Solomon, 2012).

In the exploration of social location in my account as researcher, I was careful to ensure that others in my story could not be identified and that they had provided informed consent regarding any publication. I further provided those implicated with the draft article for comment. Additionally, autoethnographers will do well to consider the impact of their narrative on potential audiences, especially when using evocative approaches, and, where appropriate, offer advisories prior to the public presentation of the story (Ellis et al., 2011; Tullis, 2013). In South Africa, where trauma is pervasive, autoethnographers should be particularly sensitive to such concerns. In sum, the autoethnographer pays attention to ethics to present a recounting of the story that accords with the perspectives of those implicated; ensures that knowledge and perspectives have not been appropriated; and maintains a trusting environment that allows for further study (Ellis et al., 2011).

Critiques and limitations of autoethnography

Autoethnography is subject to critiques that may apply to qualitative research in general. For example, critics suggest there is no generalisability because autoethnography lacks a scientific foundation and associated objectivity; focuses on literary aspects and uses emotive rather than factual language; relies on subject reports which are not reobservable and are drawn from tainted memory; is self-indulgent; and, in focusing on the self, neglects adequate examination of the social (Anderson, 2006; Burnard, 2007; Guzik, 2013; Noe, 2007; Walford, 2004). Such critiques overlook the intent of autoethnography, which is not about accurately replicating memory or facts, but rather is focused on lifting out and sharing meaning from (marginalised) experiences.

There are some limitations to autoethnography which warrant consideration, such as the potential consequences of using non-scholarly conventions that might alienate the academic community (Biesele & Hitchcock, 2008; Tomaselli, 2013).

I have struggled in writing this chapter to find an appropriate voice. If I slanted this more towards an autoethnographic piece, would the editors and reviewers feel that I have included sufficient explicit direction for those being introduced to autoethnography? By inclining more towards traditional modes of explication, have you as the reader been denied the opportunity of seeing autoethnography performed?

Additionally, autoethnography, especially evocative autoethnography, while claiming inclusivity, requires a specific parlance that actively defies traditional academic writing. Just as the novice has to learn the scientific code of traditional
research, it seems that the newcomer to autoethnography must be inducted into the particular communicative style. This required facility with language creates barriers and contradicts the intention of elevating voices that have been silenced or forced to tone down. This matters particularly in the South African context, where language has been used as a vehicle to subjugate people and where language and languages continue to be contested. Nevertheless, this research methodology can be useful in the South African research environment.

Relevance of autoethnography in South Africa

Autoethnography can effectively upset dominant constructions of subjectivities. Whitinui (2014), a Maori researcher from Aotearoa/New Zealand, has presented a strong argument for developing an indigenous form of autoethnography. He maintains that the oral tradition intersects well with the autoethnographic approach. Because autoethnographic writing is intended to be creative (Grant et al., 2013), there is room to innovate and present data in a culturally relevant way. Whitinui (2014, p. 465) further claims that autoethnography allows for a ‘(re)validation’ of the self and of a people’s history and current lived realities. Indeed, Collingwood-Whittick (2000), DeLeon (2010), Falah (2013), Moreira (2009) and Pineau (2014) offer international examples of how this methodology may offer counterdiscourses to oppressive and marginalising constructions of particular groups. A particularly powerful aspect of this methodology, Whitinui (2014, p. 471) contends, is that it allows the narrator to deconstruct and reconstruct accounts from the indigenous point of view, and so expose ongoing ‘misrepresentation, misuses and misappropriation of indigenous knowledge’. A further advantage Whitinui outlines is the ability through this methodology to reflect not only individual but also collective experiences. He stresses the importance of ‘re-calling’ events, and of reconstructing these from one’s own cultural standpoint. Finally, this method allows for the ‘conscientization, resistance and transformative praxis’ advocated by Freire (Whitinui, 2014, p. 471) and thus serves an essential social justice agenda.

Although as a white woman who has lived outside of South Africa for some time I have limited legitimacy in arguing for the development of autoethnography as indigenous research methodology, I believe many of Whitinui’s points can be applied to the South African situation. South Africa’s past of oppression and repression has meant that numerous stories have been shoved into forgotten corners. Ongoing inequality, corruption, discrimination and suppression further sideline particular stories. Oral history has an important place in reflecting South Africa’s journey (Wilder, 2004). Even as stories are being eroded due to migration, industrialisation and globalisation, many South Africans value the telling of tales. Valiant efforts are being made to gather the stories of the past and insist on their relevance. There are also initiatives to document current narratives. Autoethnography offers South African researchers a particular vehicle that resonates for portraying their (re)collections and describing their immediate lived realities. Recent scholarship, as highlighted by investigations carried out by, for example, Tomaselli,
Dyll-Myklebust and Van Grootheest (2013), Tomaselli (2007) and Pillay, Naiker and Pithouse-Morgan (2016), provides a foundation for further expansion. Drawing on Whitinui, the collective voice of ubuntu, which has been heralded as a valued African and South African principle (Allen, 2003), can be built upon. Ubuntu reflects the interconnection and interdependence of the collective and the individual and can be illuminated in collaborative autoethnographic efforts. Moreover, in any society, the hidden and marginalised stories are multiple. South Africa’s convoluted realities suggest that there are an unlimited number of narratives that should be uncovered, named and reconstructed. In autoethnography, the author can make connections between the personal and the political. Rigorous autoethnographies will contribute to the greater body of researched knowledge, can be actively used to educate the community and may support wider stories. Finally, autoethnography has particular relevance for the social sciences where reflexivity is as central to practice as it is to research (Mandell, 2007).

Conclusion

Autoethnography
Auto-ethnography
Auto/ethnography
Fragments
A whole
Slowly, cautiously
Integrating
Multi-phonic
Voices of
Myself
Others implicated
You
Academia (scholarly literature, reviewers, editors)
Analysing
My
Rational
Fixed
Fluid
Emotional
Self
Selves
Identities
Subjectivities
Consolidating
Distinguishing
Boundaries
Customizing/customising
Recalling
Reflecting
Lifting out
Deconstructing
Reconstructing
Hidden, silenced
Suppressed, subordinated
Indigenous
Overlooked stories
Stigma
Shame
Privilege
Disrupting
Celebrating
Connecting
Challenging
Compelling
Mobilising
Knowledge/s
Production
Made
Making
Meaning

Autoethnography is an important research methodology for South African social scientists as it examines individual lived realities in the context of broader cultural, political and sociological realities. As a qualitative, poststructural research intervention it can allow for the examination of untold, unknown, unacceptable, stigmatised stories. Indigenous experience and knowledges can be illuminated. Recalling, documenting and analysing hidden identities and subjectivities can contribute to instances of oppression, suppression and marginalisation being highlighted. The problematic can be discussed and successes celebrated. It is an accessible and appropriate research methodology in the South African context, and, if widely used, can contribute to the expansion of local and indigenous knowledge production.

References


Section Two: Qualitative methods


