Blending Voices and Methods: Exploring the Frontier of (Integrated) Mixed Methods Autoethnography

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Abstract

In this introductory article, we—Anthony J. Onwuegbuzie, Sandra Schamroth Abrams, and Madeline L. Abrams—weave together our personal and collective narratives to guide readers through the diverse and evolving landscape of autoethnography, particularly focusing on its integration with mixed methods research approaches. As we reflect on our experiences and the historical context of autoethnography, we present a compelling set of five articles that, collectively, expands both the theoretical and the practical applications of this field. In the first article, the authors outline 10 dimensions of autoethnography, enhancing its conceptual flexibility. They discuss integrating qualitative and quantitative research within autoethnography, using concentric circles to depict its hierarchical and fluid structure—from general autoethnography to integrated mixed methods autoethnography. The second article explores the integration of critical dialectical pluralism and a radical middle stance in mixed methods research, promoting an integrated autoethnographic approach that harmonizes social justice with methodological rigor. The third article examines integrated mixed methods autoethnography in design-based research, particularly in educational settings. This approach deepens the understanding of educational innovations by linking personal experiences with broader pedagogical implications, thereby enriching educational research authenticity. In the fourth article, the authors use an autoethnographic theater method—blending narrative, performance, and research—to highlight the value of integrating Indigenous Sámi perspectives and land acknowledgements into academic settings. The final article features a 17-year-old author using integrated mixed methods autoethnography to explore living with pain from personal experiences with disability, contributing to disability studies and emphasizing the societal need for greater accessibility and empathy. By sharing our journey and the insightful contributions of our peers, we invite readers into an ongoing dialogue about the future of autoethnographic research. Our goal is to foster a deeper appreciation of how personal experiences, integrated with methodological rigor, significantly can enhance the relevance and impact of research findings, pushing for a more inclusive and empathetic approach to understanding human complexities through (integrated) (mixed methods) autoethnography.

Keywords: Autoethnography, mixed methods autoethnography, integrated mixed methods autoethnography, critical dialectical pluralism, radical middle

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Our (Tony's, Sandra's, and Madeline's) quest to trace the origin and development of autoethnography has been a very interesting journey. Our collective efforts have led to the creation of a statistics-by-themes joint display (Guetterman et al., 2015), as exemplified in Figure 1. In narrating the trajectory of autoethnography within the qualitative research tradition through an autoethnographic lens, we now find ourselves deeply embedded within the tapestry of its evolution. It is through our reflections and experiences that we have come to understand the rich history illustrated in Figure 1 of autoethnography.

Figure 1

Joint Display of Timeline for the Development of Autoethnography as a Qualitative Research Approach

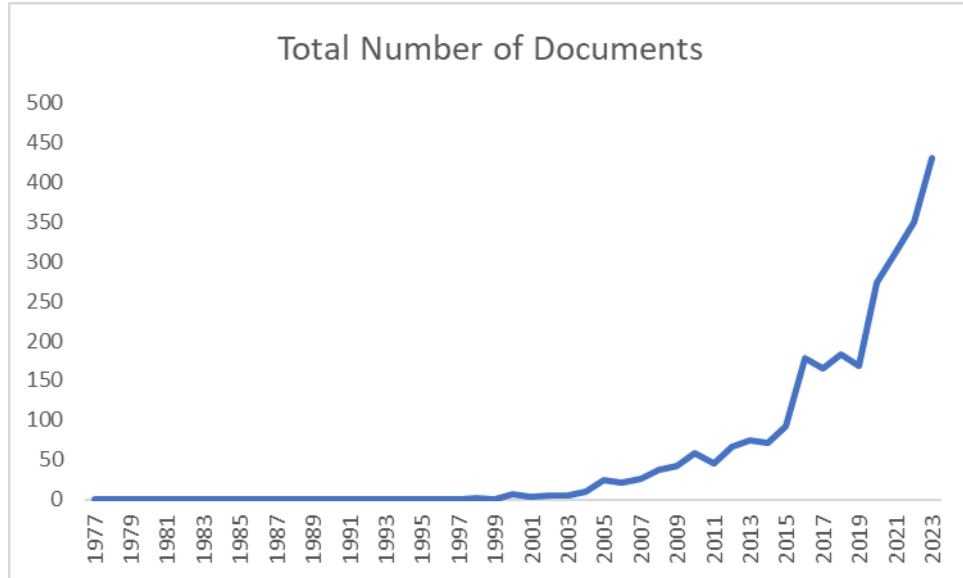| Year	Event Themes
1920s-1950s	A few ethnographers representing the Chicago school, such as Robert Park and Erving Goffman, began the process of incorporating aspects of autoethnography into their work (e.g., narrated life histories).
1975	The term "autoethnography" was officially coined by Karl G. Heider, an American visual anthropologist. Heider's work involved self-referring to the people being studied, considering it autoethnographic.
Late 1970s	Qualitative researchers began to state their positionality more explicitly and to acknowledge how their mere presence as researchers altered the behaviors of the individuals/groups whom they studied. Further, these qualitative researchers began to differentiate between those who researched groups of which they belonged to some degree (i.e., cultural insiders) and those who researched groups of which they were not a part (i.e., cultural outsiders). Autoethnography began to be framed as ethnography, wherein the researcher is a cultural insider. However, none of these researchers focused explicitly on the incorporation of personal experience into their research. The first Scopus-indexed work with "autoethnography" or one of its variant (e.g., "autoethnographic") in its title was published in 1977 in the *American Psychologist* (i.e., Goldschmidt, 1977).
1980s	Qualitative researchers, such a Norman K. Denzin, via reflexivity, began questioning and critiquing the role of the researcher, especially in the field of social sciences. Denzin advocated that researchers address issues of gender, race, and class. This reflexivity led qualitative researchers in this area purposefully to insert themselves as characters in their ethnographic narratives as a means of navigating the challenge stemming from researcher interference.
End of the 1980s	Qualitative researchers began to apply the term "autoethnography" to their work that involved the use of both confessional forms (i.e., inserting the researcher's highly personalized styles and responses to their narratives) and impressionist forms (i.e., wherein the researcher prioritizes capturing and conveying the nuanced, subjective, complex, and contextual experiences of study participants in a vivid, vibrant, focused, in-depth, and expressive manner in order to provide readers with a sense of the lived experience of the participants).

1990-1995	Qualitative researchers attempted to address the concerns raised in the previous decades pertaining to the trustworthiness of ethnographic research approaches by placing themselves directly into the research narrative while describing their positionality.
2004	Major conferences, such as the *International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry*, begin routinely accepting the presentation of autoethnographic work. Interestingly, this was the first year that saw the publication of more than a single digit number of Scopus-indexed works with "autoethnography" or one of its variant (e.g., "autoethnographic") in its title, with 10 works being published in this year.
2011	The *Doing Autoethnography* conference was established, being held in chilly Detroit, Michigan on the campus of Wayne State University. Representing the first conference to focus solely on autoethnographic principles and practices, it provided evidence of an increasing recognition and acceptance of autoethnography as a legitimate research approach. In this year, 45 Scopus-indexed works with "autoethnography" or one of its variant (e.g., "autoethnographic") in its title were published.
2015	Adam et el.'s (2015) book entitled, *Autoethnography: Understanding qualitative research*, was published, which, to date, has been cited in 2,129 works.
2016	This year saw a peak in the number of Scopus-indexed books on autoethnography ($n = 71$), with at least 13 published, including the following seminal books that have made a significant contribution to the theoretical and methodological development of autoethnography. These books encourage qualitative researchers to embrace a diversity of forms and styles in order to communicate effectively the nuanced nature of their lived experiences: • Bochner and Ellis's (2016) *Evocative autoethnography: Writing lives and telling stories*, which, to date, has been cited in 1,084 works. • Holman Jones et al.'s (2016) *Handbook of autoethnography*, which, to date, has been cited in 1,332 works. • Chang's (2016) *Autoethnography as method*, which, to date, has been cited in 4,136 works. Number of Books

2023	In this year, 431 Scopus-indexed works with "autoethnography" or one of its variant (e.g., "autoethnographic") in its title were published.
	$r_s = .95$, $p < .001$, indicating a monotonically increasing trend over time with respect to the 2,663 published works with "autoethnography" or its variant in the title.
	The above pie chart shows that, since 1977, the field of social sciences (53.6%) has, by far, the largest proportion of the 2,663 published works with "autoethnography" or its variant in the title, followed by the field of arts and humanities (15.6%) and the field of psychology (11.0%).
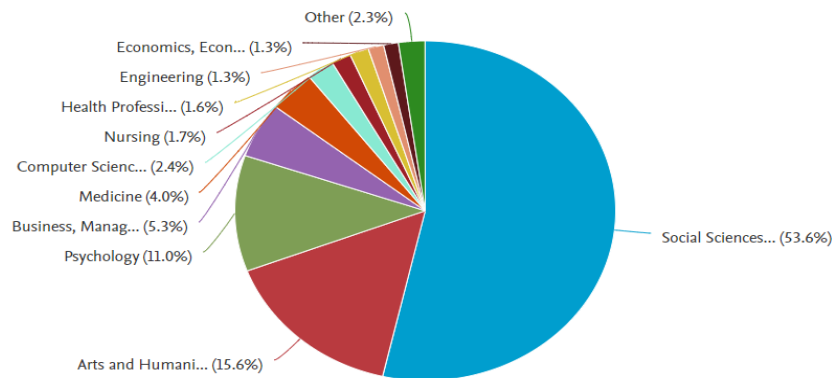
Documents by country or territory
Compare the document counts for up to 15 countries/territories.

English-speaking Western countries (i.e., United States, United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, New Zealand) represented three fourths (i.e., 76.4%) of these 2,663 published works with "autoethnography" or its variant in the title.
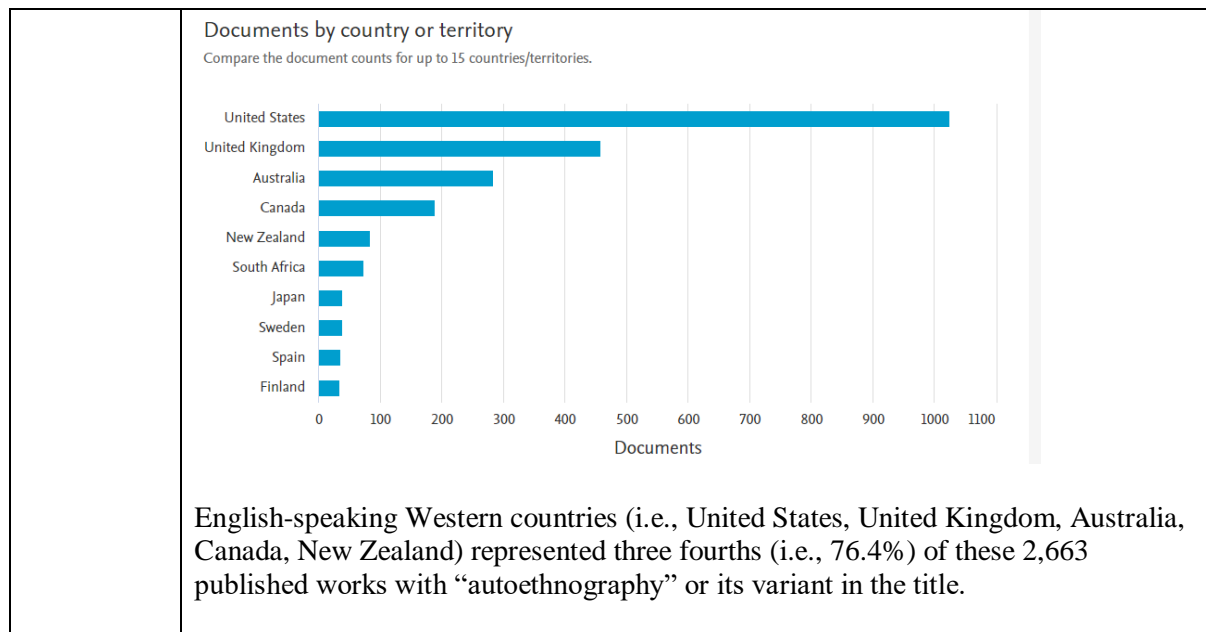
As this Figure 1 indicates, the timeline for autoethnography begins in the 1920s-1950s, a period marked by the pioneering works of ethnographers from the Chicago school, like Robert Park and Erving Goffman, who subtly integrated autoethnographic elements into their research. These were times of narrative exploration, although the term "autoethnography" had not yet been coined. As researchers, we too find that our early academic inclinations had been influenced by such narratives, although often these influences were subconscious, woven into methodologies like delicate threads in a larger academic fabric.

By 1975, Karl G. Heider officially introduced the term "autoethnography," a momentous occasion in our field of social sciences. Reflecting on our own paths, we acknowledge how this naming granted legitimacy to intuitive methodological approaches, enabling qualitative researchers to refer to themselves as *autoethnographers* without hesitation or ambiguity. The late 1970s and 1980s saw qualitative researchers increasingly asserting their positionalities within research. Norman K. Denzin's emphasis on reflexivity during the 1980s resonated with qualitative researchers' own experiences, prompting them to navigate the complexities of gender, race, and class within their narratives. This era encouraged a deeper self-awareness and critical engagement between researchers and their subjects of study, shaping the researchers' roles not just as observers, but as participants in the cultural dialogues that they sought to document.

The end of the 1980s and the subsequent decades marked a significant evolution in qualitative researchers' understandings and applications of autoethnography. The integration of confessional and impressionist forms within autoethnographic research mirrored the broader academic trend of prioritizing vivid, expressive accounts of lived experiences. These methodologies aligned with autoethnographers' desire to convey the nuanced, subjective realities of their research participants, while also wrestling with their own embeddedness within these narratives.

By 2004, the acceptance of autoethnographic work at major conferences, such as the *International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry*, signaled a collective acknowledgment of autoethnographers' research practices. This period also coincided with a surge in publications,

reflecting a growing academic appetite for autoethnographic perspectives. The establishment of the *Doing Autoethnography* conference in 2011, in Detroit, marked a personal and professional milestone for autoethnographers. It symbolized the institutionalization of their academic passions and the broader acceptance of autoethnography as a legitimate and vital research approach. The exponential growth in literature from this point forward, including seminal books in 2016 (e.g., Bochner & Ellis, 2016; Chang, 2016; Holman Jones et al., 2016), highlights the vibrant, evolving landscape of autoethnographic research.

Positioning Autoethnography

As we (Tony, Sandra, and Madeline) reflect on the past and the present trends in the world of autoethnography, we have come to the conclusion that autoethnographic research has been, and continues to be, marginalized to some extent within the broader scientific community, particularly in fields (e.g., 'hard' sciences such as physics, chemistry), methodological traditions (i.e., quantitative research), and mental models (e.g., postpositivism) that prioritize traditional scientific methods emphasizing objectivity and generalizability. The key points of contention surrounding autoethnography in scientific contexts include its inherent subjectivity, the challenges of generalizability, and its often unconventional narrative forms.

Perhaps the greatest point of contention stems from the perceived lack of accessibility of the autoethnographic research approach. This lack of accessibility affects both those within the world of academia and those outside academia. The following sections will describe these challenges in both sectors.

Inaccessibility of Autoethnographic Research Within Academia. Autoethnography, as an academic method, dwells on the periphery of many research traditions, facing accessibility issues that are both structural and perceptual. This lack of accessibility can be traced to several factors that challenge its adoption and practice among researchers, especially those trained in disciplines that traditionally emphasize more detached (e.g., quantitative) research approaches. These factors are discussed in the following sections.

Lack of Formal Training in Graduate Programs. Many, if not most, researchers encounter their first and perhaps only (brief) exposure to autoethnography during their graduate studies—if at all. Autoethnography often lacks representation in the curriculum of many research-oriented graduate programs, particularly those grounded in the 'hard' sciences and traditional social sciences (Rubinstein-Avila & Maranzana, 2015). The focus of graduate studies often lies on quantitative research methodologies, statistical analysis, and traditional qualitative approaches, such as case study or ethnography. Consequently, researchers who might be inclined toward or benefit from autoethnographic approaches often find themselves without the necessary tools, the mentorship, or even the basic familiarity with autoethnographic principles and practices to undertake such an autoethnography confidently. This gap in training can lead to a lack of proficiency and even awareness of the method's potentials and applications, making it seem like a peripheral or non-scientific approach, thereby contributing to its marginalization.

Perceived Lack of Confidence/Self-Efficacy. Closely related to the lack of formal training is the perceived lack of confidence or self-efficacy among researchers when considering autoethnography. Because this approach requires not only methodological rigor, but also a vulnerability in exposing one's personal experiences and integrating them into scientific inquiry, potential practitioners might feel ill-equipped or too exposed. Unlike conventional research methods that provide clear guidelines on data collection and analysis,

autoethnography requires a deep introspective capability and a strong narrative skill set. Even for those who are exposed to autoethnographic methods, the transition from understanding (i.e., theory) to application (i.e., practice) can be daunting. Researchers—possibly trained to write stoically based on the convention of their field—might doubt their ability to translate in a compelling manner their personal experiences into academic insights and scholarly evidence. For many, this is a radical departure from the impersonal safety of numbers. This perceived vulnerability can deter researchers from adopting autoethnography, fearing criticism or rejection from their peers in more traditional fields, in general, and fearing that their work will be viewed as merely anecdotal rather than rigorously academic, in particular.

Perceived Lack of Utility. Many researchers question the utility of autoethnography, particularly in fields that demand generalizable and replicable results (Allen, 2015). The method is sometimes viewed as being too specialized, too personalized, and, thus, of limited relevance to those seeking to address broad-scale phenomena or wishing to derive clear, generalizable insights. Moreover, in fields that emphasize outcomes directly applicable to industry, policy, or clinical practice, autoethnography can appear to be less useful. The highly personalized nature of autoethnographic research often leads to skepticism regarding its applicability to broader contexts. Indeed, its inherently personal and often context-specific insights are seen as being too narrow or subjective to inform broader applications or policy changes (Allen, 2015; Anderson, 2006; Livesey & Runsen, 2018; for an alternative viewpoint, see Hays & McKibben, 2021). This skepticism can be a significant barrier because the perceived value of research often influences decisions about methodology. This perceived lack of utility can deter researchers whose careers (e.g., eligibility for employment, for tenure, for promotion, and for merit pay) are measured by tangible impacts on their field or society at large and wherein the impact of research is measured by its scope and scale. We contend that without clear examples of how autoethnographic methods can have measurable impact and applicable insights, its utility remains in question.

Perceived Lack of Understanding of Its Value. There often is a fundamental misunderstanding of what autoethnography aims to achieve and its potential contributions to science. The value of autoethnography often is obscured by its deviation from traditional research norms. It challenges conventional notions of what research should look like, how it should be conducted, and what constitutes valid/legitimate data. The method's reliance on narrative and personal reflection frequently is misunderstood as lacking rigor. This misunderstanding can prevent its wider acceptance because many members of the academic community might not recognize fully how personal narratives can highlight cultural norms, uncover hidden assumptions, or foster empathetic understanding. That is, a strength of autoethnography is the critical integration of narratives to highlight cultural, social, and personal dynamics that otherwise are difficult to capture. The method's value in offering deep, contextual insights into the human condition often is overshadowed by the dominant scientific paradigms that prioritize detachment, systematicity, and objectivity (Anderson, 2006; Allen, 2015).

Institutional Bias and Resource Allocation. Institutional support for research typically favors established, traditional methodologies due to their verified track records in yielding funding and publications (Bo et al., 2018; Darbyshire, 2004). In environments where there is a strong hierarchy of evidence, methods that include personal narratives or subjective interpretations might be considered less valid/legitimate. This bias can discourage researchers from adopting autoethnographic methods, concerned that it might undermine their professional credibility or career progression. Researchers might struggle to secure publication of their autoethnographic

studies because reviewers and/or editors might not be familiar with or receptive to this methodology (Dashper, 2015; Wall, 2008). Furthermore, authors of autoethnographic project proposals might struggle to receive funding or support because they do not fit easily into the quantifiable metrics often used to gauge research viability and success (Johnson, 2020). This lack of institutional support can discourage researchers from pursuing autoethnographic methods, further marginalizing the approach.

Cultural and Disciplinary Resistance. Institutions and disciplines that uphold traditional research approaches actively or passively might resist methodologies that seem to diverge from established norms. In disciplines that value detachment, the introspective and personal nature of autoethnography can be seen as antithetical to *true* scientific inquiry (Anderson, 2006). This cultural resistance can be deeply ingrained, stemming from foundational beliefs about what constitutes knowledge and knowledge production. Autoethnographers might find it challenging to secure resources or to achieve legitimacy within their fields, impacting the method's accessibility and viability.

Interdisciplinary Misunderstandings. Relatedly, researchers from different disciplines might have fundamental misunderstandings about what autoethnography entails and its scientific value. These misunderstandings can stem from a lack of interdisciplinary communication, wherein the richness and rigor of qualitative research methods, in general, and autoethnographic research methods, in particular, are not adequately conveyed across disciplinary boundaries.

Ethical Concerns. Engaging in autoethnography can expose researchers to ethical and personal risks, particularly when disclosing sensitive or deeply personal information. The ethical considerations of autoethnography are complex, involving the protection of not only the researcher's own privacy, but also that of people who might be implicated in their narratives. Thus, researchers must navigate the fine line between transparency and privacy, not just for themselves, but often for the people entangled in the narratives. This ethical complexity can deter researchers from conducting autoethnography, particularly those who are concerned about the potential consequences of such exposure on their personal and professional lives. Additionally, the emotional toll of revisiting and analyzing deeply personal or traumatic events can be daunting, making this method less accessible for some.

Conclusions Regarding the Inaccessibility of Autoethnographic Research Within Academia. As can be seen, the hurdles to adopting and to mastering autoethnography within the academic sphere are considerable, ranging from institutional to personal challenges. Each of these barriers not only affects the accessibility of autoethnography, but also influences the broader perception and legitimacy of this approach within various scientific communities, thereby contributing to the limited use and acceptance of autoethnography within the broader research community. Despite these barriers, autoethnography holds profound potential for deepening understanding of self and society. Promoting the use of diverse methodologies that encompass the richness of human experience, encouraging more comprehensive education in qualitative research methods, fostering interdisciplinary dialogue, and advocating for the legitimacy and utility of autoethnographic insights are essential steps towards broadening the accessibility and acceptance of this powerful research approach. Moreover, addressing these barriers requires a concerted effort to educate, to demonstrate, and to advocate for the unique insights that autoethnographic research can offer, particularly in understanding complex human experiences that escape more detached forms of inquiry.

Inaccessibility of Autoethnographic Research Outside Academia. We have come to the conclusion that the perception that autoethnographic research is an exclusive domain of academic researchers creates significant barriers to its broader acceptance and accessibility. This notion confines autoethnographic research to the ivory towers of academia, rooted in traditional norms, and also subtly undermines the potential contributions of individuals outside academia. Often dismissed as 'lay people' and seen as unqualified for scholarly inquiry, these individuals, nonetheless, could provide profound insights into their own cultural and personal experiences. Therefore, the restrictive and exclusive perception of traditional research limits the broader application of autoethnographic research *and* restricts the diversity of voices and experiences that could enrich autoethnographic research. In the following sections are explanations of several issues surrounding this perception, with each issue reinforcing the notion that autoethnography is not just specialized, but also can be somewhat elitist in nature.

Academic Gatekeeping. Autoethnography, like many other research approaches, often is subject to academic gatekeeping, which we define as the practice wherein established academics (e.g., scholars, researchers, methodologists) within a field set standards that implicitly or explicitly exclude contributions from anyone outside the academy. That is, the existing members of the academic community control entry into certain areas of scholarly activity. Our notion of gatekeeping includes the perception that only those within academia can conduct legitimate research—a notion that is antithetical to our own research philosophy and life philosophy that we call *critical dialectical pluralism* (Onwuegbuzie et al., in press)—which can stifle innovation and restrict the diversity of voices in scholarly discourse. Such gatekeeping is reinforced by conference participation rules, publishing practices, and funding requirements that prioritize credentials and institutional affiliations. Consequently, individuals outside academia might believe that their experiences and narratives are undervalued or lack legitimacy simply because they are not members of the academic club.

In our view, autoethnography, in its essence, benefits enormously from a multitude of perspectives, including those from various socioeconomic, cultural, and personal backgrounds that typically might not be—and historically have not been—represented in academic settings. Academic gatekeeping maintains a status quo wherein certain experiences and insights are valued over others, potentially leading to a homogenization of knowledge that overlooks marginalized or less conventional viewpoints.

Jargon and Complexity. Academic discourse often involves specialized language that can be inaccessible to those outside of university settings. Autoethnography, despite its focus on personal narrative, is not immune to this issue. Theoretical discussions about ontology, epistemology, methodology, and ethics frequently are couched in dense academic jargon, making the literature and discussions around autoethnography daunting for people outside academia. This complexity can act as a barrier, preventing them from conducting autoethnographic research.

Furthermore, autoethnography can involve complex theoretical frameworks, which can be intimidating or inaccessible to those without formal training in the humanities or social sciences. Nuanced theories of identity, culture, and reflexivity that often underpin autoethnographic research can create a formidable barrier. This complexity might deter people beyond the ivory tower from engaging with autoethnographic methods, believing that these approaches are beyond their purview or are irrelevant to their personal or community narratives.

Valuing of Knowledge. In the world of academe, academic knowledge often is seen as being superior to knowledge gained through lived experience. This hierarchy can discourage individuals outside the academic world from believing that their experiences—and the knowledge that they could contribute through autoethnography—are of real, intrinsic value. This devaluation both limits the potential reach of autoethnography and diminishes the richness that diverse experiential knowledge can bring to scientific and cultural understandings.

Education and Training. Effective autoethnographic research requires not only an understanding of its methodology, but also skills in critical reflection, writing, and analysis. Academics who conduct autoethnography often develop these skills through formal education and ongoing professional development, whereas lay researchers might lack opportunities for similar training. Without support in developing these essential skills, people outside academia might struggle to engage in autoethnography effectively.

Research Resources and Support. Conducting research, including autoethnography, often requires access to a range of resources, from literature to tools for data collection to tools for data analysis to platforms for dissemination and feedback. Academic researchers often have access to resources, through universities and professional networks, that can facilitate research. In contrast, individuals outside academia typically do *not* have the same level of access (consider, for example, the importance of continued access to academic libraries and their extensive resources), which significantly can impede their ability to engage in autoethnographic work at a level that is recognized and respected within the academic community or that achieves the visibility of institutionally supported research. This disparity can result in a lack of 'professional-quality' research outputs from people outside academia, reinforcing the stereotype that only academics can produce valid/legitimate research. Furthermore, even among those able to conduct autoethnographic studies, laypeople might struggle to find platforms to share their work, limiting their audience and the impact of their research.

The Role of Mentorship and Community. Academic researchers often benefit from mentorship and community, which provide guidance, feedback, and support. People outside academia, therefore, likely are isolated from scholarly communities and their networks, and, thus, might struggle without this support, both in conducting their research and in navigating the publishing or dissemination process. The absence of a guiding hand and of networked introductions can lead to missed opportunities for development, refinement, and endorsement of their autoethnographic work.

Ethical Concerns and Institutional Oversight. Conducting ethical research is a cornerstone of academic inquiry, governed by institutional review boards (IRBs), human ethics committees, and similar bodies. These entities ensure that research involving human participants adheres to ethical standards, protecting the privacy, well-being, and rights of participants. Although our review of various university IRB protocols indicates that not all institutions require IRB approval for autoethnographic research, more often than not, such approval *is* required if the autoethnographic research includes the discussion of other people or documentation that includes other people's data. People outside of academia, who often lack knowledge of and/or access to such oversight, either might unwittingly breach ethical norms or might feel overwhelmed by the responsibility of adhering to these standards independently. For laypersons, navigating these requirements without prior experience or institutional backing can be daunting, possibly deterring them from engaging in autoethnographic research, especially

when sensitive or personal topics are involved, or possibly leading them to make significant ethical missteps when they do conduct autoethnographic research.

Perceived Credibility and Impact. Often, there is a belief that, for research to be valuable and significant, it must be affiliated with a reputable academic institution. This perception undermines the importance of narratives coming from contexts beyond the university gates, wherein individuals might have equally profound insights into cultural and social dynamics based on their lived experiences. For autoethnography, this means that personal narratives and analyses contributed by those outside traditional academic environments might be viewed as being less valid/legitimate or rigorous, reducing their chances of being taken seriously or published in scholarly outlets, thereby reinforcing the academic/non-academic divide.

Conclusions Regarding the Inaccessibility of Autoethnographic Research Outside Academia. The perception that autoethnography requires formal training and academic credentials to be conducted 'correctly' can deter people unaffiliated with universities from engaging with this research method. Although academic training can provide important tools and frameworks for conducting research, the essence of autoethnography—exploring personal experience in relation to cultural contexts—arguably can be undertaken by *anyone* with insights into their own life experiences.

Moreover, the belief that autoethnography should be confined to academia not only restricts the method's potential, but also perpetuates a narrow view of what constitutes legitimate and honored knowledge; ironically, although academic research often attempts to address inequities, the very system that supports such research also only privileges the knowledge and perspectives of academics. Addressing these accessibility issues requires a cultural shift within academia and a concerted effort to democratize the research process, in general, and the practice of autoethnography, in particular, ensuring that it is seen as a viable and valuable method for both academics and laypersons alike. This might include creating more inclusive and accessible platforms for publication, offering workshops and open resources and training to laypeople, and actively encouraging and valuing diverse voices in scholarly discourse. Also, this could involve simplifying academic jargon as well as advocating for the recognition and legitimacy of research contributions that originate beyond the ivory tower. Such efforts can help to bridge the gap between academic and 'non-academic' researchers, fostering a more inclusive approach to autoethnography that recognizes and utilizes the rich tapestry of human experiences available both inside and outside academia.

In our mind, expanding the accessibility of autoethnography to include voices outside academia helps to democratize the production of knowledge, leading to richer, more varied insights that enhance our understandings of the human condition across different contexts. To tap significantly into this potential, both academic institutions and broader societal structures need to be more inclusive and supportive of diverse research, researchers, and methodologies.

As such, we hope that the current special issue represents a step, however small, toward redefining what it means to be a researcher in the field of autoethnography. By showcasing articles that represent conceptual, philosophical, and practical applications of autoethnography, in general and (integrated) mixed methods autoethnography, in particular, this issue illuminates the diverse possibilities that exist when personal experiences are merged with academic rigor. We believe that, collectively, these articles demonstrate the unique value of combining personal narratives with empirical research.

Preview of Articles in the Special Issue

As the sunlight dances across the pages of our recent journey into mixed methods autoethnography, we—Tony, Sandra, and Madeline—sit back, each drinking his/her favorite beverage, reflecting on the nuanced and textured fibers of narratives and methodologies that have been woven together in this special issue of the *Journal of Mixed Methods Studies*. Each article, a vibrant thread in the broader fabric of scholarly inquiry, invites us to explore the dynamic interplay between the personal and the methodological, the individual and the collective.

Embarking on a journey through the multifaceted landscapes of (integrated) mixed methods autoethnography, we invite our readers into a reflective and immersive exploration. As editors and contributors to this special issue of the *Journal of Mixed Methods Studies*, we delve into the intricate relationship between methodological rigor and the evocative power of personal narratives. Each article in this collection not only stands alone as a beacon of innovative research, but also interconnects with the overarching themes of integration, vulnerability, and transformation in (integrated) mixed methods autoethnography.

Article 1: "Towards Integrated Mixed Methods Autoethnographic Approaches: A Dimensional and Poetic Journey"

In the first article, we (Tony, Sandra, Madeline, Anna S. CohenMiller, and Anthony Bambrola; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2024b) dive deep into the soul of mixed methods autoethnography. Here, we embark on a "Dimensional and Poetic Journey," an exploration that challenges the conventional boundaries between the researcher and the researched, between data and lived experience. As we navigate through this article, we are reminded of the fluidity of identity and the dynamism of personal narratives in shaping our understanding of the world. This journey is not just about collecting data; it is about experiencing it, living through the poetic rhythms of life's ebbs and flows.

Our article explores the intersection of autoethnography with mixed methods research, and we argue for an integrated approach that combines qualitative and quantitative data to enrich the autoethnographic process. This approach aims to map a new territory within the field by integrating personal narratives with broader social, cultural, and political contexts through diverse data collection and analytical techniques.

After much discussion, we decided that the best way to represent our conceptual framework is visually (see Figure 2). This figure takes the form of concentric circles. We have positioned these circles in such a way that each one surrounds the others, creating a pattern of nested circles with a common center. The outer circle represents the dimensions of autoethnography. The middle circle represents mixed methods autoethnography and its stages. The inner circle represents integrated mixed methods autoethnography. That is, integrated mixed methods autoethnography is nested within mixed methods autoethnography, which, in turn, is nested within autoethnography. As such, our concentric circles depict levels of hierarchy, with the element in the inner circle—integrated mixed methods autoethnography—signifying a new and core concept. In our article, we discuss each of these three layers, beginning with the dimensions of autoethnography (i.e., outer circle), followed by mixed methods autoethnography and its stages (i.e., middle circle), and then ending with integrated mixed methods autoethnography (i.e., inner circle).

Figure 2

Conceptual Framework for Expanded Autoethnography
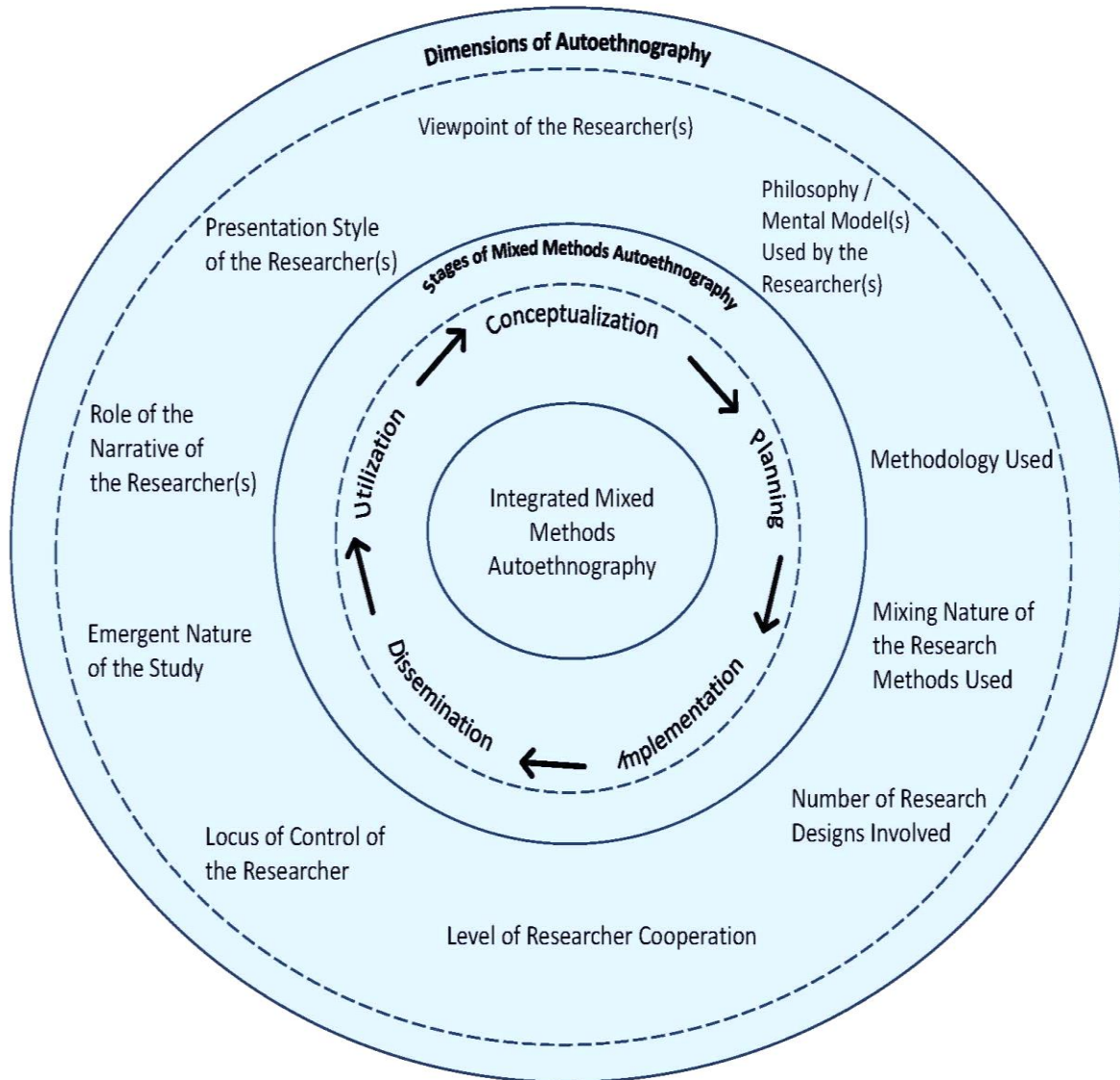
Article 2: "Fostering Innovation in Integrated Mixed Methods Autoethnography: The Role of Critical Dialectical Pluralism and the Radical Middle"

In the second article—which was inspired by our (Tony, Madeline, and Sandra) very recent and very well-received paper presentation at the *International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry* (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2024a)—we (Tony and Sandra; Onwuegbuzie & S. S. Abrams, 2024a) reflect on our collaborative journey that integrates critical dialectical pluralism (CDP; Onwuegbuzie & Frels 2013; Onwuegbuzie et al., in press) with the concept of the radical middle. This evolution from CDP 1.0 to CDP 2.0 captures our progression towards a methodology that not only upholds the rigors of research, but also champions the causes of social justice, inclusion, diversity, equity, and social responsibility—collectively known as the SIDES of CDP (Onwuegbuzie et al., in press). Our narrative illustrates how what I (Tony) refer

to as the *radical middle* (Onwuegbuzie, 2012) facilitates a dynamic fusion of qualitative and quantitative research approaches, enriching both the process and the products of research. This approach does not merely place methodological traditions side by side, but, rather, weaves them together into a coherent whole, thereby providing a robust framework for exploring complex social phenomena through a deeply personal and culturally contextual lens.

In the dim light of a room filled with the soft hum of computers and rustling of papers, we—Sandra and Tony—found ourselves steeped in discussions that blurred the lines between quantitative rigidity and qualitative fluidity. Our conversations often stretched into the early hours, illuminated by the glow of our screens and a shared passion for a transformative approach to research.

We embarked on a path defined by CDP, a beacon guiding us through the often turbulent waters of mixed methodologies. CDP, born from a desire to embrace diverse epistemological perspectives (i.e., Onwuegbuzie & Frels 2013), had matured into a robust framework that celebrated the interplay of varied realities—subjective, objective, and intersubjective (i.e., Onwuegbuzie et al., in press). This framework was not just a methodological choice; it was a commitment to the very SIDES (i.e., **s**ocial justice, **i**nclusion, **d**iversity, **e**quity, and **s**ocial responsibility) that define our research ethos.

As we navigated through our research, the radical middle served as a crucible wherein the rigid structures of quantitative research methods melded with the nuanced insights of qualitative research. This integration was not a compromise, but a fusion that yielded a richer, more textured understanding of the human experience—one that only could be achieved through the lens of integrated mixed methods autoethnography.

This approach, which we have termed *integrated mixed methods autoethnography*, is more than just a methodology; it is a stance, a way of being in the research world that respects and utilizes the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative research approaches. It is autoethnographic in its focus on personal narratives and also in its commitment to embedding these stories within the larger tapestry of cultural and social frameworks.

In our practice, integrated mixed methods autoethnography has enabled us to explore deeply personal narratives while simultaneously drawing on quantitative data to broaden the scope of our understandings. Through this methodological duality, we were able to capture the complexity of individual experiences within the broader societal contexts that shape them.

As we reflect on our journey, we recognize that the integration of CDP and the radical middle in integrated mixed methods autoethnography is not just a methodological innovation but a transformative practice that redefines the power dynamics of research. By perceiving research participants as co-researchers, we democratize the research process, which empowers individuals not only to share their stories, but also to shape actively the research narrative.

This approach has profound implications for social justice—it ensures that research is not only about understanding or describing the world, but also about changing it. The fusion of CDP and the radical middle within integrated mixed methods autoethnography represents a commitment to a research practice that is methodologically robust and also ethically grounded and socially transformative.

As we continue to advance this integrative approach, we are reminded that the journey is not simply about developing new research methods, but about fostering a research culture that values diversity, equity, and inclusion. It is a journey that challenges us to rethink how we

conduct research *and* why we do it—to ensure that our work contributes to a more just and equitable society.

Article 3: "The Role of Integrated Mixed Methods Autoethnography in Design-Based Research"

Continuing the exploration of methodological integration, in the third article, we (Tony and Sandra; Onwuegbuzie & S. S. Abrams, 2024b) discuss the significant role of integrated mixed methods autoethnography within the realm of design-based research. By highlighting specific projects, we showcase how this approach supports a nuanced understanding of educational innovations and interventions. Through the lens of (integrated mixed methods) autoethnography, researchers can articulate the deeply personal impacts of educational research, linking individual experiences with broader pedagogical implications. This blending of methods illuminates the path for future educational research and ensures that the findings are deeply rooted in authentic educational contexts.

Article 4: "A Mixed Methods Autoethnographic Theater: Extending Pedagogy and Research Through the Development of a Sámi Land Acknowledgment"

The fourth article, authored by Anna CohenMiller, Tove Mentsen Ness, and Rose Martin (CohenMiller et al., 2024), presents a novel approach to acknowledging Sámi land in educational settings. This article takes the form of an autoethnographic theater, a method that combines narrative, performance, and mixed methods research to explore and to express the complexities of cultural acknowledgment in academia. Through a series of evocative acts that include music, dance, and voice, the authors engage with the sensitive dynamics of cultural interaction, highlighting the transformative potential of integrating indigenous perspectives into academic practices. Their work serves as a compelling example of how autoethnography can bridge personal experience and cultural critique, fostering a deeper understanding of indigenous rights and representation.

Article 5: "An Integrated Mixed Methods Autoethnography of Pain"

In the fifth and final article, I (Madeline; M. L. Abrams, 2024) offer a poignant exploration of pain through an integrated mixed methods autoethnography. Drawing from my personal experiences with disability and recovery, I intertwine qualitative and quantitative analyses to delve into the physical and emotional dimensions of living with pain. My study not only offers an integrated mixed methods autoethnographic lens to disability literature, but also it exemplifies the power of how an integrated mixed methods autoethnography enabled me to articulate complex human sentiments and experiences. Through my narrative, readers can gain insights into the challenges of navigating daily life with a disability, can develop an awareness of the confines of pain and disability, and can consider the broader implications for accessibility and empathy in society.

Conclusions

Each article in this special issue enriches understandings of mixed methods autoethnography, in general, and integrated mixed methods autoethnography, in particular, challenging the research community writ large to consider not only the methodologies that we employ, but also the personal and cultural narratives that shape our research landscapes. As we reflect on these

contributions, we invite our readers to engage deeply with these articles, recognizing the profound connections among method, story, and transformation in the pursuit of scholarly inquiry and social change.

Together, these articles craft a mosaic of perspectives that enrich our understandings of (integrated) mixed methods autoethnography. Given that we are exploring uncharted methodological grounds, we perceive this special issue as an opportunity to inspire conversation not just among ourselves in the manuscripts that we have penned, but with you, the reader, and anyone interested in this topic. Thus, this collection is an invitation to a conversation, a dance of ideas and experiences that challenges all of us to be ever more thoughtful, ever more empathetic, and ever more curious about the world around us.

Via the last article in the special issue—written exclusively by Madeline, a 17-year-old high school student—we aim to challenge the traditional boundaries that historically have separated 'academic' from 'non-academic' contributions. We advocate for a model wherein autoethnographic research is understood as a collaborative, mentored, and/or interdisciplinary endeavor, accessible to all who wish to explore the complex interplay between individual experiences and broader cultural realities. Through this, we envision a more expansive field wherein the voices of all researchers, regardless of their formal training or affiliations, are heard and valued.

In conclusion, we hope that the discussions and studies presented in this special issue contribute to the scholarly discourse on methodological innovation and also serve as a call to action for the academic community as a whole. We must continue to push for changes in how research is perceived and practiced, making it a more inclusive and reflective space that respects and utilizes the wealth of knowledge and insights that can be gained from every individual's life story. This effort will enrich our collective understandings and appreciation of the diverse world in which we live, moving us closer to a truly inclusive academic community.

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