INTERSECTIONAL REFLEXIVITY

Using intersectional reflexivity as a means to strengthen

critical autoethnography

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Abstract

This chapter proposes intersectional reflexivity as a means to strengthen critical autoethnography – the exploration of the self in connection with the broader context. Intersectional reflexivity is a developmental tool which can be used by gender, management and organisation scholars engaging in autoethnographic research to critically explore, express and interpret their intersecting identities, how these shape their lived experience and are determined by structures of power. Intersectional reflexivity can also help scholars gain insights through their autoethnographic work in order to more effectively navigate challenges in daily organisational life, and influence individual and organisational practices within their own institutions.

Keywords

Autoethnography, Critical Autoethnography, Intersectional Reflexivity, Intersectionality, Gender, Race.

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to introduce *intersectional reflexivity* as a means to strengthen critical autoethnography, illuminate the researcher's intersecting identities, and investigate how these identities attach privilege and disadvantage to the researcher's lived experience in specific contexts. As a 'dark-skinned' (*morena*) professional woman in Mexico and a foreign woman of colour working as an academic in the UK, I have had to navigate the cultural, social and organisational structures that shape how I experience the intersection of two salient categories of difference, gender and race, in different contexts. By using critical autoethnography, the stories and experiences of those, like myself, who are underrepresented, silenced or ignored, can be investigated, documented, analysed and heard. In this chapter, I refer to gender as the social and cultural construction of a supposed binary of male and female. I understand race as the historical, social and cultural differentiation of people on the basis of both visible physical characteristics, including skin colour, hair colour and facial features (Loury, 2009) and invisible cues, such as language and accent (Alim et al., 2016). Gender is understood as racialised and therefore experienced individually.

In the first section, I introduce autoethnography as a research method that utilises data about the self and its context, detailing its opportunities for gender, management and organisation research. I then propose that as a reflexive, critical and experiential research method, autoethnography can particularly benefit from engaging in intersectional reflexivity. The second section expands on the idea of intersectional reflexivity and provides some guidelines for its use in autoethnography. I also present short autoethnographic accounts as illustrations of how intersectional reflexivity has helped me reflect on, question, critique and act upon the ways in which my intersecting identities can affect and are affected by research activity, including the power structures within which it takes place. In the third section, I discuss the ethical implications and limitations of autoethnography and intersectional reflexivity. Finally, I present some concluding remarks and suggest further uses of intersectional reflexivity.

Autoethnography

Autoethnography is both a qualitative research method and a genre of writing (Foster et al., 2006; Haynes, 2018). It brings together the intentions of ethnography (looking at the world outside one's own) and autobiography (looking inward and creating a story of one's self) (Schwandt, 2001). Autoethnography 'begins with the self' (Glesne, 2006, p. 199), displaying multiple layers of consciousness, thoughts, feelings and beliefs that connect the self to the

broader context (Ellis, 1997; Ellis & Bochner, 2000). The intention of autoethnography is not to be 'objective' or ensure 'validity' (Ciuk et al., 2018). Rather, it uses the researchers' familiarity - the intimate self-knowledge that researchers have about their own experiences (Davies, 2012) - to extend our understanding of a particular social issue (Foster et al., 2006) and 'to reveal and revise the world' (Holman Jones, 2005, p. 767).

In autoethnography, researchers act as initiators, subjects and objects of their self-exploration (Chang & Bilgen, 2020). The primary data is their own personal experience (Chang, 2008). Data collection is done through personal biographies and essays, autobiographical accounts, narratives, reflections, tales, short stories, memoires, vignettes, journals and other forms of fragmented writing. These are written over time, expanded and revised for greater identification, clarity and depth. Autoethnography can present an argument and serve as an empirical basis to research (Taber, 2010), but it can also be messy, visceral, brutal and non-concluding (O'Shea, 2018, 2020).

While autoethnography has long been used in anthropology, sociology, communication and cultural studies (e.g. Reed-Danahay, 2009; Ellis, 2007; Anderson, 2006), it is still relatively innovative in management and organisation studies (some recent examples include: Callahan & Elliott, 2020; Ford & Harding, 2008; Haynes, 2013; Huopalainen & Satama, 2020; Johansson & Jones, 2019; Long et al., 2019; O'Shea, 2018, 2020; Pechenkina & Liu, 2018; Porschitz & Siler, 2017; Prasad, 2019). Yet, autoethnography 'offers another lens through which to better understand organisation and management' and allows researchers in these fields to 'tell stories otherwise silenced' (Doloriert & Sambrook, 2012, p. 83). Autoethnography thus allows researchers to connect their everyday experiences in organisational life, whether experienced as mundane or complex, with a wider cultural, social, political and organisational context.

Doloriert and Sambrook (2012) identified three streams of autoethnography in organisation research: i) the exploration of the researchers' experience while engaging with an external organisation (e.g. while conducting fieldwork or collecting data); ii) the exploration of the culture of self, work and relationships within researchers' current Higher Education (HE) organisations; iii) the interpretation of past critical moments within the researchers' career trajectories outside HE (such as careers in the private sector). These three streams might overlap in autoethnographic research, such as when gender, organisation and management scholars interpret their academic careers or research processes and past work experiences simultaneously (e.g. Haynes, 2012; Learmonth & Humphreys, 2012).

Autoethnographic research in gender, management and organisations can explore a wide range of topics, including identity and identity work, bodies in management, organisations and education, careers successes and failures, job roles, organisational life and culture, interpersonal relations, employment relations, and work and family issues (Boyle & Parry, 2007; Humphreys & Learmonth, 2012; Reed-Danahay, 2001). A more critical form of autoethnography in organisations and organisational life involves the exploration of discrimination, oppression, marginalisation, white supremacy, sexual harassment, bullying, violence and organising in the workplace, which have long been treated as 'taboo topics' (Boyle & Parry, 2007), especially within business schools. However, in the light of the existing gender wage gap and collective movements (e.g. Black Lives Matter, Building the Anti-Racist Classroom) these issues can no longer be ignored. Critical autoethnography can help answer to calls for individual and collective action aimed at dismantling racialised (and heterosexual) power structures within academia (Dar et al., 2020). Since critical research into organisations can be perceived as a threat to organisational leaders and powerful groups, autoethnography allows researchers to ethically critique organisational life and culture by analysing the self in alignment with the researchers' own ontological, epistemological and theoretical grounding (Taber, 2010). For example, Taber (2010), when denied access to military personnel, after having requested to carry out qualitative interviews, realised that by researching others, she was 'finding a way to hide from [her] own experiences' (ibid, p. 8). She chose instead to use her own experience as an ex-military employee to study gender and militarism. She concluded that 'the most respectful and rigorous way for [her] to proceed was to explicate how [her] own life was interrelated with military institutional ruling relations' (ibid.). Turning to the self is, in some instances, the most valuable and desirable research method.

Autoethnography and intersectional reflexivity

Autoethnographic narratives or stories are analysed and interpreted to achieve understanding of organisations, culture and society through the self (Boylorn & Orbe, 2014). This process is assisted by reflection and reflexivity (Chang & Bilgen, 2020). Reflection encourages researchers to use memories and recollections to *construct stories* as close to the experience as they can remember it (Ellis & Bochner, 2000), including who said and did what, how, when, where, and why (Bolton, 2010). Reflexivity urges researchers to *question* or *interrogate*, not only the truth claims of others or specific situations, but also the truth claims we make about ourselves (Cunliffe, 2003).

Reflexivity and intersectionality are at the heart of feminist thought and methodology. They are intrinsically related and have high utility value in autoethnography. Intersectionality is recognised as central to the study and understanding of the lives of individuals as unique and multidimensional, shaped by social inequality, oppression and discrimination (Crenshaw, 1989). The development of intersectionality as a concept can be considered 'as a reflexive move' (Carstensen-Egwuom, 2014, p. 267), which rejected the neutralisation and generalisation of the experience and knowledge of black women (Harding, 1991) and encouraged researchers to use their own subjectivity, positioning and perspectives in interpretative research (Collins, 2002). There are two key considerations of intersectional inquiry. The first consideration is its focus on the *interaction* between categories of difference (e.g. gender, race/ethnicity, social class, age, sexuality, disability, nationality, parental status) instead of paying exclusive attention to the categories themselves (Rodriguez, 2018). The second consideration is the identification of difference and the unequal outcomes of power structures and social locations in everyday life, as determined by an individual's intersecting identities.

The idea of *intersectional reflexivity* was developed to encourage scholars to precisely acknowledge and critique their own intersecting identities, and the privilege and disadvantage they represent in specific contexts (Rodriguez & Ruiz Castro, 2014). Scholars can integrate intersectional reflexivity into autoethnography as a developmental tool to achieve four key aims: 1) to explore, express and interpret their intersecting identities and how these shape interpersonal relationships, 2) to explore and question their own lived experience in specific sociocultural contexts and structures of power, 3) to reflect upon and critique their own research activity in connection with their intersecting identities and, 4) to critique their environment and explore how their intersecting identities influence specific phenomena and settings:

> [H]ow we – seemingly unwittingly – are involved in creating social or professional structures counter to our own values (destructive of diversity, and institutionalising power imbalance for example). It is becoming aware of the limits of our knowledge, of how our own behaviour plays into organisational practices and why such practices might marginalise groups or exclude individuals (Bolton, 2010, p. 14).

An intersectional reflexive treatment of autoethnography as a method would require researchers to situate and immerse the self within the sociocultural context of a location, culture, organisation or group, in which research is conducted or in which researchers are embedded. It would also require scholars to link personal identity narratives with the existing

power structures (Collins, 2015; Holvino, 2010). In addition, it would require researchers to acknowledge their position of privilege and marginalisation in specific contexts (Boylorn and Orbe, 2014) and its influence on how they conduct research, work, organise and develop. These insights can only be achieved through 'reflexivities of discomfort' (Pillow, 2003, p. 188), which encourages autoethnographers to transcend self-indulgent storytelling and explore the unfamiliar and uncomfortable as practices of 'confounding disruptions' (Taber, 2010, p. 192). These disruptions impact scholars' actions, i.e. how they relate to others, include, value and support others or challenge discriminatory practices within their own HE institutions or workplaces. Autoethnography that is supported by intersectional reflexivity, like intersectional research and methodology, can be emancipatory 'for the lives, experiences, and circumstances of participants and researchers' (Rodriguez, 2018, p. 446).

Intersectional reflexivity can be used in the different streams of autoethnography in management and organisation research identified by Doloriert and Sambrook (2012). Those scholars exploring the self in relation to the research process or activities, involving methodological or analytical reflexivity (Anderson 2006; Johnson & Duberley, 2013), are encouraged to acknowledge that their research ideas, analysis and interpretations derive from their personal experience and own intersecting identities. This includes the expectations and reward systems imposed by their institutions and their own positioning within the broader research system. Researchers can consciously become more aware of 'power and class differentials between themselves and participants' (Harding, 2018, p. 145), by exploring interviews or other research methods 'as a microcosm of the wider social world where privileged and oppressed meet' (ibid.). Oftentimes this reflexivity is conducted from the position of privilege occupied by researchers (e.g. as 'experts' or 'evaluators'), creating 'an unconscious conviction of being in control of the Other' (Josselson, 1996, p. 65). However, the intersecting identities and lived experience of some researchers do not always locate them in an advantaged position in relation to participants. They might instead share the experience of study participants (Berger, 2015), thus becoming the 'other' researcher researching the 'other'. Integrating intersectional reflexivity into autoethnography that explores the self in relation to the research process requires questioning this assumed privileged position of the researcher within the researcher-participant configuration.

Intersectional reflexivity in autoethnography which focuses on scholars' experiences in their current or past employing organisations can be used to explore scholars' intersecting identities. It can help to unpack the challenges, responses and experiences associated with navigating their socially stigmatised or privileged identities. This is achieved by providing

description and analysis of empirical data that can increase our understanding of diverse ways of being and living (Boylorn & Orbe, 2014.). An intersectional reflexive approach to autoethnography can adopt and contribute to feminist, postfeminist, post-colonial, gender, queer, Marxist or post-Marxist perspectives. It can be used to explore and bring new understandings of organisational life and 'new or neglected phenomena into the focus of existing organization theory' (Linstead et al., 2014, p. 180). Intersectional reflexivity can be used by researchers from underrepresented groups as a developmental tool to find greater value in their experiences, knowledge and contributions, and to make these visible. It can be used by researchers in a more privileged position to explore their advantage. For example, Learmonth and Humphreys (2012), used autoethnography based on their academic lives as middle-class, male and 'full' professors at research-intensive universities to develop knowledge in the area of identity work in organisations. Although they had left their previous jobs in the private sector in search of more meaningful jobs, they soon found themselves playing the academic 'career game'. The authors rightly argue that 'intimate stories of the academic self, *must* be subjected to critique and analysis' (ibid., p. 111-112), However, engaging in intersectional reflexivity would have strengthened their autoethnographic accounts by enabling them to critique how 'the game' they play, characterised by 'competitive and manipulative masculinity' (ibid., p. 101), rewards and excludes specific groups of academics, and how their advantaged position, determined by their racialised gender (white male) as well as class, has allowed them to succeed at the 'career game'.

Applying intersectional reflexivity

While methodological and critical autoethnography make important contributions to management and organisation studies (Doloriert & Sambrook, 2012; Johnson & Duberley, 2013), 'how' such autoethnographic work can be conducted is less clear. In the following section, I illustrate the use of intersectional reflexivity through three autoethnographic accounts, written in the past and more recently, in order to contribute to this gap and strengthen critical autoethnography in management and organisations. These accounts are based on my experience of conducting research with professionals in Mexico, and of being a minority group academic in the UK. For some of the research projects to which I refer below, I had employed methodological reflexivity to acknowledge how my positioning affected how I designed, conducted, interpreted and presented my research. This reflexivity was expanded upon by exercising intersectional reflexivity to explore disadvantage and empowerment in organisations through examining my own experiences. First, I reveal my intersecting

identities and reflect on how these have shaped my self-perception and lived experience. I then describe and analyse some of the emancipatory relationships and experiences I have encountered in my engagement with research on gender, race and class in organisations as a senior lecturer and research advisor. Boxes 1 and 2 include guideline questions that I used to practice intersectional reflexivity, and which gender, management and organisation autoethnographers can also use for their own self-exploration.

- Insert Box 1 near here –

- Insert Box 2 near here –

Autoethnographic accounts

Account 1. Acknowledging my silent identities

I describe myself as a Mexican woman, born to parents who at times struggled to keep what would be considered middle-class living standards in Mexico City. I am *morena*, or dark-skinned, and I was always very self-conscious of that fact. In the Mexican context, as in many other countries, whiteness is glorified. Research has linked dark skin colour to poverty, low education and limited employment opportunities (Villarreal, 2010). I grew up hearing demeaning comments and jokes about dark, poor and uneducated Mexicans. Although I had access to relatively good education and held professional jobs, I simply felt less attractive, less valued, less 'taken seriously' because of my skin colour and phenotype (more indigenous rather than European-looking). After graduating from a Mexican university, I obtained a scholarship from the British Council to complete a masters' programme in London. Once in London, I decided to stay in and pursue a doctoral degree, funded by the Mexican government. Although I always felt I belonged in London, I now understand that it was not a sense of belonging that I was experiencing, but a sense of invisibility and anonymity which created a false sense of freedom. I did not feel the insecurities or oppression I had experienced in Mexico. Instead, I was attending a world-leading university and 'becoming' an academic. However, the same identity insecurities, as a woman of colour, accompanied me during my search for academic jobs in Germany, the US and the UK. This was worsened by my self-evaluation of having strongly accented English (and German while working in Germany). During much of my

academic career outside of Mexico, I let my identity as an academic surpass the salient identities that had marked much of my life in Mexico. Upon reflection, I believe sweeping my salient identities under my 'new' identity as an academic allowed me to put myself in a 'safer' place (i.e. academia), a place falsely promising objectivity, meritocracy and inclusion.

Account 2. Recognising discrimination in my home country

For my PhD project, I researched empowerment and gender inequality in an IT firm and a professional service firm, both based in Mexico City. My former employee status at these organisations facilitated access to potential interviewees and secondary data. Like many researchers, my choice of research topic and settings was a reflection of my own experience and view of the world: I had experienced violence and discrimination against women in Mexico, and was aware of discriminatory, exploitative and marginalising practices in some workplaces. I wanted to find explanations to my anecdotal observations and hoped to contribute towards alleviating these issues through my research. In the methodological chapter of my PhD thesis (Ruiz Castro, 2009), I discussed my standpoint and how my positioning might have influenced the research design and interpretation of data. This was methodological reflexivity. I acknowledged that the way I had experienced both organisations as my workplace could have influenced how I interpreted the data. After re-reading this material, however, I realised that I was also acknowledging how conducting my PhD project had helped me understand my past experiences as a dark-skinned employee in Mexico. Referring to the IT firm (SDC), I wrote:

> *I regarded [the IT firm] as having a friendly working environment. I did not perceive hierarchical barriers to interact with people, and I felt welcome to express concerns and propose solutions. Furthermore, I felt trusted by supervisors when they assigned to me important responsibilities and almost tripled my salary in one single increase, especially considering that I had not concluded my undergraduate studies and was only 21 years old. My experience at SDC taught me the values of self-determination and open communication, which I have kept with myself to date. Overall, I remember my experience at SDC as life enriching.*

My reference to the professional service firm was less positive:

> *[The auditing firm] is a hierarchical organisation, and my experience there contrasted considerably* [to the IT firm]. *I was not used to an environment where staff do not get to interact with people in high-rank positions. I did not feel welcome to*

> *express what I was thinking and feeling. I simply felt I was there to do my job, and not to participate.*

I recognised little about race and class issues in the above accounts, however my data pointed clearly to the disadvantage women in the professional service firm experienced at the intersections of gender, class and racio-ethnicity. An article on intersectionality and career advancement processes (Ruiz Castro & Holvino, 2016), looked at the data from an intersectional perspective, exploring how the intersections of these categories of difference (re)produced inequality, showing how career trajectories, career advancement and work interactions were overdetermined by employees' identities. Instead of collecting or consulting our data for pre-determined categories of class and race, we proposed to use the construct of 'markers of inequality' to capture the simultaneous construction of differences specifically in the Mexican socio-cultural context. In our findings, we wrote:

> *[T]wo female managers discussed how (male) partners demanded that they ask women staff to change the way they dressed, for example, from a simple jumper to 'a more feminine suit'. Another male partner asked that a young woman's employment be terminated because, given her appearance* [dark-skinned]*, 'she could not represent the firm properly'* (ibid., p. 339).

Analysing this type of interview data from an intersectional perspective was fascinating in a theoretical sense. At a personal level, learning about these situations stirred a range of emotions in me, from anger to sadness. In the methodological chapter of my PhD thesis, I wrote:

> *[My] knowledge of both organisations was very much limited to Human Resources operations. While conducting this research, I actually learned of many other experiences that I had not realised before. Certainly, I also identified myself with some of the interviewees' experiences... I... believe that the interviewing process had been* [reflexive] *for both* [participants] *and myself.*

While the study showed how intersecting identities determine career opportunities to different groups of individuals in different degrees of privilege and disadvantage, it also revealed in the clearest, most brutal way how I might have been perceived and valued by others. This research on intersectionality in a professional service firm and more recent research that I have conducted on gender, race and class in multinational corporations in Mexico, suggest that the 'markers of inequality' I carry would expose me to discriminatory practices and prevent me from advancing to the higher hierarchical levels. Conducting this type of research and reflecting on it from my own intersecting identities has allowed me to

gain a clearer understanding of my possibilities and limitations afforded by this particular socio-cultural context. This understanding also influences my professional identity as a researcher, my academic practice, and my approach to teaching and researching, including integrating an intersectional and de-colonising perspective into the curriculum, and recognising that gender is not a unifying factor.

Account 3. Becoming a foreign women of colour in the UK

In 2018, I was invited by a group of black practitioners and activists to be a research advisor for a project aiming to explore the experiences of BAME women working and living in the UK. The people behind the project (to whom I shall refer as 'Special Women' hereafter) have transformed lives and fought to challenge and change the status quo with their heart, body and minds. Though fully committed to the project, I perceived my role merely as a research advisor. In meetings, I introduced myself as a 'Senior Lecturer from the University of Roehampton'. My contributions to the discussion were mostly in relation to research design and relevant lines of enquiry. I talked about findings from past research and the publications that could potentially derive from this research project. I was so invested in my academic career and reputation as a researcher and research advisor that I had completely left out my salient identities. In a context where academics are increasingly measured on the basis of rapid publication, highly competitive research funding, and other 'objective' metrics, my main tool in navigating my academic life was through the creation of knowledge and tangible outcomes, rather than through aligning my research with my salient identities. As I continued advising the research team, I had the opportunity to learn from the experiences of BAME women in the UK, not only through the interviews and surveys that the research team had conducted, but also through 'being' who I was and being 'seen' for what I am. I started reconnecting with those salient identities, i.e. being a foreign woman of colour, which I had chosen to silence, or, had consented to allow the system to subtly marginalise, stigmatise and silence. Among the gender and management/organisations research community in the UK, I am the 'other'. This area is overwhelmingly dominated by white and native English-speaking women. Instead of making a huge effort to blend in and to manage impressions (those ethnic minority academics who do it on daily basis know how exhausting and demoralising this can be), the 'Special Women' team *saw* me in a way I am not usually seen in academia. They saw me not only as an 'expert' in the field, but also acknowledged and valued the strengths associated with me being a 'different' woman researcher.

The project team organised an event, attended by more than 200 professional women, most of them BAME women, to present the project's findings. I was invited not only as a member of the research advisory team, but also as a BAME woman. On the run up to the event, I received an email by the project team, inviting me to participate in a flash mob. They asked if I could say some lines in my native language, Spanish. I accepted the invitation with some hesitation (wasn't I only a research advisor?). I then received the lines, which read:

I am a different woman. My difference is my strength. I bring all that I am, to all that I am called to be, and do. This is my story, my voice, my truth.

Which I translated into Spanish as:

Soy una mujer diferente. Mi diferencia es mi fuerza. Llevo comigo misma todo lo que soy, a todo lo que se me pide ser, y hacer. Esta es mi historia, mi voz y mi verdad.

The experience that has resulted from this research activity has been emancipatory and transformative. It has encouraged me to recognise the power and uniqueness of my own gender, race and nationality and how, at their intersection, they strengthen my role as a researcher and lecturer. This does not mean that I now ignore how those identities can put me at disadvantage in different contexts, e.g. how 'professional' I am perceived by students in the classroom or how 'valid' my expertise as a researcher is perceived by more privileged colleagues. Nor does it mean that my identity as a gender and organisations scholar isn't important to me. Rather, this means that I have found the strength to bring myself out of the 'comfortable invisibility' I was experiencing as a foreign women of colour working as an academic in the UK. I have purposefully taking on roles within my own institution that allow me to use my voice and potentially influence processes (something I had previously avoided). I actively reach out to colleagues from ethnic minorities, to include, connect and collectively empower each other. I have found it easier to collaborate with white female scholars because I no longer undermine the strength of my identities before them.

During that event, I listened attentively to the presentation of the project findings, which focused on the lived experiences of BAME women professionals - a picture of blatant discrimination and micro-aggressions, but also of resilience and strength. I remember that a white woman near me introduced herself. I responded, 'I am Mayra… I am a Senior Lecturer at the University of Roehampton, but I'm here today as a woman of colour'. I wanted the white woman to also 'see' me for what I am. I refused to hide my core identities or allow the white woman to ignore them. In that moment, I chose not to push race away.

In the midst of having to meet institutional expectations of excellence and performance in academia and the resulting high workloads, I often let my researcher identity

overtake my core identities. Once, during such a time, I decided to skip an event organised by the 'Special Women', but they would not allow me to disconnect; Their response was: 'The voice of Latin American women is absent in this space, and you contribute to that, and so much more to where we are today and where we're going... I won't rest until you're in the room, so will circle back to you shortly.' In the end, I attended the event.

Ethical considerations in autoethnography and intersectional reflexivity
Conventional ethnographic studies, in which the focus of the inquiry is on understanding a specific culture or setting, might be regulated and protected by procedural, conventional ethical frameworks (Doloriert & Sambrook, 2009). Within autoethnography, where the focus is on the researcher's experiences, regulation is less tangible. There are, however, a number of ethical issues that need to be considered. These issues relate to the self and other parties revealed in autoethnographic accounts.

In relation to the self, or 'auto' ethics (Doloriert & Sambrook, 2009), anonymity is one of the major issues. Within autoethnography, anonymisation of the researcher is not a feasible option as the identity of the researcher is revealed (Haynes, 2018). The level of exposure of the self in autoethnography makes it 'the most dangerous fieldwork of all' (Parry & Boyle, 2019, p. 695). It is therefore crucial that scholars are aware of their vulnerability and protect the self from any potential pain or distress (Doloriert & Sambrook, 2009; Haynes, 2011). This potential pain or distress is even more latent when using intersectional reflexivity as emphasis is put on revealing, questioning and critiquing the self and the power structures that hold it. Doloriert and Sambrook (2009) regard the issue of harm as being more closely associated with 'Health and Safety at work' rather than with ethics. Researchers need to decide whether they are ready to put themselves 'out there' and consider how autoethnography could affect them physically, psychologically and emotionally. My guess is that many gender, management and organisation scholars choose not to engage in autoethnography, especially when a reflection on their intersecting identities is involved, because of the pain that self-discovery can carry. There is also the risk of presenting our vulnerabilities to the institutional actors, who, through their power, privilege, ignorance and 'unintended' actions perpetuate marginalisation and discrimination in our institutions. In addition, revealing the autoethnographer's identity jeopardises the blind review and publication process (Doloriert & Sambrook, 2012).

In relation to others, or relational ethics (Ellis, 2007), ethics lies in the recognition and valorisation of 'mutual respect, dignity, and connectedness' between researcher and

researched, and with those work colleagues, students, managers, relatives or friends we talk about in our autoethnographic accounts (Doloriert & Sambrook, 2012; Ellis, 2007). Relational ethics calls us to recognise that when writing about others, autoethnographic accounts need to consider how others would feel about what they read. Consideration should be given to whether the identity of groups, organisations or specific individuals are being revealed, and whether revealing their identity is absolutely crucial or relevant to the analysis. As such, in the autoethnographic accounts that I presented above, I chose to pseudonymise organisations and people, focusing on reflexively writing and analysing my own experience. In addition, I approached the 'Special Women', whose words I used, to ask for their approval.

Concluding remarks

In this chapter, I introduced autoethnography as a valuable research method for gender, management and organisation research that allows the exploration, expression and interpretation of individual experiences and organisational life within academics' own HE institutions and workplaces. I also proposed the use of intersectional reflexivity (Rodriguez & Ruiz Castro, 2014) as a conscious, intentional and developmental tool in critical autoethnography. I provided some guideline questions, which can be used by scholars to acknowledge their lived experience as determined by their intersecting identities, and how that experience is shaped by power structures and systems of oppression and privilege. Autoethnographic accounts showed how, by engaging in intersectional reflexivity as a dark-skinned woman in Mexico and a foreign woman of colour in academia in the UK, I have been able to reconnect with my core identities, find my place within my own institution, and attach a new meaning to my academic role. This approach can be adopted by other minority scholars. Equally, engaging in intersectional reflexivity has value for white, privileged scholars interested in consciously revealing power, control and inequality, and committed towards overturning and disabling unequal systems of power. A good starting point is to reflect on and acknowledge how they have benefitted from existing power structures and through the interaction (or lack of interaction) with those who they might construct as the more disadvantaged within the research process or HE institutions.

I hope that this chapter has shown how scholars can consciously adopt an intersectional reflexive approach to critical autoethnography. The 'key questions' listed in Boxes 1 and 2 provide a frame for critical autoethnography through intersectional reflexivity. These questions can be expanded and modified to better fit individual experiences,

determined by identities that I did not directly address, including sexuality or disability. Intersectional reflexivity can strengthen other reflexive research methods (e.g. action research) and other creative channels (e.g. blogs). It can also be conducted collaboratively by a group of autoethnographers with a shared line of inquiry (see Chang, 2013).

Adopting intersectional reflexivity to conduct autoethnography enables researchers to critically acknowledge and embrace their intersecting identities. Treating themselves as subjects and objects of self-exploration in connection with the wider sociocultural and organisational context can result in the conscious transformation of individual and organisational practices.

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Box 1. A guide to intersectional reflexivity in autoethnography: The research process

A guide to intersectional reflexivity in autoethnography

A. Autoethnography focused on the research process and the relationship between researchers and research participants

− Who am I?

− How do I see myself? What identities do I consider more salient?

− How am I constructing my own identity? How are others constructing my identity? (Cassell, 2005)?

− Who am I when I consider multiple and intersecting identities (Jones et al., 2012, p. 703)

− How do I experience my identity at the intersections? (Jones et al., 2012)

− What are the sociocultural contexts and structures of power and privilege [and disadvantage] that influence and shape [my] identity? (Jones et al., 2012, p. 703)

− What was my positioning at the time I conducted research?

− What was my view of the world? What was my relation to the wider socio-cultural context?

− What brought me to this line of enquiry and helped me craft my research questions? (Taber, 2010).

− How do I know the research field/context?

− Who do I conduct research with and collaborate with?

− What identities, perspectives and experiences do I share, or not, with research participants?

− How does who I am, who I have been, who I think I am, and how I feel affect data collection and analysis? (Pillow, 2003: 176).

− What aspects of my intersecting identities am I hiding? To what end?

− Who and what topics do I value or favour through my research project?

− Who and what topics do I exclude from my research project?

− How do my self-perception and view of the world change as a result of the research I have conducted? What new research questions and theoretical groundings does it make me consider and explore?

- What do I learn about myself?
- How do I want to use or materialise the new insights originated from this research project?
- What actions do I take or what new practices do I adopt as a result of these new insights?

Box 2. A guide to intersectional reflexivity in autoethnography: Organisational life

A guide to intersectional reflexivity in autoethnography

B. Autoethnography focused on organisational life and conducted within our current or past HE institutions/workplaces

- Who am I?
- How do I see myself? What identities do I consider more salient?
- How am I constructing my own identity? How are others constructing my identity? (Cassell, 2005)?
- Who am I when I consider multiple and intersecting identities (Jones et al., 2012, p. 703)
- How do I experience my identity at the intersections? (Jones et al., 2012)
- What are the sociocultural contexts and structures of power and privilege [and disadvantage] that influence and shape [my] identity? (Jones et al., 2012, p. 703)
- Who am I within my HE institution or workplace?
- How do I construct relationships with others?
- What of my identities and abilities have I been neglected?
- What challenges or problems am I facing? How do I internalise them or solve them? (Dunbar-Hall, 2009)
- What are my goals and aspirations? What do I want my legacy to be? How could my research help towards this end?
- What new understanding of myself do I develop? How do I become a different person? How do I recognise myself?
- How do what I experience benefit my professional responsibilities and opportunities? (Dunbar-Hall, 2009)

- How do I want to use or materialise the new insights originated from this experience or situation?
- What actions do I take or what new practices do I adopt as a result of these new insights?