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

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Abstract

In the domain of research, where stories unfold,
There's autoethnography, a tale to be told.
Traditionally, a qualitative approach, both personal and wide,
Weaving lives and meanings, a cultural guide.

Bochner and Ellis promoted the autoethnographic scene,
Where layers of consciousness seem to intervene.
Offering in their 2016 *Evocative Autoethnography*
A genre that links the self to society.

First-person prose, in varied forms it appears,
Short stories, poetry, sparking emotions and tears.
Novels and essays, with photographs to tell,
Autoethnographic tales in ways that compel.

In this present article, with hearts bold and true,
Tony Onwuegbuzie, Sandra Abrams, and Madeline Abrams, too,
Alongside Anna CohenMiller and Anthony Bambrola, they stand,
Reframing autoethnography, mapping out new land.

Autoethnography, a call for methods combined,
By these scholars' efforts, a new frame outlined.
Connecting the personal to the wide scopes,
Of social, cultural, and political tropes.

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Ten dimensions identified in their expansive span,
Tony, Sandra, Madeline, Anna, and Anthony began
An integrated, integrative, integral dance.
Autoethnography's reborn, given a new chance.

At the heart of an autoethnographic quest,
A radical middle is where researchers should invest,
This means embracing an emtic view,
With critical dialectical pluralism being what they pursue.

In this radical middle, integrated methods intertwine,
Meta-methods combine, creating a sign,
Different designs, each with its own tone,
Collaborative minds, in harmony, do hone.

Balanced contribution between participant and investigator,
Iterative pathways, each team member, an innovator,
Narratives woven, deeply entwined,
Semi-personalized tales, rich stories combined.

So, let us explore, with minds open wide,
Autoethnography's depths, where meaning making abides.
With Tony, Sandra, Madeline, Anna, and Anthony, let's start,
On this rich tapestry, where science meets art.

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

It is 3:33 am on January 4, 2022, and I (Tony) had been suddenly awakened. However, I was not awakened by a nightmare but by a research idea. Specifically, on waking up, I immediately asked myself, "Why does autoethnography have to be a qualitative research approach? Why can't autoethnography *also* represent a mixed methods research approach by including the collection, analysis, and interpretation of quantitative data within the autoethnographic process?" In posing these two questions, I reminded myself of the origin and development of autoethnography. In particular, I recalled that autoethnography can be traced back to the early-to-mid-20th century, during which a few ethnographers representing the Chicago School began the process of incorporating aspects of autoethnography into their work (e.g., narrated life histories). Moreover, I recollected that autoethnography represents a form of qualitative research, in general, and ethnographic research, in particular, wherein the researcher links personal experiences to broader social, cultural, and political meanings and understandings. Simply stated, autoethnography—a term that was coined in 1975 by Karl G. Heider, an American visual anthropologist—refers to qualitative research that involves critical observation of an individual's lived experiences. However, I remembered that, in Heider's original conceptualization, the aspect of self-study had not become a defining feature; rather, following traditional qualitative techniques, the researcher self-referred to the individuals (i.e., participants) of study.

As I lay in bed, I recollected the origin and evolution of autoethnography, as illustrated by the following poetic representation, which I have entitled, "Autoethnographic Recollections," and which represents an integration of found poetry (Prendergast, 2006) and research poetry (Faulkner, 2009)—hopefully being consistent with what Lahman et al. (2011) referred to as "good enough research poetry" (p. 894) that is associated with novice research poets like me:

I recollected that, during the early-to-mid-20th century's light,

When the Chicago School began to shine so bright.

Ethnographers, pioneers of the day,

Incorporated autoethnography in their own way.

I recollected Heider's seminal year,

1975, when his coin of the term did appear.

For him, it was the people's stories, not his own,

That made the work autoethnographic, well-known.

I recollected that, later in the 70s, researchers found

Their presence in groups made a definitive sound.

Positionality, a term they did tout,

Acknowledging their impact, inside and out.

I recollected that, in the 80's, questions did arise

About the role of qualitative researchers, a critical guise.

Norman Denzin noted the shift, in research's evolution

Towards reflexivity, with gender, class, and race inclusion.

I recollected that, at 1980's end, confessional forms arose,

Scholars passionately applying autoethnography's prose.

Impressionist tales, so vivid and bright,

Crafting narratives, researcher's insight.

I recollected that the 90's brought concerns of legitimacy,

Ethnographic trustworthiness, a necessity.

Researchers inserted themselves into their own tale,

Increasing involvement, making their mark, without fail.

I recollected that, in 2004, a turning point did show

Conferences embracing autoethnography's glow.

The *International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry*, a site

Welcoming narratives, shedding research's light.

I recollected that, today, as Stanley L. Witkin proclaimed

Autoethnographers' hybrid form, acclaimed.

Confessional-impressionist tale, they weave

Performative, poetic, narratives they conceive.

I recollected that, today, autoethnographers blend confession and art,

A hybrid tale, where the self takes part.

Symbolic and lyrical language style

Bringing stories to life, building autoethnography's profile.

Furthermore, I recalled the definition of autoethnography by Bochner and Ellis (2016)—who were former colleagues of mine when I was a full professor at the University of South Florida—

as "an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural" (p. 65).

My two aforementioned questions about autoethnography and mixed methods research further awakened me from my slumber. I began answering my questions by reminding myself that, since 2007, many monomethod approaches, methodologies, methods, and processes have been transformed into mixed methods research approaches. That is, they had been subjected to a "mixed methods way of thinking" (Greene, 2007, p. 20). In particular, I reminded myself of how, within the last decade, ethnographic research—which has its roots as a qualitative approach in the 20th century when anthropologists engaged in participant observation and detailed descriptions of different cultures—has been expanded to *Mixed Methods Ethnographic Research* (*MMER*; Crede & Borrego, 2013; Hitchcock & Onwuegbuzie, 2020; Schensul & LeCompte, 2012; Schensul et al., 2012). I recalled that, when conducting MMER, ethnographers use a combination of qualitative research approaches (e.g., interviews, focus groups, observations) and quantitative research approaches (e.g., surveys), and/or mixed methods research approaches (e.g., archival analyses, mapping strategies).

Further, I reminded myself of other mixed methods transformations that have occurred within the field of monomethod research, as reflected in Table 1. "So, why can't autoethnography be expanded to mixed methods autoethnography, or the like?," I asked myself.

Table 1

Mixed Methods Transformations that have Occurred Within the Field of Monomethod Research

Monomethod Element	Mixed Methods Transformation
Grounded Theory	Mixed Methods Grounded Theory (MM-GT) Creamer, 2018, 2021; Guetterman et al., 2017; Howell Smith et al., 2020; Johnson et al., 2010; Johnson & Walsh, 2019; Shim et al., 2021
Phenomenological Research	Mixed Methods Phenomenological Research (MMPR) Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2014, 2015
Case Study	Mixed Methods Case Study (MMCS) Onwuegbuzie & Wisdom, 2013; Sharp et al., 2012; Walton et al., 2020
Action Research	Mixed Methods Action Research (MMAR) Christ, 2010; Ivankova, 2014; Ivankova & Wingo, 2018; Onwuegbuzie & Dickinson, 2007
Ethnographic Research	Mixed Methods Ethnographic Research (MMER) Crede & Borrego, 2013; Hitchcock & Onwuegbuzie, 2020; Schensul & LeCompte, 2012; Schensul et al., 2012
Narrative Inquiry	Mixed Methods Narrative Inquiry (MMNI) Onwuegbuzie & Abrams, 2024b
Narrative Research	Mixed Methods Narrative Research (MMNR) Doran et al., 2022; Onwuegbuzie & Abrams, 2024b
Participatory Research	Mixed Methods and Community-Based Participatory Research (MMCBPR) DeJonckheere et al., 2019

Monomethod Element	Mixed Methods Transformation
Randomized Controlled Trials	Mixed Methods Randomized Controlled Trials (MMRCT) Edmunds et al., 2022
Quasi-Experimental Methods	Quasi-Experimental Mixed Methods (QEMM) Nielsen et al., 2017
Impact Evaluation	Mixed Methods Impact Evaluation (MMIE) Onwuegbuzie & Benge, 2018; Onwuegbuzie & Hitchcock, 2017
Bibliometrics	Mixed Methods Bibliometrics (MMB) Onwuegbuzie & Frels, 2015; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2018
Systematic Reviews	Integrated Mixed Methods Systematic Reviews Onwuegbuzie, in press-a
Focus Group Discussions	Mixed Methods Focus Group Discussions (MMFGDs) Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, et al., 2009, 2010; Onwuegbuzie, McAllister-Shields, et al., in press
Interviews	Mixed Methods Interviews (MMIs) Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013
Visual Displays	Mixed Methods Visual Displays Kleih et al., 2022; Onwuegbuzie & Dickinson, 2008

It is now 5:08 am. However, despite the earliness of the morning, this question caused my brain to race. I quickly came to the conclusion that the prevailing thought that autoethnography represented *purely* a qualitative research tradition reflected, what I refer to often as *dichotomous thinking*. Believing passionately that researchers should adopt a synechist (i.e., anti-dualistic) stance wherein dichotomies are replaced with continua (Johnson & Gray, 2010), I began framing autoethnographic approaches as being multi-dimensional in nature. For example, I created a dimension representing the mixing nature of autoethnography—with monomethod-based autoethnography (e.g., traditional [qualitative] autoethnography) at one end of the continuum and mixed methods-based autoethnography at the other end of the continuum. Then, I asked myself, "How many dimensions are relevant to autoethnography?" In order to answer this question, I sat up in my bed, reached for my iPhone, and then used the *Notes* app to take notes about potential dimensions associated with autoethnography.

After taking notes in bed for approximately two hours, I decided that it was time for me to get out of bed, to shower, and then to move onto my computer where I would be able to resume my note-taking in a more efficient manner. Taking a shower was especially important for me in my quest to reflect more on the concept of mixed methods autoethnography, not only because I did not want to subject my nephew, Osa, with whom I live, to my unshowered self later that morning, but also because, over the years, I have engaged in my best scholarly reflexivity in the shower—developing numerous scholarly works while showering. (If only I could bring my computer into the shower and type while showering!) And January 4, 2022 was no different because, while in the shower, I was able to identify a few more potential dimensions associated with autoethnography.

Despite how productive my shower had been, by the time that I had completed it, I realized that I needed help to crystallize my multi-dimensional thinking. I have been extremely fortunate to have co-authored works with numerous prominent mixed methods researchers. Therefore, I had a very large pool of scholars from which to ask to collaborate with me on this mixed methods autoethnography work. In particular, I wanted to write with one or more mixed methodologists who were particularly knowledgeable about both the theory and practice of qualitative research, who had taught qualitative research courses, who had a background and passion for disseminating best practices for teaching and learning (e.g., Ph.D./Master's students, early-career mentorship), and who were award-winning teachers. Two colleagues came immediately to my attention: Professor Sandra Schamroth Abrams and Professor Anna S. CohenMiller.

Therefore, after spending a few more hours educating myself further about autoethnography, at 12:31 pm GMT, I sent an email simultaneously to both Sandra and Anna, as follows:

"Dear Sandra and Anna,

Happy New Year!

I hope that you and your loved ones are well! You might recall that I briefly introduced you to each other (between zoom and FaceTime) several weeks ago…….

As you both know, I love to write articles for which it is outrageous for me to write. Indeed, it could be argued that such an article [on mixed methods autoethnography] should be written by someone like Carolyn Ellis (my ex-colleague at the University of South Florida) and/or her husband. However, writing about topics about which I have written little or nothing provides me with the best opportunity to grow.

Now, I know that both of you are extremely busy. However, I am hoping that you can carve out time to co-write this editorial [on mixed methods autoethnography] with me over the next two months, If you are not available, I will completely understand. I will then just either write it myself or look for other co-authors, although I would MUCH rather co-write this with both of you.

However, if you are available—and, as I stated, I really hope you are—then, I am hoping that we can set up a meeting for sometime next week. I have been doing a lot of meta-thinking on this topic and even have a potential title on which I would like to get feedback from you. In fact, I awoke during the early hours of this morning and automatically started outlining the first draft of this editorial in my head—which is a big sign that I need to start (co-)writing it!

Anyway, I look forward to your response as to your availability at your earliest convenience.

Cheers!

Tony"

When Tony sent his email, it was 7:31 am EST, and my (Sandra's) daughters' school had just reopened after the holiday break. Although I cannot recall the details of that morning, I am confident that they included the typical weekday morning rush to feed the dog, the cat, and my

daughters their respective breakfasts, as well as prepare lunch and snack for my daughters to take with them. Despite arising before the din of the girls' alarm clocks, much to my dismay, I continuously have found myself in throes of the morning hustle—perhaps because it takes time for the caffeine in my morning coffee to work its neurochemical magic—or perhaps because we need to tweak our routine. Nonetheless, apparently I looked at my phone for a brief moment at approximately 7:35 because I sent Tony the following text at 7:39 am on January 4, 2022:

> "Hi Tony. I am so glad that you took time for yourself yesterday. That's excellent. I also just saw your email re: the ms [manuscript]. I will send it around 9:30 am my time, which will be my first encounter this morning with my computer."

Although this exchange referenced a different email and project, the text identifies that I would not fully access my inbox until 9:30 am. In fact, in another email to Tony that morning, which I sent at 9:21 am, I indicated, "Hi Tony, I see several emails from you, so this is response #1 :). Get ready for more."

As I made my way through my emails, I came upon Tony's invitation, and I remember feeling excited about the opportunity to think about a topic that had been swirling around in my head given my ongoing discussion with Anthony Bambrola, one of my students in the St. John's University Ph.D. program in Curriculum and Instruction (at the time, I was a full professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at St. John's University, as well as the director of the Ph.D. program in Curriculum and Instruction). Anthony had been conducting what appeared to be an emerging mixed methods autoethnography, and, in addition to thinking with Anthony about his topic, I served on his committee. I mentioned this in my email to Tony and asked if we may invite Anthony on the project (though I expressed concern about time because I was aware of Anthony's obligations as a Ph.D. student and an elementary school principal). I sent the following email to Tony at 10:08 am EST:

> "Dear Tony (and hello, Anna!),
>
> Tony, you always are a hard worker, so I am not surprised that you took the time writing and outlining brilliant editorials.
>
> I am so glad that you reached out regarding the mixed methods autoethnography because, as you know, this interests me quite a bit, especially since Anthony Bambrola started working on one for his dissertation (and I am on his committee).
>
> I very much look forward to working on this project with both of you over the next two months. I am wondering—might you be open to inviting Anthony on this endeavor? I am not sure if Anthony will have the time, but I do not want to assume, and I think his input/feedback based on his own experiences could be very enlightening.
>
> Per next week, I can meet on the 13th and possibly on the 11th if the 13th is not good for you both.
>
> So exciting!!
>
> Best,
>
> Sandra"

Tony responded at 10:32 am EST indicating that he recalls Anthony's work and even discussing autoethnography with Anthony previously:

> "I am so glad you are interested in this topic and are willing to co-write with me in a 2-month timeframe. Yes, of course, please include Anthony as a co-author, As you know, I had the pleasure of having him in my mixed methods course in 2020, and it was so motivating to discuss autoethnography with him. I also recall having a one-on-one session with him to give him advice as to how to produce a mixed methods autoethnographic doctoral dissertation for which you are a committee member on January 20, 2021. Our meeting took place at the same time that Amanda Gorman was reading her poem entitled, "The Hill We Climb," at President Biden's inauguration. We could perhaps use his dissertation or ensuing article as an exemplar.
>
> Although I missed her great recital (I watched it later on YouTube), it was worth it."

Additionally, Tony mentioned that Anna had an away message due to the holiday, and, with Tony's agreement, I decided to wait until we heard from Anna so that I could provide Anthony a complete picture of what we thought would be ahead of us. Anna responded with enthusiasm on January 10, 2022 at 2:32 am EST, and Tony replied the next morning, January 11, 2022, 6:35 am EST, an email that included the message, "Sandra, let's go ahead and arrange to meet with Anthony as soon as possible." A quick glance at my calendar reveals a packed schedule on January 11 and January 12, likely the reason why I wrote the following to Anthony on Thursday, January 13, at 1:00 pm EST:

> "Dear Anthony,
>
> I hope all is well. I am writing on behalf of Tony Onwuegbuzie and Anna CohenMiller because we three are planning on writing an editorial about mixed methods autoethnography. When Tony approached me about the editorial, one of my first thoughts was, "We need to include Anthony on this project!" We agreed that your contributions will be so important, and we would like to invite you to join us in this endeavor.
>
> Although I know you are insanely busy, I hope you will accept this invitation not only because you have so much to contribute based on your current research, but also because the thinking and writing process will help you as you progress through your dissertation phase.
>
> If you accept, we will try to meet in the next week or so for an initial meeting, with the intention to write the editorial in the next two months.
>
> Thank you in advance for your consideration.
>
> All the best,
> Sandra, and for Tony and Anna"

Given that the aforementioned email exchanges included four people and had taken place over a span of nine days, it is important to pause and to create equal space for Anna's and Anthony's responses and reflections. In what follows are Anna's and Anthony's respective accounts.

Upon receiving this email, I (Anna) was living in northern Kazakhstan. With two adults, two energetic kiddos under the age of 10 and two playful kittens, the sounds of the morning and intricate movement began to emerge, flowing and cascading across the one-level home in our campus housing. Looking outside across the steppe, snow was piled high and glistening, creating a sense of viewing the wide expanse as if looking at the ocean. Inside, the centralised city-regulated heating meant we could easily lounge in shorts and t-shirts even when the outside temperatures were well below freezing for months on end.

Being able to look out and feel the vast openness was important emotionally and psychologically, especially because of the continued quarantine measures in the country. Kazakhstan was one of the first countries to go under strict lockdown in March 2020, and living on a university campus meant additional regulations which continued into 2022.

And being able to connect beyond the university walls with colleagues and friends offered ways to feel a part of a global space and linked to meaningful work. And this is when the email from Tony arrived.

Thinking back now, in April 2024, I can still feel the warmth of the email. I was shocked to receive such an invitation. I had worked hard to create a space of having a vacation—actually using an away message on my email! And yet, I couldn't keep myself from checking my inbox. How magical it was to receive the email from Tony that day. In that time and space, I could feel the sense of connection—an embodied feeling welcoming in and inviting us together— gently bringing together geography, disciplines, perspectives, experiences, people, words, and hearts into a common area of exploration.

On thinking about mixed methods autoethnography, I could feel myself moving through a landscape of thoughts: "*Is it possible*?" I wondered. I had integrated evocative autoethnography in my own work (CohenMiller, 2020) and guided the way for students and researchers to see its potential in Kazakhstan (Aitenova & CohenMiller, 2020). I played with the ideas: "*Is it a contradiction in terms? What could it mean for expanding our understanding*?" My thoughts continued…seeing a direct connection to the book I had recently published— a book which Tony and I had been in discussion about throughout its development— *Questions in Qualitative Social Justice Research in Multicultural Contexts* (CohenMiller & Boivin, 2021). Thinking about the central themes of the book, I started to get excited about potential common ideas:

> *Perhaps mixed methods autoethnography could facilitate voice for participants and researchers?*

> *Perhaps it could offer new directions to promote equity and inclusion?*

> *Perhaps it could offer directions for creativity and justice-centered work* (which then link to my more recent work as well, cf. CohenMiller, 2024; CohenMiller & Grace, forthcoming)

Absolutely! The ideas—the people. Lifting my soul—possibilities and potential and grounding:

from lock down and quarantine   wearing masks

kittens scrambling around

      Playing and joyful kids

        noise, or is it music?

        movements, hard and soft   flowing   to and   fro

        cinnamon rolls, a sticky enticement

stuck inside together, and   something

                  more

fields and plains and steppe of snow,

        bright sunshine glistening

an email bringing people together

      reaching beyond space and time, beyond disciplines and programs

at home, work and personal

      overlapping//sounds//and smells of life

of home and family

        and   worklife,

an integration of space and place,

collaboration,

delicate ideas and robust direction.

lifted

      and ready, together

Upon being contacted by Sandra, I (Anthony) felt an immediate sense of both flattery and modesty at the invitation to collaborate on this potential piece. While honored to receive the consideration amongst these inspiring colleagues, my positionality as such a novice researcher gave me pause about the depth of my potential contributions. As often has been the case in dialogue with Sandra, I was grounded by reflection upon the nature of our journey into this less explored territory of autoethnography. Engaging in a mixed methods research approach to autoethnography lacks established precedent, yet exudes expansive possibility.

On a personal level, here I am exploring the integrative approach to research as part of my dissertation work, studying my own pandemic principalship through the lens of time-use during this unique time in education and school leadership. As I noted in my proposal, I was not seeking to be methodologically adventurous in my approach to the research; in fact, quite the opposite. My research began with a wondering about how school principals use their time amidst the backdrop of leading schools during a global pandemic. My initial data collection engaged multiple methods of journaling and logging actions, quantitizing and qualitizing data for my own understanding, as well as that of a potential audience to my research later on. Within this space, and with inspiration from Sandra and Tony as professors at the time, I found

myself discouraged at the lack of model studies taking a similar approach, but pushed to explore further, as the very nature of our work as researchers is to grow the field.

As I noted to Sandra in conversation, my research felt like hacking through the jungle with a machete; there wasn't a clear path, or really one at all, to follow so, one needed to be forged. Now, I certainly appreciate that my emerging study was not the sole creator of the path towards mixed autoethnography—not at all! But, it had the potential to be, perhaps, one example, or story, as an autoethnography might best be characterized. It could be a building block for someone else, again perhaps, to lean on and learn from, to critique, and to improve upon in their methodological approach. Despite my very raw nature as an educational researcher, my initial intimidation of co-authoring on this piece with these accomplished individuals gave way (somewhat) to the realization that there may be others in my shoes. There might be someone inspired by the possibility to explore research through a new path, integrating methods not often brought together, and to be reassured that if it is going to be initiated, it is going to be messy and organic. And that's okay.

Research should begin with a wondering, a question, or a motivation for exploration. For myself, I wasn't seeking to figure out a way to do mixed autoethnography; instead, I had a question about my practice and one that could be studied autoethnographically, as well as through integrated collection and analysis of data. I might have stepped into this mixed autoethnography terrain accidentally, but emerged from it recognizing there is value here to our research community and, hopefully, my contributions can be a small part of the inspiration to build upon the research niche, further establishing its legitimacy in the field and necessity for answering some of those questions that inspire research endeavors to begin with. What possibilities exist when exploring autoethnographically? And how could they be enhanced when integrating through a mixed data collection and analysis approach? How might meaning be enhanced through this complex, but calculated integration? How do these approaches, so often not married in research, complement each other to compensate for potential shortcomings and limitations and strengthen conclusions, while counteracting against attempts to delegitimatize any singular component approach? I was, and remain, inspired by the possibilities of opening new research paths through a mixed methods autoethnography approach. In my own study, utilizing a mixed methods autoethnographic approach was validated by the need to capture a cultural experience through various methods. Autoethnography studies life and life is complex.

Complex research inquiries require complex methodological approaches. That complexity, or messiness of methods, can still be rigorous and substantively contribute to the literature base. As Tony (Onwuegbuzie, 2012) states, "Good research is good research, whether it stems from the quantitative, qualitative, or mixed research tradition, as long as meaning ensues, that represents interpretive consistency...the degree of consistency between the methods used and the researcher's inferences and generalizations" (p. 195). Regardless of methodological positionality, the shared goal remains to produce meaningful, trustworthy research, which actively contributes to the knowledge base (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2010).

For that reason, modest Anthony, receiving this invitation to collaborate didn't necessarily disappear, but instead, ceded to the recognition that this work is important and that my experience traversing this jungle with my machete is not a solitary experience, as others have machetes, too.

Once all four of us had agreed to collaborate on the mixed methods autoethnography project, we exchanged a few emails to determine a time for our first meeting. This turned out to be a challenging task because of the time difference among us, with Sandra and Anthony being located in the northeastern United States, Tony in London, England, and Anna in Kazakhstan (at the time)—this yielded an 11-hour time difference between Sandra/Anthony and Anna. Notwithstanding, we were able to meet on three occasions in 2022: January 27, February 8, and March 1. During these meetings, we identified 10 dimensions that characterize autoethnography, which we will outline in the next section.

We had now reached the point of being able to write our mixed methods autoethnography manuscript. Unfortunately, all of us became very busy with both our personal and professional lives, leading to our project going into hibernation—for even longer than do arctic ground squirrels, who hibernate for approximately 7 to 8 months, making it one of the longest hibernation periods among mammals. Indeed, our project went into hibernation for 19 months! It was until October 5 when, as a member of the editorial board of the *Journal of Mixed Methods Research* (*JMMR*), I (Tony) received an invitation from the esteemed Co-Editors-in-Chief of *JMMR*—Drs. Timothy C. Guetterman and José F. Molina-Azorin—to participate in a contribution to the special issue in memory of the Late Dr. Mike Fetters, a former Editor-in-Chief of *JMMR*, that would be published in July, 2024 (Onwuegbuzie, M. L. Abrams, et al., 2024). Because one of the potential topics for this special issue was "Integration and operationalization of integration procedures," I (Tony) thought that waking up our mixed methods autoethnography project and submitting a manuscript for this *JMMR* special issue made sense. Sandra agreed, as did Anna and Anthony. I (Sandra)—a vocal proponent of what my co-authors and I refer to as *child-parent research* (Abrams et al., 2017a, 2017b, 2019, 2020; Schaefer et al., 2020, 2021)—approached my then-16-year-old daughter, Madeline, and asked if she would be interested in co-authoring the *JMMR* special issue manuscript, especially bearing in mind that Madeline had just had her mixed methods autoethnographic study accepted for publication (cf. M. L. Abrams, 2024). Such an invitation seemed like a natural fit given that Madeline had initiated and engaged in an integrated mixed methods autoethnography wherein she recorded her experiences recovering from knee surgery and the related physical challenges that ensued when she had to immobilize her leg for 6 weeks. The writing for the *JMMR* manuscript would be different from her autoethnography in that she would be describing her methods, something Madeline seemed to have taken pride in documenting.

Writing about my (Madeline's) integrated mixed methods autoethnography felt almost as empowering and liberating as conducting the autoethnography. It was exciting to share my voice and my methods, and I was thrilled to share how I analyzed my work, even creating a visual to offer readers a connection to my data analysis process (see M. L. Abrams, 2024). Generating this image, however, was not simple to do, even if the idea seemed to evolve organically.

Over the winter holiday break, my family and I visited my grandparents in Florida. One afternoon after a quick lunch at one of my grandparents' favorite restaurants, my mother (Sandra) and I decided to walk back to my grandparents' house, which is about a two-mile endeavor. Especially after my knee surgery and challenging recovery, I welcomed the walks, and the Florida sunshine and my mother's company made it all that more inviting. On this afternoon walk, I began to discuss my integrated mixed methods autoethnography with my mother, with a focus on the ways I quantitized (Sandelowski et al., 2009) qualitative data and qualitized (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2019) the quantitative data in a recurring, iterative fashion.

During this conversation, we strolled past the greenery and exaggerated flowerbeds that contrasted with the dead flora back home in the wintery Northeast. On this journey, we also walked past an aerated water fountain and, as I stopped to take a photo of the fountain (because I found the setting beautiful), I conceived the connection between the fountain and my mixed methods autoethnography. Although this association initially seemed arbitrary, it eventually helped me to create a clear and comprehensive image of the methodologies I used to conduct, analyze, and write about my integrated mixed methods autoethnography. The more I unpacked the metaphor, the more I could envision my processes in the image of a fountain: taking water (i.e., fluid data and reflection) from the base, pressurizing it, erupting the water into the air until it reaches its peak, and returning to the base in preparation for the cycle to begin once again.

Autoethnography supports the individual expression of self. I enjoy this aspect and I specifically am fascinated by the many layers of reflections that unintentionally occur during this form of writing. Integrated mixed methods autoethnographies encourage the writer to share their voice—specifically tone of voice, point of view, and various forms of self-expression through the interplay of qualitative and quantitative methods. Integrated mixed methods autoethnographies also invite the reader on a journey through a jungle of thoughts and interpretations. This form of exploration is a shared experience for both the writer and the reader, creating a bridge between the two worlds, a bridge that cannot be created without pure honesty, vulnerability, and receptivity.

With the author team together, I (Tony) sent an email to Drs. Guetterman and Molina-Azorin on October 16, 2023, notifying them of our decision to submit a manuscript for the special issue, as follows:

> "Dear Tim and Jose,
>
> I hope that you are both well and that you enjoyed your weekends!
>
> Thank you for your email inviting us to contribute to the special issue in memory of Mike Fetters, which will be published in July, 2024.
>
> On behalf of Sandra Abrams (copied on this email), I would like to notify you that we intend to participate in this special issue, and that we will submit a 4,000 word (or less) manuscript by 1st February 2024.
>
> Thanks again.
>
> Warmest regards,
>
> Tony"

Therefore, our sleeping giant—in the guise of our mixed methods autoethnography project—had been awoken!
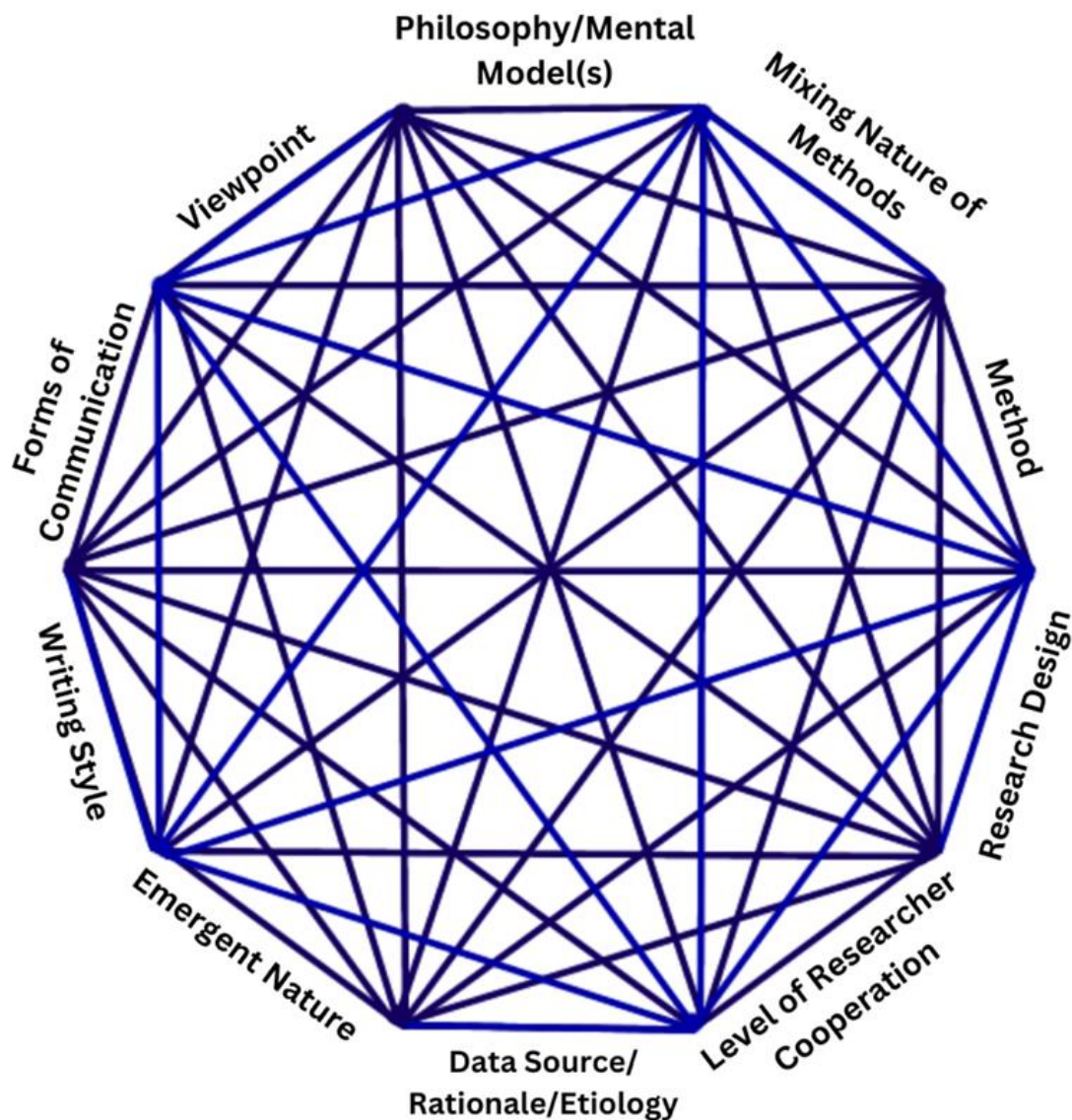
Dimensions of Autoethnography

Arriving at 10 dimensions of autoethnography provided us with an imagery of a decagon (see Figure 1). Broadly speaking, a decagon is a polygon that has 10 sides and 10 angles. Because we did not want to develop a hierarchy with regard to our 10 dimensions, we decided to view our 10-dimensional typology of autoethnography as representing a *regular decagon* wherein

(a) all sides are equal in length—that is, all autoethnography dimensions (each represented by one side of a regular decagon) are equal in importance—and (b) all angles are congruent (i.e., each measuring 144 degrees)—that is, the relationships or connections among the 10 dimensions are (approximately) equal. In visualizing our 10-dimensional typology of autoethnography, the regular decagon serves as a metaphorical representation of the interconnectedness and coherence of the 10 dimensions. Each dimension contributes to the overall understanding of the autoethnographic approach in its expanded and flexible form, with the angles representing the nuanced relationships as well as their interconnectedness and complexity, highlighting the dimensions' interplay and mutual influence on the conduct of autoethnography.

Figure 1
10-Dimenisional Representation of Autoethnography in its Expanded and Flexible Form

In what follows, we will outline each of the 10 dimensions, and we begin by reiterating that these dimensions are not presented in any particular order of importance.

Autoethnography Dimension 1: Viewpoint

Traditionally, autoethnography typically has been conducted using an emic lens. In the context of autoethnography, an emic perspective refers to the researcher's insider's viewpoint, wherein the researcher engages with his/her/their own experiences, emotions, and cultural milieu to provide rich, nuanced understandings and to interpret phenomena (Pike, 1967; Spradley, 1980). As a reminder, Bochner and Ellis (2016) defined autoethnography as "an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural" (p. 65). This definition implies that autoethnography involves reflecting on one's own lived experiences and cultural background to explore broader social and cultural issues. Therefore, autoethnographic research emphasizes the subjective experiences and interpretations of the researcher, making use of emic perspectives to uncover deeper insights into cultural phenomena.

However, consistent with our synechist (i.e., anti-dualistic) stance, we contend that it is possible to conduct autoethnography using an etic lens, at least to some degree. An etic perspective—which was introduced by linguistic anthropologist Kenneth Pike (1954, 1955) in order to provide a contrast with the concept of "emic"—is an approach that involves the analysis of cultural phenomena from an outsider's viewpoint. In other words, as noted by Currall and Towler (2003), "etic refers to the trained observer's analysis of 'raw' data" (p. 522). More specifically, it involves focusing on observing and interpreting behaviors, beliefs, and practices within a culture from an external, independent standpoint for the purpose of enriching the interpretation of the autoethnographer's experiences and cultural context, without (necessarily) considering the insider's subjective experiences or interpretations. An etic perspective often involves the application of universal frameworks, theories, or measurement tools to study cultural phenomena in a standardized manner. For example, an autoethnographer may include etic perspectives by incorporating theoretical frameworks, concepts, or perspectives from outside their own cultural context to analyze their experiences. This could involve drawing on existing literature, theories, or methodologies to contextualize and to interpret their autoethnographic findings from a broader sociocultural perspective.

Therefore, in their purist forms, emic and etic perspectives lie on the opposite ends of an interactive continuum, with a purely etic perspective providing valuable insights into cross-cultural similarities and differences at one end, and a purely emic perspective emphasizing the understanding of cultural phenomena from within the cultural context and autoethnographers' subjective experiences at the other end.

During our various discussions, we conceptualized that rather being forced into an either/or way of thinking in terms of lens (i.e., emic vs. etic perspective), in many contexts, it is appropriate—and even methodologically expedient—to adopt a both/and stance (i.e., logic of combination; Johnson, 2023), wherein both emic and etic perspectives are used in combination. Dwyer and Buckle (2009) proposed the *Space Between* that allows researchers to occupy the position of both insider and outsider rather than viewing it exclusively as a dichotomy of either insider or outsider. Further, I (Tony) have coined this marriage between emic and etic perspectives as representing an "emtic perspective," which represents the place "where emic and etic viewpoints are maximally interactive" (Onwuegbuzie, 2012, p. 205). Therefore, combining emic and etic perspectives within an autoethnography allows autoethnographers to

combine an emic perspective that facilitates the identification of the intricacies, meanings, and nuances of cultural practices from an insider positionality, with an etic perspective that involves incorporating theoretical frameworks, concepts, or perspectives from outside their own cultural context to analyze their experiences.

Autoethnography Dimension 2: Philosophy/Mental Model(s)

Autoethnography has its roots in interpretivism and constructivism (see, for e.g., Pitard, 2017), which are research philosophies that emphasize the subjective understanding and interpretation of social phenomena. Proponents of interpretivism emphasize the subjective understanding and interpretation of social phenomena. They contend that reality is socially constructed and that meaning is not immutable but, instead, is shaped by individuals' perspectives, experiences, and interactions within specific social and cultural contexts. Interpretivists focus on understanding the meanings and interpretations that individuals attach to their experiences and the social processes that shape those meanings. Autoethnography aligns with interpretivism by emphasizing the researcher's subjective experiences and interpretations of cultural phenomena, often within the context of personal narratives. Autoethnographers acknowledge the role of the researcher as both the subject and the object of study, blending personal experiences with cultural analysis to create nuanced understandings of social and cultural issues.

Constructivism represents a family of research philosophies, including radical constructivism (Glasersfeld, 1995), social constructivism (Palinscar, 1998; Rust et al., 2005; Scribner, 1985; Vygotsky, 1962, 1978), and social constructionism (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Leeds-Hurwitz, 2009; Schwandt, 2000, 2007). In general, proponents of constructivism posit that individuals actively construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world through their experiences, interactions, and/or mental processes. They contend that learning is an active process of meaning making in which individuals build on their existing knowledge and cognitive structures to construct new understandings and interpretations of reality. Key principles of constructivism include *active learning* (i.e., emphasizing that learning is an active process in which individuals engage with their environments, make connections between new and existing knowledge, and construct their own understanding of concepts), *knowledge construction* (i.e., individuals construct knowledge through a process of mental activity, such as problem-solving, reflection, and inquiry), *learning* (i.e., representing a process of constructing meaning rather than passively receiving information), *social interaction* (i.e., recognizing the importance of social interaction and collaboration in the learning process, which provide opportunities for sharing perspectives, negotiating meaning, and co-constructing knowledge), and/or *personal meaning* (i.e., emphasizing the importance of personal meaning and relevance in learning, wherein individuals are more likely to construct meaningful understanding when they can relate new information to their own experiences, interests, and goals). Autoethnography aligns with constructivism because both autoethnography and constructivism emphasize the subjective understanding of individuals' experiences and interpretations of reality. Autoethnographers explore their own lived experiences and perspectives, whereas constructivists posit that individuals (e.g., research participants) actively construct their own understanding of the world based on their interactions and experiences. Autoethnography and constructivism share common principles related to subjective understanding, personal meaning making, active engagement, and contextual understanding, making them compatible approaches for exploring and understanding individuals' experiences and interpretations of reality. Most notably, Ellingson and Ellis (2008)

jointly constructed a story about the intersections between autoethnography and social constructionism.

Although, traditionally, autoethnography is associated with interpretivist and constructivist research philosophies due to its emphasis on subjective understanding, personal meaning-making, and contextual understanding, it is feasible to conduct autoethnography adopting *any* research philosophy. In fact, we had come to the conclusion that there is no tenet associated with autoethnography that disqualifies *any* research philosophy from being adopted, at least to some extent, when conducting autoethnography. However, the extent to which autoethnography aligns with various research philosophies might vary, and certain adjustments or adaptations might be necessary to accommodate different epistemological, ontological, axiological, and methodological assumptions.

Figure 2 presents Tony and his co-author's (i.e., Onwuegbuzie & Corrigan, 2021) three-dimensional model for categorizing and organizing philosophical assumptions and stances for mixed methods-based research studies. However, although we (Tony and Julie Corrigan) did not make this point, our three-dimensional model also can be used for categorizing and organizing mental models associated with both quantitative research studies and qualitative research studies. Each of the three dimensions—which all lie on a continuum—focuses on a unique component of mental models, and each is positioned at 90-degree angles to the other two dimensions.

Adapting Onwuegbuzie and Corrigan's (2021) conceptualization, the *Philosophy Dimension 1* (emergent nature of the philosophical assumptions and stances) continuum classifies the point during the (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods-based) research process wherein the philosophical assumptions and stances emerged. At one end of the continuum—what we refer to as a *top-down approach*—is a situation whereby the researcher(s) conceptualizes a (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods-based) research study using a predetermined (i.e., a priori) philosophical lens. At the other end of this continuum—what we refer to as a *bottom-up approach*—is a situation whereby the researcher(s) conceptualizes a (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods-based) study *before* deciding on the underlying philosophical lens, yielding an emergent (i.e., a posteriori) philosophical approach. The mid-point of the continuum represents philosophical frames that emerge in an iterative manner.

The *Philosophy Dimension 2* (i.e., origin of philosophy) continuum signifies the extent to which the philosophical assumptions and stances underlying the (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods-based) research study represent a monomethod research study (i.e., the quantitative research tradition [e.g., postpositivism; e.g., Phillips & Burbules, 2000]) or the qualitative research tradition [e.g., some form of constructivism such as social constructivism, social constructionism, and radical constructivism, as mentioned earlier]), at one end, and a mixed methods-based research study (i.e., those philosophies that are presented in Table 2) at the other end. The mid-point of this continuum represents quantitative and qualitative research philosophies that have been adapted for mixed methods-based research studies.

Figure 2

Dimensions of Philosophical Assumptions and Stances for Mixed Methods-Based Research Studies[a]

Table 2

Mixed Methods-Based Research Philosophies and Worldviews

Philosophy/ Worldview	Stance
Pragmatism-of-the-middle philosophy	Offers a practical and outcome-oriented method of inquiry that is based on action and leads, iteratively, to further action and the elimination of doubt; traditions routinely are mixed (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Johnson et al., 2007)
Pragmatism-of-the-right	Holding a moderately strong form of realism, and a weak form of pluralism (Putnam, 2002; Rescher, 2000)
Pragmatism-of-the-left	Antirealism and strong pluralism (Maxcy, 2003; Rorty, 1991)
Anti-conflationist	Methodology should not be conflated with technical aspects of method because the same method can be used by researchers with different ontological/epistemological stances; adoption of a more principled approach when combining methods—only appropriate to combine methods if a common ontological/epistemological stance can be maintained (Bryman, 1992; Hammersley, 1992; Layder, 1993; Roberts, 2002)
Critical realist	Mix of critical theory and a multilevel, discursive social scientific realism (Houston, 2001; Maxwell, 2004; Maxwell & Mittapalli, 2010; McEvoy & Richards, 2003, 2006)
Dialectical stance	Dialogical engagement with philosophical differences that generatively produce new knowledge and insights (Greene, 2007, 2008; Greene & Caracelli, 1997; Greene & Hall, 2010; Maxwell & Loomis, 2003). Use of "dialectical pragmatism" (i.e., examine qualitative and quantitative stances fully and dialectically, and produce a combination solution that and works best for the research question; Teddlie & Johnson, 2009)
Complementary strengths	The quantitative and qualitative traditions are not necessarily incompatible but are substantively different; thus, methods used for different traditions should be kept separate to preserve paradigmatic and methodological integrity (Brewer & Hunter, 1989; Morse, 2003)
Transformative-emancipatory	Emancipatory, participatory, and anti-discriminatory research that focuses directly on the lives, experiences, and perceptions of marginalized persons or groups (Mertens, 2003, 2007, 2010; Mertens et al., 2010)
A-paradigmatic	The quantitative and qualitative traditions are logically independent and thus can be mixed; but although they are useful for reflection, they do not shape practical research decisions; rather, practical characteristics and issues related to the underlying context and problem drive these decisions (Patton, 2002; Reichardt & Cook, 1979)
Substantive theory	The quantitative and qualitative traditions may be embedded or intertwined with substantive theories; yet, substantive issues and conceptual theories drive the mixed research, not traditions (Chen, 2006)
Communities of practice	Consistent with pragmatist philosophy but accommodates variations and inconsistencies that prevail within mixed research by promoting a diversity of researchers, allowing the traditions to operate at different levels, incorporating group influences on methodological decisions, shifting debates about the traditions to level of practice and research culture, and allowing methods to be chosen based on their practical value for addressing a research problem (Denscombe, 2008)

Philosophy/ Worldview	Stance
Phenomenography	Its primary construct is the personal conception, which represents a vital relationship between experienced events and the personal meaning that emanates from these events—which prevail as a unitary conception, yielding the primary unit of analysis (Feldon & Tofel-Grehl, 2022)
Dialectical pluralism	Involves a belief in incorporating multiple epistemological perspectives within the same inquiry (Johnson, 2012, 2017; Johnson et al., 2014; Tucker et al., 2020). It is a metaparadigm or metaphilosophy wherein researchers "dialectically listen, carefully and thoughtfully, to different disciplines, paradigms, theories, and stakeholder/citizen perspectives" (Johnson, 2017, p. 160). Specifically, it "means listening, understanding, learning, and acting" (Johnson, 2017, p. 160). Involves taking a pluralist stance ontologically (i.e., multiple kinds of reality [e.g., subjective, objective, intersubjective]) and relies on a dialectical, dialogical, and hermeneutical approach to studying phenomena (Johnson, 2012).
Critical dialectical pluralism	Metaparadigm or metaphilosophy that builds on Johnson's (2017) dialectical pluralism but that operates under assumption that social injustices are ingrained in every society (Onwuegbuzie & Frels, 2013). It is a process philosophy and a communication theory wherein procedural justice, process justice, and philosophical justice are emphasized, and wherein the role of (mixed methods) researcher is changed to (mixed methods) research-facilitator and, at the same time, the role of a participant is changed to a participant-researcher. Critical dialectical pluralism 2.0 promotes culturally progressive, culturally responsive, and culturally engaged research—promoting **s**ocial justice, **i**nclusion, **d**iversity, **e**quity, and **s**ocial responsibility, which represent five SIDES that facilitate global justice (Onwuegbuzie, S.S. Abrams, et al., in press).

Adapted from "A call for mixed analysis: A philosophical framework for combining qualitative and quantitative," by A. J. Onwuegbuzie, R. B. Johnson, and K. M. T. Collins, 2009, *International Journal of Multiple Research Approaches* (p. 134). Copyright 2009 by Dialectical Publishing, LLC.

Philosophy Dimension 3 (i.e., number of philosophies involved) indicates the number of research philosophies involved in the (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods-based) research study. At one extreme of the continuum (i.e., a-philosophical) are research studies that do not involve the adoption of any explicit research philosophy—whether a priori, a posteriori, or iteratively. At the other extreme are (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods-based) research studies wherein the researcher(s) adopt multiple research philosophies that come to the fore a priori, a posteriori, or iteratively. To summarize, expanding our (Onwuegbuzie & Corrigan, 2021) three-dimensional conceptualization has led us to conclude that *any* research study—whether quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods-based—can be positioned *anywhere* within the three-dimensional representation. In the context of autoethnography, this means that any research philosophy can be used, whether a priori, a posteriori, or iteratively. Therefore, when conducting an autoethnography, the choice of research philosophy should depend on the researcher's theoretical orientation, research questions, and goals, as well as the nature of the phenomenon being studied.

Autoethnography Dimension 3: Mixing Nature of Methods

As we noted previously, traditionally, autoethnography has been a monomethod research approach—specifically, a qualitative research approach. However, as Tony first asked on

January 4, 2022, and as subsequently echoed by Madeline, Sandra, Anna, and Anthony, "Why does autoethnography have to be a qualitative research approach? Why can't autoethnography *also* represent a mixed methods research approach, by including the collection, analysis, and interpretation of quantitative data within the autoethnographic process?"

Now, as argued by Onwuegbuzie, Johnson, et al. (2009), having a qualitative-based research philosophy (e.g., some form of a constructivist orientation) does not prevent a researcher from collecting, analyzing, and interpreting quantitative data. At the very least, descriptive statistical analyses could be conducted by qualitative researchers "that do not involve the analyst making inferences beyond the research participants at hand, which is typically not the goal of qualitative researchers" (Onwuegbuzie, Johnson, et al., 2009, p. 130). It follows from this contention that autoethnographers have at their disposal the option to collect, to analyze, and to interpret quantitative data, regardless of their research philosophical orientation(s), in the same way that ethnographers can collect, analyze, and interpret quantitative data—yielding *mixed methods ethnographic research* (*MMER*; Crede & Borrego, 2013; Hitchcock & Onwuegbuzie, 2020; Schensul & LeCompte, 2012; Schensul et al., 2012). And it is the inclusion of quantitative research approaches as part of an autoethnographic study that results in what we coin as *mixed methods autoethnography*.

We conceptualize qualitative-based autoethnography and mixed methods autoethnography as being located at two opposite ends of a mixing continuum. In between these two ends are what we label as *integrated mixed methods autoethnography* wherein the qualitative and quantitative elements of an autoethnography are combined in such a way that they become interwoven and mutually enriching. As such, mixed methods autoethnography subsumes integrated mixed methods autoethnography as a special case because the latter optimally involves the seamless blending together of different methodological elements (i.e., data) in order to create a unified analysis and interpretation.

A major difference between mixed methods autoethnography and integrated mixed methods autoethnography is that, whereas when conducting mixed methods autoethnography, each monomethod design (i.e., quantitative research design, qualitative research design) retains its identity, for integrated mixed methods autoethnography, the qualitative and quantitative strands are synthesized into a cohesive whole for the purpose of producing a unified understanding. Alternatively stated, mixed methods autoethnography involves the use of qualitative and quantitative elements separately but alongside each other. For example, an autoethnographer might use both qualitative research approaches and quantitative research approaches to explore different aspects of their personal experience or cultural phenomenon. In this case, this researcher maintains distinct qualitative and quantitative components within the study.

Conversely, integrated mixed methods autoethnography involves the blending of qualitative and quantitative elements in order to create a nuanced and multifaceted understanding of the phenomenon under study that goes well beyond what each individual design can provide. The goal of integrated mixed methods autoethnography is to integrate the elements in such a way that they complement and enrich each other, leading to a deeper understanding of the research topic. For instance, an autoethnographer might weave together qualitative narratives with quantitative data to provide a more comprehensive analysis of their personal experiences within a cultural context. In this approach, the qualitative and quantitative components are integrated seamlessly to create a unified autoethnographic account.

The difference between mixing in autoethnography (i.e., mixed methods autoethnography) and integrating in autoethnography (i.e., integrated mixed methods autoethnography) is analogous to the distinction between mixing and integrating in the world of investment, which, as outlined by Fitzgibbons et al. (2017), lies in how portfolio compositions are formed. According to these authors, in the case of mixing, managers create two separate style portfolios, each focusing solely on either momentum or value expected returns. Conversely, in an integrated approach, managers amalgamate information from both styles to generate an overall expected return forecast for each stock. This divergence in portfolio construction can significantly impact portfolio effectiveness and, ultimately, returns. It is more efficient to consider all available information simultaneously (i.e., integration approach) rather than piecemeal (i.e., mixing approach), because the latter approach risks omitting relevant information from decision-making processes (Fitzgibbons et al., 2017). Similarly, in mixed methods autoethnography, conducting studies in a piecemeal fashion—such as having distinct quantitative and qualitative phases—can lead to the omission of important synergies from each phase. As such, we believe that integrated mixed methods autoethnography approaches represent the crème de la crème of autoethnography.

Autoethnography Dimension 4: Method

Regardless of whether the researchers use monomethod research approaches or mixed methods research approaches to conduct autoethnography, another option available to autoethnographers is to use multiple methods (i.e., multimethod) research approaches. That is, qualitative-based autoethnographers can use multiple methods by collecting, analyzing, and interpreting multiple forms of qualitative data within the same study. In particular, qualitative-based autoethnographers can collect, analyze, and interpret qualitative data (e.g., both observational data and images), either concurrently or sequentially. Similarly, mixed methods autoethnographers can use multiple methods by collecting, analyzing, and interpreting multiple forms of qualitative data and/or quantitative data within the same study. As before (cf. Dimension 3), we conceptualize qualitative-based autoethnography and mixed methods autoethnography as being located at two opposite ends of a mixing continuum.

At an even richer and thicker level, autoethnographers can utilize both mixed methods research approaches and multiple methods research approaches. Onwuegbuzie and Hitchcock (2019) refer to the use of mixed methods research approaches and multiple methods research approaches within the same study as representing either multi-mixed methods research approaches or meta-methods research approaches. The difference between these two approaches is that, whereas multi-mixed methods research approaches involve the *partial* integration of multiple methods research approaches and mixed methods research approaches, meta-methods research approaches involve the *full* integration of multiple methods research approaches and mixed methods research approaches (Onwuegbuzie & Hitchcock, 2019). As such, using meta-methods research approaches within an autoethnographic study represents the most expansive form of autoethnography. Therefore, although both multi-mixed methods autoethnographic research approaches and meta-methods autoethnographic research approaches lie in between qualitative-based autoethnography and mixed methods autoethnography because it represents an even more expansive methodology, meta-methods autoethnographic research approaches are closest to being located at the center of this continuum.

Autoethnography Dimension 5: Research Design

Research approaches are whole systems adopted by researchers to conduct their investigation. In contrast, research designs are part of an approach or system. They represent the overall plan, structure, and strategy that researchers adopt to conduct a study and to answer specific research questions. That is, they provide a blueprint for the entire research process (Onwuegbuzie, in press-b).

Keeping these definitions in mind led us to the conclusion that autoethnographic research designs can drive, as well as be driven by, monomethod and/or mixed methods research designs. Figure 3 illustrates the case of autoethnography-driven concurrent research designs. As can be seen from this figure, there are several cases here—ranging from the case involving a qualitative-based autoethnographic research design, to some form of a mixed methods-based autoethnographic research design, and to an optimal form of mixed methods-based autoethnographic research design. As an example of one end of the autoethnography continuum, a qualitative-based autoethnographic research design can be combined with a qualitative research design component involving one or more non-autoethnographic participants that is conducted concurrently (i.e., independently), including one or more of the following qualitative research designs:
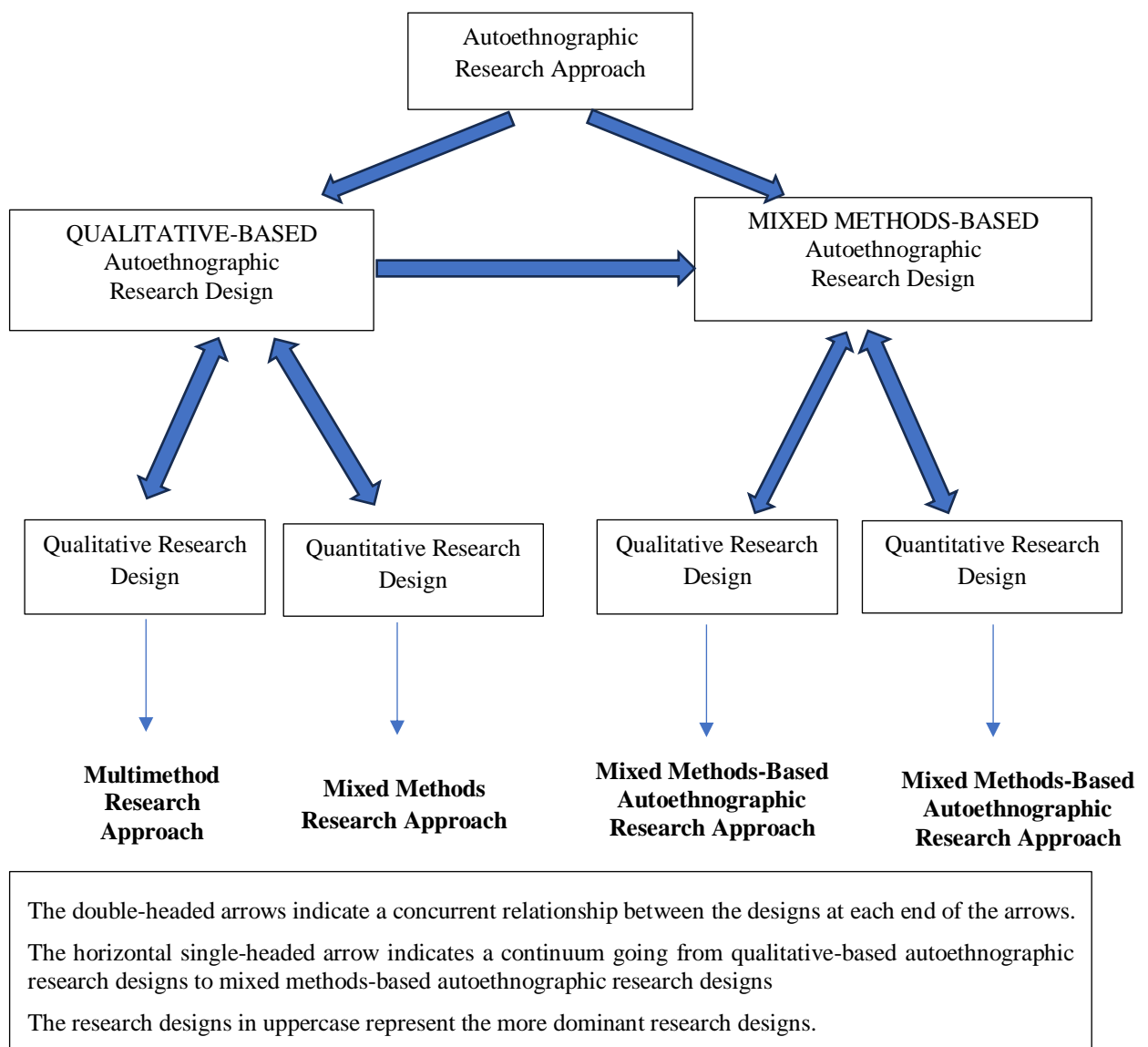
- Ethnography
- Microethnography
- Grounded Theory
- Case Study
- Phenomenological
- Life History
- Oral History
- Ethnomethodology
- Ecological Descriptive
- Action Research
- Narrative Research
- Literary Criticism

This combination would mean that, in its entirety, the qualitative-based, autoethnographic-driven study would fall under the umbrella of a multimethod research approach. Before providing an example of a multimethod research approach that includes autoethnography and another qualitative research design, we step aside to highlight an article I (Sandra) have liked using with my first-year Ph.D. students not only because of the content—the experiences of two Ph.D. students toward the end of their program—but also because of the research approach. McPhail-Bell and Redman-MacLaren (2019) engaged in a concurrent *and* collaborative autoethnography. Interestingly, the primary data collection included emails that the authors sent to one another over 18 months, followed by individual reflective responses to themes that surfaced during data analysis. At that stage, the authors then shared their responses with each other, providing one another feedback in the form of "reflective pieces, poetry and email, as well as 'in person' over Skype" (p. 1090). We focus on this piece because it has the essence of autoethnography in it—the personal reflexivity and the communicative flexibility—*and* it begins to showcase how autoethnography can work in tandem with other methods. For example, given that McPhail-Bell and Redman-MacLaren were interested in exploring their peer support model that helped them during the completion of their doctoral program, perhaps

the authors could have coupled their autoethnography with a case study of the doctoral program. Such a qualitative multimethod research approach could have created openings to understand ways to integrate additional supports and/or to offer ideas for programmatic change. In that vein, because the research would occur concurrently, it would be essential for researchers to acknowledge continuously that their ontological, epistemological, and axiological positions might be influenced by the non-autoethnographic component of the research study (and vice versa).

Figure 3
Autoethnography-Driven Concurrent Research Designs

The double-headed arrows indicate a concurrent relationship between the designs at each end of the arrows.

The horizontal single-headed arrow indicates a continuum going from qualitative-based autoethnographic research designs to mixed methods-based autoethnographic research designs

The research designs in uppercase represent the more dominant research designs.

Alternatively, at this same end of the autoethnography continuum, a qualitative-based autoethnographic research design can be combined with a quantitative research design component involving one or more non-autoethnographic participants that is conducted concurrently, including one or more of the following quantitative research designs:

- Historical (e.g., Historiography)
- Descriptive
- Correlational
- Pre-experimental
  - one-shot case study
  - one-group pretest-posttest design
  - static-group comparison design
- Quasi-experimental
  - nonequivalent control group design
  - time series design
  - multiple time series design
  - counterbalanced design
- Experimental (Randomized Control Designs)
  - pretest-posttest group design
  - posttest only group design
  - Solomon four-group design
  - cross-over trial
  - single case study

(For a comprehensive list of quantitative research designs with explanations, we refer you to Appendix B [pp. 371-379] of Onwuegbuzie & Frels, 2016.) This combination would mean that, in its entirety, the qualitative-based, autoethnographic-driven study would fall under the umbrella of a mixed methods research approach. When we think of a concurrent combination involving autoethnography and a quantitative research design, we consider what Zhang et al.'s (2021) research might have looked like if it had included an autoethnography that had occurred at the same time as the distribution of their questionnaire. More specifically, the researchers used a questionnaire followed by semi-structured interviews to explore educators' use of an e-book for teaching K-12 students about artificial intelligence (AI). What if, as the authors surveyed the teachers, the authors, also engaged in individual autoethnographies that they then examined collaboratively? Such a concurrent combination involving a quantitative research design and autoethnography could enrich the overall research and related findings. Furthermore, because the research would occur concurrently, researchers would need to acknowledge continuously that their ontological, epistemological, and axiological positions might be influenced by the non-autoethnographic component of the research study (and vice versa).

As an example of the other end of the autoethnography continuum, a mixed methods-based autoethnographic research design can be combined with a qualitative research design (e.g., from the list provided earlier in this section) component involving one or more non-autoethnographic participants that is conducted concurrently.

Whereas the designs that are combined in Figure 3 are conducted independently (i.e., concurrently)—which we refer to as *autoethnography-driven concurrent research designs*—qualitative-driven autoethnographic research designs also can be combined with other research designs in a way that the ensuing research design depends, at least in part, on the autoethnographic research design that preceded it. We label these approaches as *autoethnography-driven sequential research designs* (see Figure 4). These research designs involve at least some of the data collected, analyzed, and interpreted in the first phase—the autoethnographic research design phase—being used to inform the second monomethod phase,

and any other subsequent phases. As can be seen in Figure 4, at one end of the autoethnography continuum, a qualitative-based autoethnographic research design can inform either a subsequent qualitative research design phase or a subsequent quantitative research design phase, with the former yielding a multimethod research approach and the latter yielding a mixed methods research approach. Alternatively, a mixed methods-based autoethnographic research design can inform either a subsequent qualitative research design phase or a subsequent quantitative research design phase, with both scenarios yielding a mixed methods-based autoethnographic research approach. Circling back to the aforementioned studies (i.e., McPhail-Bell & Redman-MacLaren, 2019 and Zhang et al., 2021), we consider how autoethnographic research could inform a subsequent qualitive or quantitative research design phase. Hypothetically, for the former, McPhail-Bell and Redman-MacLaren could have used the themes from their individual and collaborative autoethnography to explore and to analyze further a case study of their Ph.D. program. In this way, their autoethnographic phase of the research could inform their data collection and data analysis in the subsequent case study. Likewise, if Zhang et al. had conducted their own autoethnographies first, then their findings could shape the way they construct and analyze their questionnaire, something the authors would need to document reflexively.

In addition to autoethnographic research designs driving another component/phase of a study, autoethnographic research designs can support both monomethod research designs and mixed methods research designs. For these designs, the monomethod research design component/phase or the mixed methods research design component/phase represents the dominant research component/phase in the study. The monomethod research design component/phase either could be a qualitative research design (i.e., qualitative-driven) or a quantitative research design (i.e., quantitative-driven). Returning to our previous exemplar, if McPhail-Bell and Redman-MacLaren (2019) were to conduct a case study first followed by their autoethnographies, then they could integrate their understandings of their Ph.D. program—gleaned from the case study—into their reflective memos and ongoing analysis. Additionally, Zhang et al. (2021) could use their questionnaire data as a springboard for an autoethnography of their own approaches to teaching AI. Across both of these exemplars, given that a non-autoethnographic method would inform the autoethnography, it would be critical for researchers to acknowledge continuously that their ontological, epistemological, and axiological positions might be influenced by the first, non-autoethnographic phase of the research study.

Figure 4

Autoethnography-Driven Sequential Research Designs
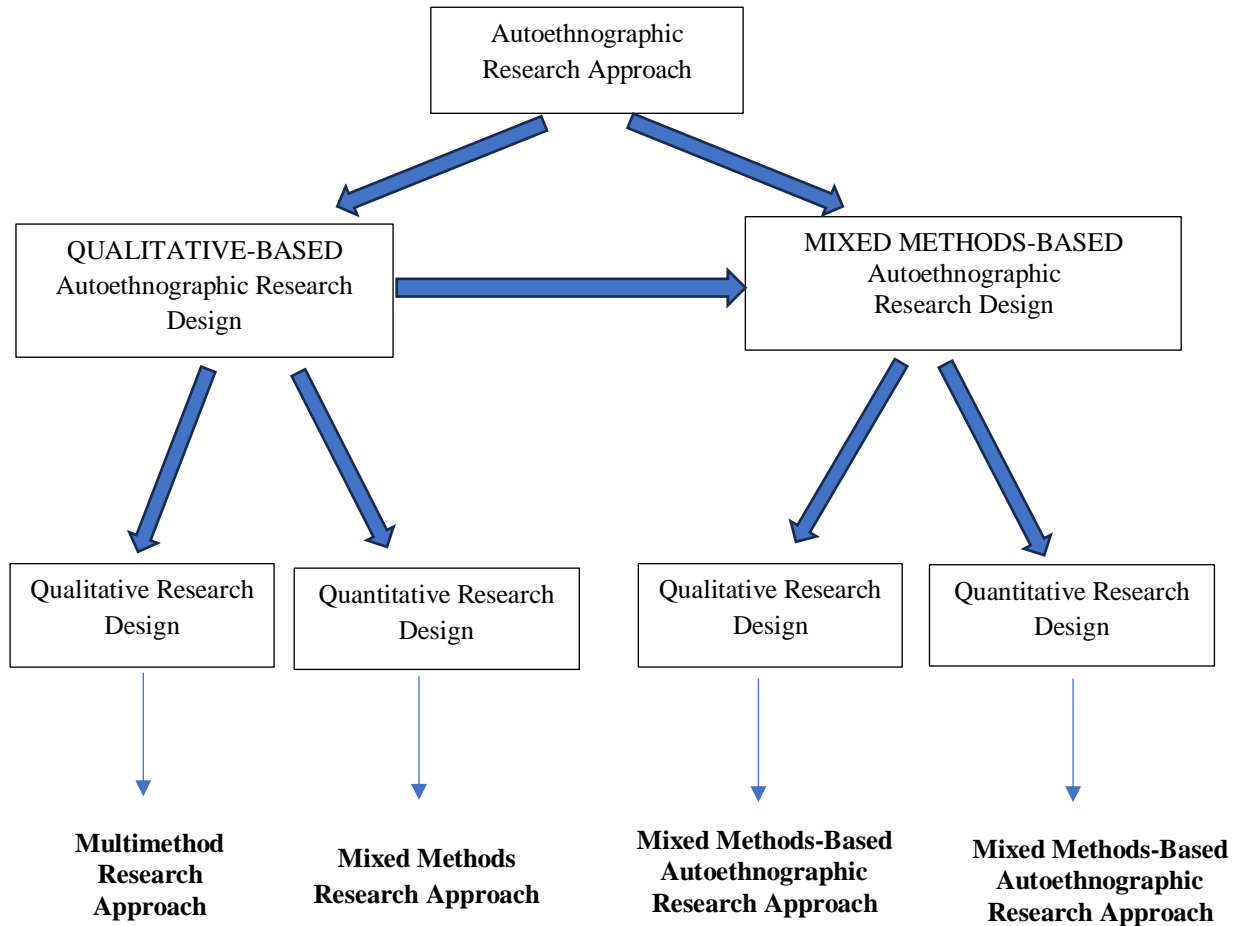
The single-headed arrows indicate a sequential relationship between the designs at each end of the arrows.

The horizontal single-headed arrow indicates a continuum going from qualitative-based autoethnographic research designs to mixed methods-based autoethnographic research designs.

The research designs in uppercase represent the more dominant research designs.

Figure 5 illustrates what we refer to as *qualitative-driven embedded concurrent autoethnography research designs*. For these designs, the qualitative element represents the dominant research component/phase in the study. The autoethnographic component/phase—which, under our conceptualization, as usual, can range from the case involving a qualitative-based autoethnographic research design, to some form of a mixed methods-based autoethnographic research design, and to an optimal form of mixed methods-based autoethnographic research design—occurs concurrently. In one scenario, the dominant qualitative research design (e.g., from the list provided earlier in this section) component would occur alongside a qualitative-based autoethnographic research design component under an umbrella of a multimethod research approach. In another scenario, the dominant qualitative research design component/phase occurs alongside a mixed methods-based autoethnographic research design component/phase, yielding either a multi-mixed methods research approach

(i.e., involving the partial integration of multiple methods research approaches and mixed methods research approaches) or a meta-methods research approach (i.e., involving the full integration of multiple methods research approaches and mixed methods research approaches).

Figure 5
Qualitative-Driven Embedded Concurrent Autoethnography Research Designs
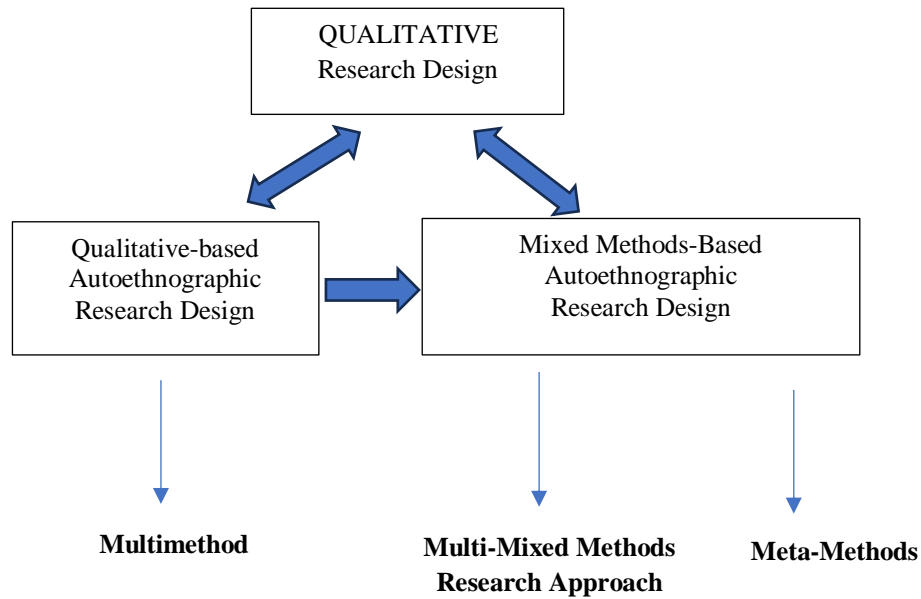
The double-headed arrows indicate a concurrent relationship between the designs at each end of the arrows.

The horizontal single-headed arrow indicates a continuum going from qualitative-based autoethnographic research designs to mixed methods-based autoethnographic research designs.

The research design in uppercase represents the more dominant research design.

In this situation, given that we are proposing the inclusion of autoethnography *alongside* a multimethod study and *alongside* mixed methods research, we return once more to the two studies we have embraced as exemplars. For McPhail-Bell and Redman-MacLaren's (2019) study, we will modify the hypothetical scenario by suggesting that the authors' autoethnography occur alongside a phenomenological case study of how doctoral students receive support in their program. Given that Zhang et al.'s (2021) study already includes a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews, the modification to include autoethnography would translate into the ongoing analysis of self and of teachers' approaches; more specifically, the themes that would emerge from the autoethnography could be used to analyze the questionnaire (and vice versa) and could inform the design and analysis of subsequent semi-structured interviews (just as the interview data could inform the authors' autoethnographies). Across both exemplars, the researchers would need to remain aware of how their understandings, beliefs, and approaches might evolve over time due to the confluence and, therefore, integration of the autoethnographic and non-autoethnographic methods and stances.

Figure 6 illustrates what we refer to as *quantitative-driven embedded concurrent autoethnography research designs*. For these designs, the quantitative element represents the

dominant research component/phase in the study. Further, the autoethnographic component/phase occurs concurrently. In one scenario, the dominant quantitative research design component/phase (e.g., from the list provided earlier in this section) occurs alongside a qualitative-based autoethnographic research design phase under an umbrella of a mixed methods research approach. In another scenario, the dominant quantitative research design component/phase (e.g., from the list provided earlier in this section) occurs alongside a mixed methods-based autoethnographic research design, yielding either a multi-mixed methods research approach or a meta-methods research approach, depending on the level of integration.

Figure 6

Quantitative-Driven Embedded Concurrent Autoethnography Research Designs
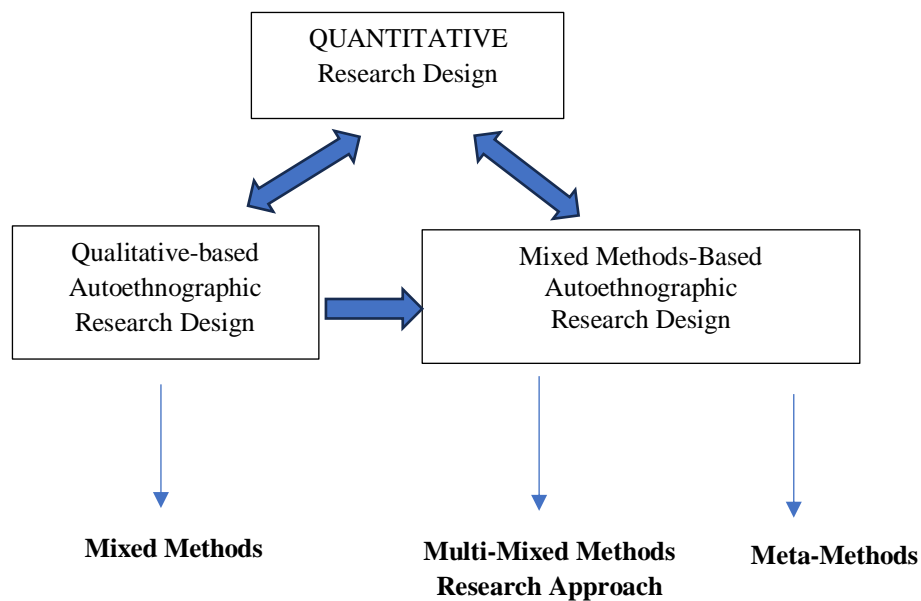
The double-headed arrows indicate a concurrent relationship between the designs at each end of the arrows.

The horizontal single-headed arrow indicates a continuum going from qualitative-based autoethnographic research designs to mixed methods-based autoethnographic research designs.

The research design in uppercase represents the more dominant research design.

Although we argue for a full(er) integration whenever possible, sometimes research approaches have a dominant phase. When autoethnography is the non-dominant component, even if conducted concurrently, the researcher runs the risk of including autoethnography in tokenistic ways. For example, if Zhang et al. (2021) were to include an autoethnography, but their quantitative methods (in this case a questionnaire) were to represent the dominant phase of the study, then the autoethnography likely would include primarily the authors' own experiences and/or their reflexive understandings of the quantitative data and the questionnaire method. If the authors' reflexive understandings of the research methods and findings were to be the only instance of autoethnographic data included, however, then the researchers could run the risk of distilling the autoethnographic process and their insights might appear more akin to researcher memos than autoethnographic findings.

Figure 7 illustrates what we refer to as *mixed methods-driven embedded concurrent autoethnography research designs*. For these designs, the mixed methods element represents the dominant research component/phase in the study. Furthermore, the autoethnographic component/phase occurs concurrently. In one scenario, the dominant mixed methods research design component/phase occurs alongside a qualitative-based autoethnographic research design phase under an umbrella of a mixed methods research approach. In another scenario, the dominant mixed methods research design component/phase occurs alongside a mixed methods-based autoethnographic research design, yielding either a multi-mixed methods research approach or a meta-methods research approach, depending on the level of integration.

Figure 7

Mixed Methods-Driven Embedded Concurrent Autoethnography Research Designs

The double-headed arrows indicate a concurrent relationship between the designs at each end of the arrows.

The horizontal single-headed arrow indicates a continuum going from qualitative-based autoethnographic research designs to mixed methods-based autoethnographic research designs.

The research design in uppercase represents the more dominant research design.
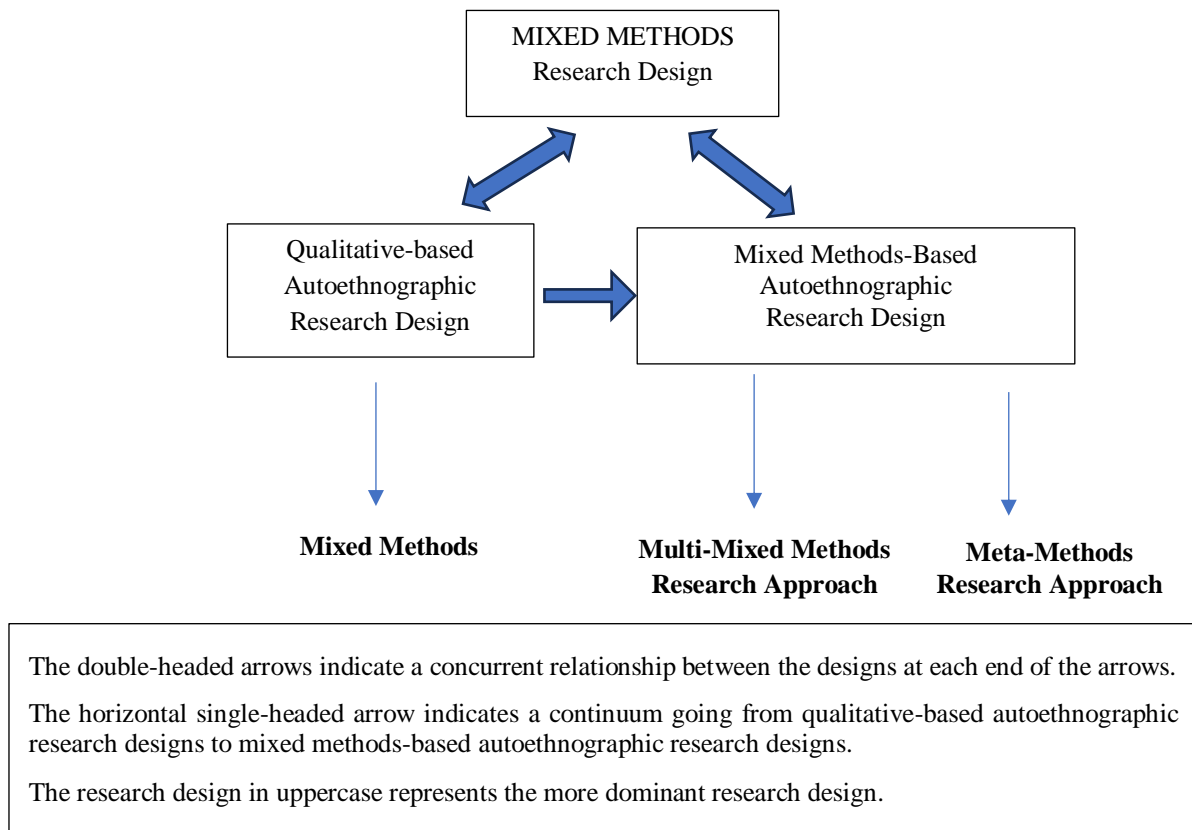
Returning to our previous example, we envision the mixed methods research that Zhang et al. (2021) conducted informing their hypothetical autoethnography in that the researchers could consider their own practices—both as researchers and as educators—as they examine approaches to teaching AI. They also could juxtapose how other teachers value and perceive AI with their own understandings, beliefs, and values regarding AI. Here, too, we caution the use of autoethnography in a tokenistic manner, as with any research method, and suggest that researchers be mindful to align their research questions with their methodology and methods.

Figure 8 illustrates what we refer to as *qualitative-driven embedded sequential autoethnography research designs*. For these designs, the qualitative element represents the dominant research component/phase in the study. Further, the autoethnographic component/phase occurs sequentially. In one scenario, data collected, analyzed, and interpreted

from the dominant qualitative research design phase—which represents the first phase—would inform a qualitative-based autoethnographic research design phase under an umbrella of a multimethod research approach. In another scenario, the dominant qualitative research design phase would inform a mixed methods-based autoethnographic research design, yielding either a multi-mixed methods research approach or a meta-methods research approach, depending on the level of integration.

Figure 8

Qualitative-Driven Embedded Sequential Autoethnography Research Designs
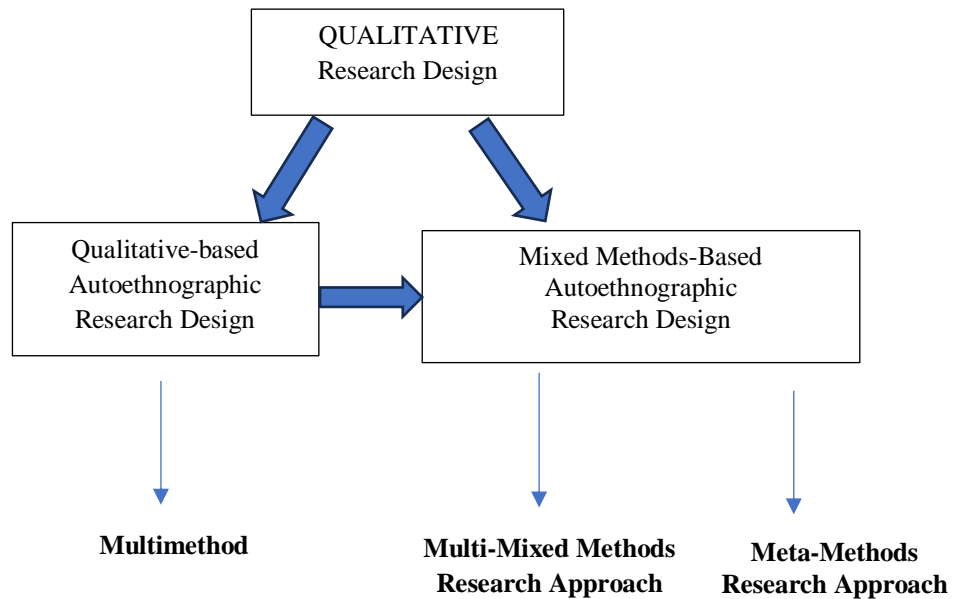
The single-headed arrows indicate a sequential relationship between the designs at each end of the arrows.

The horizontal single-headed arrow indicates a continuum going from qualitative-based autoethnographic research designs to mixed methods-based autoethnographic research designs.

The research design in uppercase represents the more dominant research design.

If we return the exemplar with McPhail-Bell and Redman-MacLaren's (2019) study modified to include a case study, which, in this instance, would be the dominant phase, researchers could use their autoethnographies to contemplate how the case study design enabled them to explore the support structures of their Ph.D. program. Thereafter, they could fold in their insights from their autoethnographic accounts of their experiences with peer support, a focus that already was part of the original study. By engaging the latter, we suggest that such an approach could avoid tokenistic use of autoethnography when autoethnography is not the dominant research design.

Figure 9 illustrates what we refer to as *quantitative-driven embedded sequential autoethnography research designs*. For these designs, the quantitative element represents the dominant research component/phase in the study. Further, the autoethnographic component/phase occurs sequentially. In one scenario, data collected, analyzed, and interpreted from the dominant quantitative research design phase—which represents the first phase—

would inform a qualitative-based autoethnographic research design phase under an umbrella of a mixed methods research approach. In another scenario, the dominant quantitative research design phase would inform a mixed methods-based autoethnographic research design, yielding either a multi-mixed methods research approach or a meta-methods research approach, depending on the level of integration. For example, if Zhang et al. (2021) were to have conducted a correlational study of teachers' inclusion of specific e-book features and students' use of AI, followed by their mixed methods research study that also included autoethnography, then their quantitative research design would inform their mixed methods-based autoethnographic design.

Figure 9

Quantitative-Driven Embedded Sequential Autoethnography Research Designs
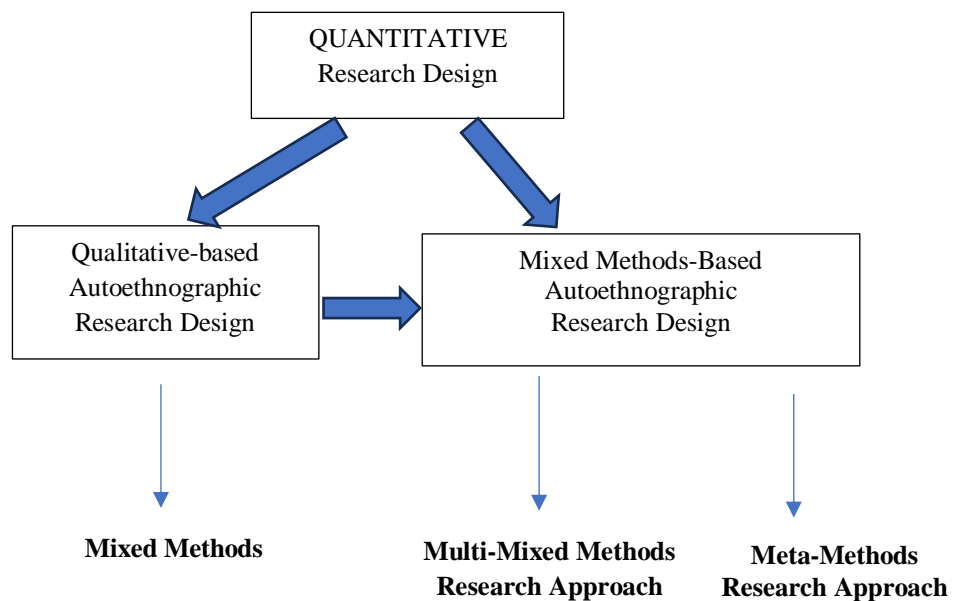
The single-headed arrows indicate a sequential relationship between the designs at each end of the arrows.

The horizontal single-headed arrow indicates a continuum going from qualitative-based autoethnographic research designs to mixed methods-based autoethnographic research designs.

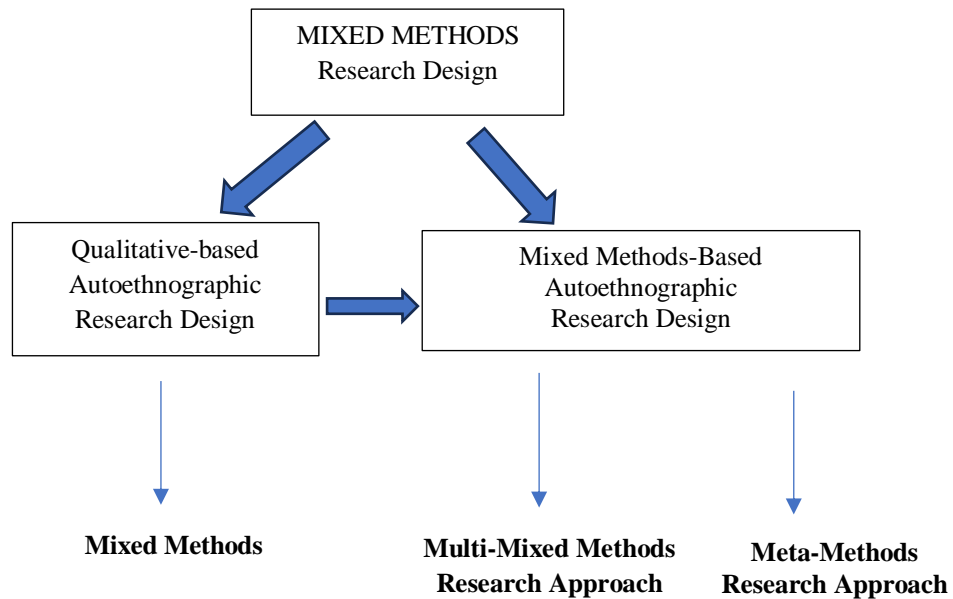The research design in uppercase represents the more dominant research design.

Figure 10 illustrates what we refer to as *mixed methods-driven embedded sequential autoethnography research designs*. For these designs, the mixed methods element represents the dominant research component/phase in the study. Further, the autoethnographic component/phase occurs sequentially. In one scenario, data collected, analyzed, and interpreted from the dominant mixed methods research design phase—which represents the first phase— would inform a qualitative-based autoethnographic research design phase under an umbrella of a mixed methods research approach. In another scenario, the dominant mixed methods research design phase would inform a mixed methods-based autoethnographic research design, yielding either a multi-mixed methods research approach or a meta-methods research approach, depending on the level of integration. Returning to the previous exemplar, if Zhang et al.'s (2021) original mixed methods research design (i.e., questionnaire and semi-structured

interviews) were to precede a mixed methods-based autoethnographic research design (e.g., autoethnography that includes both quantitizing and qualitizing the data; see M. L. Abrams, 2024 as an example), then that combination would yield a multi-mixed methods research approach. However, if the qualitative and quantitative methods are integrated at every level (e.g., design, data collection, data analysis, dissemination) and across both phases, then the study would represent a meta-methods research approach.

Figure 10

Mixed Methods-Driven Embedded Sequential Autoethnography Research Designs

> The single-headed arrows indicate a sequential relationship between the designs at each end of the arrows.
>
> The horizontal single-headed arrow indicates a continuum going from qualitative-based autoethnographic research designs to mixed methods-based autoethnographic research designs.
>
> The research design in uppercase represents the more dominant research design.

As has been the tradition, a researcher can use an autoethnographic approach without using a specific research design. However, as can be seen, conducting an autoethnographic research design alongside another research design can allow a researcher to ask more complicated and complex research questions. Moreover, it should be noted that an autoethnographic researcher can include multiple research designs. Indeed, as we reflected on the benefits of combining an autoethnographic research design with one or more research designs, we came to what we deemed to be a Eureka moment! Specifically, adapting Greene et al.'s (1989) conceptualization of the purpose of mixing quantitative and qualitative approaches, we came to the conclusion that the utility of combining autoethnographic research designs with monomethod and/or mixed methods research designs is that this combination can be used in the following ways:

- triangulation (i.e., comparing findings from the qualitative-based autoethnographic research design/mixed methods-based autoethnographic research design with the results from the qualitative research design[s]/quantitative research design[s]),

- complementarity (i.e., seek elaboration,[6] enhancement, illustration, and clarification of the findings from one strand [e.g., qualitative-based autoethnographic research design/mixed methods-based autoethnographic research design] with results from the other strand [e.g., qualitative research design[s]/quantitative research design[s]]),

- development (i.e., use the results from one strand [i.e., research design] to help inform the other strand),

- initiation (i.e., discover paradoxes and contradictions that emerge when findings from the two or more strands [i.e., research designs] are compared that might lead to a re-framing of the research question), and

- expansion (i.e., expand breadth and range of a study by using one or more strands [i.e., research designs], alongside an autoethnographic design, for different study phases).

Autoethnography Dimension 6: Level of Researcher Cooperation

The Greek word from which "autoethnography" originated consists of the following three roots: "αὐτός" (autós), "ἔθνος" (éthnos), and "γράφω" (grápho). Dealing with each of these words in turn, αὐτός" (autós), means "self" or "same." The word "self" is commonly used as a prefix in English to indicate something self-referential or automatic. The word "αὐτός" is derived from the reflexive pronoun "autos." This prefix is commonly used in English to denote something self-referential or automatic, as in words like "autobiography" (self-written life story) or "autonomous" (self-governing). In autoethnography, "auto" emphasizes the personal and self-reflective nature of the research process, highlighting the researcher's self-awareness and reflexivity. In the context of autoethnography, the word "self" emphasizes the personal and introspective nature of the research process, highlighting the researcher's self-awareness and reflexivity in exploring cultural experiences.

Next, "ἔθνος" (éthnos) means "nation," "people," or "ethnic group." This word conveys the idea of a shared cultural identity among individuals who belong to a particular community, representing a collective community bound by shared cultural characteristics, beliefs, traditions, language, and identities. In the context of autoethnography, "ethnos" underscores the exploration of cultural experiences, norms, and values within a distinct social group living within a defined geographical area with a common cultural heritage and language. It emphasizes the cultural dimension of the research, focusing on how individuals' lived experiences are shaped by their cultural backgrounds.

Finally, "γράφω" (grápho) is a Greek verb that means "to write" or "to describe." This word forms the basis of English words like "graph" and "graphic" in English, which relate to writing, recording, describing, documenting, or representing. In autoethnography, "grapho" emphasizes the act of documenting one's experiences, insights, and reflections in written form—such as personal narratives, journals, reflective essays, and ethnographic accounts—to capture, to analyze, to interpret, and to document individual experiences within cultural contexts. It promotes the role of writing as a method of self-expression and knowledge production in the research process.

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[6] Greene et al.'s (1989) concept of complementarity did not include a specific reference to *member checking*, a term coined by Lincoln and Guba (1985) to describe a qualitative research technique to support credibility wherein the researcher presents interview transcripts and emerging analyses to the participant(s) to clarify, to confirm, and/or to challenge the information and correct any misinformation of misrepresentation (McKim, 2023).

Together, these three Greek roots—"αὐτός" (autós), "ἔθνος" (éthnos), and "γράφω" (grápho)—form "αὐτο-ἔθνος-γράφω" (auto-ethnos-grapho), which evolved into "autoethnography" in English, a term that encapsulates the process of self-reflective writing about one's cultural experiences and identity. It signifies the intersection of self-awareness, cultural exploration, and written representation in academic inquiry, highlighting the importance of personal narratives and storytelling in order to understand broader socio-cultural phenomena.

Therefore, it should not be surprising that, traditionally, autoethnography has been conducted by an individual researcher. According to Ellis et al. (2011), autoethnography involves "research, writing, story, and method that connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social, and political." The emphasis on personal experience and reflection suggests that it is often undertaken by an individual to explore her/his/their own lived experiences within broader socio-cultural contexts. Furthermore, Anderson (2006) discusses how autoethnography allows researchers to explore their own experiences, identities, and emotions within cultural contexts, which aligns with the idea of individual reflexivity and subjectivity in research.

However, we position the conduct of autoethnography by a single researcher as representing one end of a continuum. Moreover, in our expanded conceptualization of autoethnography, we position autoethnography as denoting a research approach that can be conducted by multiple researchers either in a collective manner or in a collaborative manner.

In collective autoethnography—which represents the opposite end of the continuum to autoethnography being conducted by a single researcher—multiple researchers would work together within the same research study; however, typically, they would maintain a degree of independence in their data collection, data analysis, data interpretation, and meaning making. Each researcher may contribute their own autoethnographic narratives or insights based on their individual experiences or perspectives. Although researchers may work together on certain aspects of the study, there may be less intensive interaction and coordination compared to collaborative approaches.

Contrastingly, collaborative autoethnography—which represents somewhere in between a single autoethnographer and multiple autoethnographers conducting research together involves a more intensive level of interaction and cooperation among researchers throughout the research process. Team members actively engage with each other in a cooperative manner throughout the autoethnographic research process to share ideas, to discuss methodologies, to co-create narratives, to analyze data, to share interpretations, and the like. Collaboration in autoethnography often emphasizes shared goals, mutual respect, dialogue, reflexivity, and mutual exploration of sub-themes, themes, or meta-themes across the researchers' experiences. Furthermore, the "combination of multiple voices to interrogate a social phenomenon creates a unique synergy and harmony that autoethnographers cannot attain in isolation" (Chang et al., 2016, p. 24). Optimally, this approach involves shared decision-making and interaction throughout the autoethnographic research process, which leads to a more integrated and holistic understanding of the underlying phenomenon, as researchers collaboratively construct meaning from their diverse perspectives.

Autoethnography Dimension 7: Data Source/Rationale/Etiology

Just as, traditionally, autoethnography has been conducted by a single researcher, it also has been driven by the researcher—what we call researcher-driven autoethnography. In researcher-driven autoethnography, the primary focus is on the researcher's perspective(s) and experiences. Here, the researcher takes the lead in initiating and shaping the research process

by selecting the topic, conceptualizing the autoethnography, planning the autoethnography, designing the autoethnography, collecting the data, analyzing the data, interpreting the data, meaning making, and shaping the narrative via their writing. The researcher may draw from personal experiences, perspectives, memories, interpretations, and reflections to explore a particular cultural phenomenon, social issue, or the like. This researcher-driven approach involves emphasizing the researcher's subjectivity, self-awareness, insights, and voice, critically reflecting on her/his own positionality and biases throughout the research process—with participants playing a relatively more passive role in the research process.

Yet, the various discussions among our writing team led us to conclude that autoethnography can be expanded to include participant-driven autoethnography. By participant-driven autoethnography, we mean that the emphasis within the autoethnography shifts to the experiences and perspectives of the *participant(s)* involved within the cultural context under study. For this mode of autoethnography, participants are actively engaged in shaping the research questions and research process, as well as guiding the narrative, contributing their own narratives, insights, and reflections. With this approach, the researcher especially values the diversity of participant voices and experiences, highlighting the importance of collective storytelling and collaboration in the research process. Essentially, participants contribute their own stories, perspectives, and insights to the study, often through (debriefing) interviews, participant-led writing, or other participatory methods. The ensuing research narrative emerges from the perspective(s) of the participant(s), with the participants' voices and experiences being a focal point in the analysis and interpretations. As such, with participant-driven ethnographic approach, the voices and experiences of the participants are prioritized, with the goal of capturing a more diverse and nuanced understanding of the cultural phenomena under investigation. Simply put, this approach emphasizes the inclusion and empowerment of participant voices.

Within our conceptualization, researcher-driven and participant-driven autoethnographic approaches represent two distinct perspectives on how the autoethnographic research process is initiated and conducted. However, as we have posited throughout our missive, rather than representing a dichotomy (i.e., researcher-driven vs. participant-driven autoethnographic approaches) that yield completely distinct and mutually exclusive approaches, they lie on an interactive continuum, with the purest forms of researcher-driven autoethnography and participant-driven autoethnography lying at each pole. This interactive continuum represents a spectrum of involvement and agency of the researcher and participant in shaping the autoethnographic research process and narrative.

At one end of the interactive continuum is researcher-driven autoethnography wherein greater emphasis is placed on the researcher's perspective, autonomy, and control over the autoethnographic research process—with the researcher being exclusively responsible for initiating and guiding the research. While still engaging in self-reflection and reflexivity, the researcher primarily relies on her/his/their own narratives and insights to generate knowledge about cultural phenomena. That is, although reflexivity and subjectivity are central to researcher-driven autoethnography, the researcher retains primary authority and agency in shaping the analysis and narrative through their own lens of understanding.

At the other end of the continuum, participant-driven autoethnography involves prioritizing the perspectives, experiences, voices, and agency of the participants within the cultural context under study. Participants play a primary role in shaping the research process by contributing

their own narratives, perspectives, insights, and interpretations. As such, this approach emphasizes empowerment of participants in the autoethnographic research process.

In between these two extremes, there exists a range of hybrid autoethnographic approaches that blend elements of both researcher-driven and participant-driven autoethnography to varying degrees. The closer the autoethnography is to the researcher-driven end of the continuum, the more the researcher retains primary authority and agency in the research process, with the researcher's voice being dominant. In contrast, the nearer the autoethnography is to the participant-driven end of the continuum, the more autonomy and agency that the participant has within the research study, with each participant's voice being central.

However, the closer the autoethnography is to the center of the interactive continuum, the more there is an equal balance in engagement in the research process between the researcher(s) and the participant(s). This central location is characterized by shared decision-making and co-authorship of narratives. Alternatively, this midway point might involve the adoption of a more flexible approach, exemplified by shifts in researcher and participant roles throughout the research process based on the evolving dynamics and needs of the study. In between these two ends of the continuum, there can be various degrees of collaboration and interaction between the researcher and participants. For example, a researcher may initiate the research process based on her/his/their own experiences (i.e., researcher-driven approach) but actively involve participants in data collection, data analysis, and data interpretation. In other words, the ethnographic study may begin with a researcher-driven approach but evolve towards greater participant involvement as the research progresses. Alternatively, a researcher may start with a focus on participants' experiences (i.e., participant-driven approach) but then provide additional context or interpretation based on their own experiences. Optimally, at this halfway point, the researcher collaborates closely with participants at all stages of the research process to co-create knowledge, meaning, and, ultimately, the research narrative, through shared storytelling, dialogue, interpretation, and reflection. In what we refer to as the *radical middle approach to autoethnography* (cf. Onwuegbuzie, 2012), inclusivity, reciprocity, empowerment of participants, shared authority between the researcher and the participants, and respect for diverse perspectives in the ethnographic research process are emphasized—yielding a research process that is more participatory, collective, and collaborative.

Adopting a radical middle approach to the conduct of ethnography is consistent with the mixed methods-based research philosophy called *critical dialectical pluralism* (CDP), which was co-conceptualized by Tony (Onwuegbuzie & Frels, 2013) and co-expanded by Sandra and our prolific colleague, Dr. Elena Forzani (Boston University) (Onwuegbuzie, S. S. Abrams, et al., in press). In its latest rendition, CDP 2.0, hereafter referred to as CDP, promotes the inclusion of participants and their voices at every stage of the research process—from conceptualization to planning to dissemination to utilization. CDP 2.0 has, what Tony, Sandra and their colleague, Elena Forzani from Boston University, refer to as, *the many SIDES of CDP* (i.e., **s**ocial justice, **i**nclusion, **d**iversity, **e**quity, and **s**ocial responsibility; Onwuegbuzie, S. S., Abrams, et al., in press), which represent five core elements that facilitate global justice (Al-Rodhan, 2009). Adoption of CDP involves conducting research that re-frames participants as participant-researchers and researchers as research-facilitators who ensure that participants play a central role in identifying problems and effecting change that they believe is needed in local and/or global contexts. Most notably, CDP differs from critical-based, participatory-based, and transformative-emancipatory research philosophies because (a) it emphasizes mixed methods-based research approaches; (b) eliminates, to the greatest extent possible, hierarchical

structures inherent in research studies between researchers and their participants; and (c) emphasizes the inclusion of participants and their voices at every stage of the research process, with researchers collaborating with participants as co-ideators, co-investigators, and, most importantly, co-decision makers.

Overall, framing researcher-driven and participant-driven autoethnography as lying on an interactive continuum highlights the dynamic and iterative nature of the autoethnographic research process, wherein the balance between researcher control and participant involvement may shift at any point in the research process. Moreover, this interactive continuum between researcher-driven and participant-driven autoethnography reflects the diverse ways in which researchers engage with their own experiences and with those of others within cultural contexts. Autoethnographic researchers may position themselves at different points along the continuum. The choice of autoethnographic approach depends on factors such as the specific research context, research goals, research objectives, ethical considerations, power dynamics, and the desired level of collaboration with participants. This flexible continuum allows for greater responsiveness to the complexities of human experience and cultural dynamics within the research process.

Autoethnography Dimension 8: Forms Communication

Another revelation that emanated from our Zoom meetings and follow-up discussions is that autoethnography can be conducted in an a priori, an a posteriori, or an iterative manner. When conducting autoethnography a priori, the researcher establishes a clear plan or framework for the autoethnographic study before beginning the data collection process. In particular, the research design and research procedures are predetermined based on existing knowledge, experience, theories, and/or frameworks. This approach is relatively more structured and systematic, with the researcher having a predefined idea of what they are looking for and how they will analyze the data.

In contrast, conducting autoethnography in an a posteriori manner involves reflecting on personal experiences and data after they have been collected. The researcher may engage in data collection without a predetermined plan or structure, allowing the research process to emerge organically from the data themselves. The framework, objectives, and methods of the study may occur after the data collection or analysis already has begun. This approach is more exploratory and open-ended, allowing the researcher to be more flexible and responsive to unexpected insights, patterns, and emergent themes that might arise during the analysis, interpretation, and meaning-making phases.

Within our conceptualization of this eighth dimension, a priori and a posteriori autoethnographic approaches represent two distinct perspectives on how the autoethnographic research process unfolds. As such, they can be framed as lying on an interactive continuum, with the purest forms of a priori autoethnography and a posteriori autoethnography lying at each pole. In between the two poles are autoethnography studies that are conducted in an iterative manner, involving an ongoing and recursive process of data collection, data analysis, data interpretation, reflection, and revision. The autoethnographic researcher continuously cycles through these stages, refining her/his/their understanding and interpretation of the data over time. This approach emphasizes flexibility and adaptability, allowing the researcher to respond to new insights or developments as they emerge throughout the study, emphasizing the dynamic nature of the research process.

Overall, each approach—a priori, a posteriori, iterative—offers different advantages and challenges in conducting autoethnographic research. Researchers may choose one approach or combine elements of multiple approaches based on the nature of their research questions, the context of the study, and their own preferences and expertise.

Autoethnography Dimension 9: Writing Style

In terms of writing style, ethnographic narratives (a) can be written in a way that represents an add-on to the other findings and interpretations, (b) can be interspersed with the other findings and interpretations, (c) can be embedded with the other findings and interpretations, or (d) can serve as a stand-alone narrative. When narratives serve as an add-on, they are presented distinctly from other findings and interpretations. They are typically included as supplementary information that provides additional insight or context to the main research findings. These narratives may offer personal reflections, anecdotes, or lived experiences that complement or enrich the broader themes or conclusions drawn from the ethnographic research study. By presenting narratives as an add-on, researchers acknowledge the unique perspective offered by autoethnographic accounts without integrating them directly into the main analysis.

Autoethnographic narratives that are interspersed often are woven throughout the research findings and interpretations, intermingled with other forms of data and analysis.

By integrating narratives with other findings, autoethnographic researchers aim to demonstrate the interconnectedness of personal experiences with broader social phenomena or theoretical frameworks. This approach of interspersing allows for a more fluid and holistic presentation of the research, wherein personal narratives are used to illustrate or to illuminate key sub-themes, themes, meta-themes, or other concepts.

Narratives that are embedded are seamlessly integrated into the broader analysis, often without explicit differentiation between autoethnographic accounts and other forms of data. When this writing style is adopted, autoethnographic narratives become an integral part of the research narrative, contributing to the overall interpretation or path of argumentation presented by the researcher. By embedding narratives, the autoethnographic researcher emphasizes the significance of personal experiences in shaping understanding and knowledge production within the research context.

Finally, ethnographic accounts that serve as stand-alone narratives may be presented as writings that are separate from the main body of research findings. These narratives often are crafted to stand on their own as compelling stories or reflections, independent of the broader research context. By presenting narratives as standalone text, autoethnographic researchers showcase the richness and depth of personal experiences without necessarily connecting them directly to broader theoretical or empirical discussions.

These four ethnographic writing styles lie on an interactive continuum, ranging from being written in a way that serves as stand-alone narratives, to being written in a way that represents an add-on to the other findings and interpretations, to being interspersed with the other findings and interpretations, to being embedded with the other findings and interpretations. Overall, the choice of how to present autoethnographic narratives depends on the goals of the research, the intended audience, and the desired level of integration with other forms of data and analysis. Each approach offers its own strengths and considerations, and researchers may choose to adopt one or more of these strategies based on the specific needs of their study.

Autoethnography Dimension 10: Forms of Communication

Continuing on the topic of writing style, ethnographic forms of communication can lie on another interactive continuum that ranges from a highly impersonal to a highly personalized communication style. Here, the communication typology presented in the literature review book that Rebecca Frels and I (Tony) penned (i.e., Onwuegbuzie & Frels, 2016) is particularly pertinent for autoethnographic representations. In our literature review book, we identified the following four key modes for presenting research findings and information: **a**ct, **v**isualize, **o**rally present, and **w**rite—which yield the acronym *AVOW*. Specifically, in the context of autoethnography, the *act* mode is tantamount to what is referred to as performative autoethnography (see, for e.g., Spry, 2001), which involves providing autoethnographic representations via performance art, poetry, ethnodrama and ethnotheatre, music, movement and dance, and multimedia/digital storytelling. The *visualize* component of AVOW involves providing autoethnographic representations via drawings, photographs, paintings, videos, multimedia, and the like. The *orally present* component of AVOW involves providing autoethnographic representations via some form of oral presentation, such as at a professional conference. Finally, the *write* component of AVOW involves providing autoethnographic representations via a written account.

Each of these AVOW modes can be delivered in a manner that ranges from a highly impersonal to a highly personalized communication style. This highly impersonal—highly personalized continuum represents the varying degrees of self-reflection and authorial presence within the communication. One end of this continuum involves using a highly impersonal communication style. When adopting this style, the ethnographic communicator's focus is primarily on the research subject matter, with minimal emphasis on the researcher's personal experiences, emotions, reflections, or personal insights. The narrative tends to adopt a more dispassionate or detached tone, akin to the report writing used in quantitative research studies.

The other end of the continuum involves a highly personalized communication style. When adopting this style, the ethnographic writer places greater emphasis on the researcher's subjective experiences, emotions, reflections, and personal insights throughout the communication style, thereby allowing readers to connect more deeply and empathetically with the researcher's perspective and lived experiences. The researcher's voice is more prominent, and there is a greater degree of self-disclosure and introspection. This style allows for a deeper exploration of the researcher's personal journey, perspectives, and insights, enriching the narrative with individual experiences and perspectives.

In between a highly impersonal communication style and a highly personalized communication style lies a spectrum of communication styles that vary in their degree of personalization. This spectrum includes semi-personalized styles, wherein some personal elements are incorporated but not to the extent of a highly personalized approach. These semi-personalized styles may include a balance of personal anecdotes, reflections, or interpretations alongside more objective or detached language. In essence, they bridge the gap between impersonal and highly personalized writing styles, offering a middle ground that allows for both personal engagement and scholarly rigor.

The choice between adopting a highly impersonal and highly personalized communication style depends on various factors, including the research aims, audience, and disciplinary conventions, as well as the writer's personal communication preference and level of comfort. Researchers may opt for a more impersonal style to maintain a degree of formality, whereas others may prioritize personal engagement and reflexivity through a more personalized

approach, whereas still others may opt for a style that lies somewhere between an impersonal style and a personal style. Ultimately, the goal is to select a communication style that best addresses the research objectives and effectively communicates the richness of the autoethnographic experience.

Towards the Radical Middle in Autoethnography Via the 10 Dimensions

As has been seen in the preceding section, we have conceptualized autoethnography as being represented by 10 dimensions, each lying on some form of interactive continuum. At this point of our own narrative journey, we thought that it would be more reader friendly to summarize these 10 dimensions via what we hope represents "good enough research poetry" (Lahman et al., 2011, p. 894), as we discussed earlier. We have entitled our poem,

"A Tapestry of Voices: Navigating Autoethnography's Ten Dimensions through Poetry", as follows:

First, researchers situate themselves in the research,

Embracing the emic viewpoint where insights lurch.

Or, optimally, they blend emic with etic sight,

Maximally interactive, emtic shedding new light.

Second, they may navigate without a set mental mold,

Or may choose from many philosophies, whether new or old.

From critical dialectical pluralism they may select,

Or any philosophy that they can use to direct.

Third, a monomethod approach they may employ,

Qualitative autoethnography, their stories deploy.

Or, optimally, they blend methods in their quest,

Mixed methods research, where insights manifest.

Fourth, their methods evolve in layered embrace,

Monomethod, multimethod, or meta-methods grace.

Each approach adds depth to their research design,

As dimensions of inquiry intertwine.

Fifth, no design or one design strand,

Or multiple designs, a vision so grand.

Driving their exploration, they understand,

With design diversity, their narratives expand.

Sixth, a single researcher or teams unite,

Collaborative spirits, shining bright.

In collective efforts, they see the light,

In autoethnography, their voices ignite.

Seventh, participant-driven, their voices heard,

Or researcher-driven, wherein perspectives are stirred.

Or balance struck, a story told,

In contribution styles, the narratives unfold.

Eighth, their approach is neither rigid nor fixed,

A priori, a posteriori, or an iterative mix.

Flexibility reigns, as they adapt and refine,

Navigating the autoethnographic methodological design.

Ninth, narratives emerge, in forms diverse,

As add-ons they serve, or interspersed in verse.

Embedded in the story, or standing alone,

Each tale unique, each representing a milestone.

Tenth, the communication style may vary, from detached to dear,

Impersonal or personalized, conveying what is clear.

In each of the 10 dimension's embrace, autoethnography finds its place,

A journey of discovery, stemming from a radical middle's embrace.

Elsewhere, Tony and Sandra (Onwuegbuzie & S. S. Abrams, 2024a) have advocated that autoethnographers consider adopting a radical middle stance. As we note in our article, being in the radical middle means avoiding taking a passive and complacent stance whereby the status quo between quantitative and qualitative epistemologies remains unchallenged. Instead, researchers should aspire to cultivate a fresh theoretical and methodological terrain—what we refer to as a *third space*—that fosters equitable coexistence among all research traditions. In this space, researchers adopting a radical middle stance should be deliberately responsive, adaptable, interactive, context-sensitive, and forward-thinking, driving innovation and meaningful inquiry.

In the context of autoethnography, adopting a radical middle stance with respect to the aforementioned 10 dimensions optimally would yield the following characteristics:

- adopting an emtic viewpoint;

- using critical dialectical pluralism as the research philosophical lens;

- conducting an integrated mixed methods autoethnography study;

- using a meta-methods research approach that combines mixed methods and multiple methods;

- using one or more research designs;

- involving multiple researchers in a collaborative manner;

- adopting a balanced approach that is both participant-driven and researcher-driven;

- involving an iterative approach to data collection, data analysis, data interpretation, reflection, and revision;

- producing narratives that are embedded with the other findings and interpretations; and

- producing narratives using a semi-personalized style that allows for both personal engagement and scholarly rigor.

Conducting autoethnography in the radical middle, optimally, leads to the adoption of an integrated mixed methods autoethnographic approach. And, as we stated earlier, we consider integrated mixed methods autoethnography approaches to exemplify the pinnacle of autoethnographic practice.

Conclusion

Autoethnography can be a vulnerable method to embrace,

Continued reflexivity leads to memories to trace

Experiences with nuances and textures alike,

Rich narrative insights and creativity are ripe.

A mixed methods autoethnography, an approach to inquire

And draw on qual and quant—in an integrated spire

That can offer the field innovative heights,

Exploring the depths of experience and insights.

A radical middle—hopes for integrated forms

Of approaches to data beyond hackneyed norms.

Ten dynamic and iterative dimensions we suggest,

With continua for custom and personalized quests.

So this we ask of you, our reader:

Seek inside this manuscript deeper,

Question how and where your research might reside

And leave room for inspiration and innovation to collide.

Try to engage in mixed methods autoethnography;

Keep track of your methodological journey;

Challenge yourself to iteratively provide

Explorations of your data—the "so what" that's inside.

As we write this treatise, we have just learned that we have been invited to deliver a presentation on our concept of integrated mixed methods autoethnography at the 20th International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry (ICQI) that will take place in May 2024, very close to the time that our missive will be published. This 2024 ICQI Conference will feature the return of the "Day in Mixed Methods Special Interest Group (SIG)," which will take place on May 17th, 2024. The Day will highlight the theme: "Qualitatively-Driven Mixed Methods Inquiry: Tackling Complex Realities in an Ever-Changing World." (https://icqi.org/pre-congress-days-a-day-in-mixed-methods/). The aim of the organizers of this Day (i.e., Professors Sharlene Hesse-Biber, César A. Cisneros Puebla, and James Salvo) is

> to focus on 'subjugated knowledges'—those lived experiences of marginalized groups that often go unnoticed – by utilizing mixed methods methodologies and techniques that hold promise for unearthing these insights. We aim to generate research that can effectively inform social policy and interventions that include the voices of the marginalized and are aimed at real-world issues that the pandemic has intensified.

> The Day aims to explore innovative mixed methods research approaches. The conference sessions and roundtable discussions we have planned for the Day provide a platform for mentoring and engaging with emerging scholars who can offer new perspectives on traditional methodologies and new technologies.

> The conference Day in Mixed Methods sessions will feature topics such as global health disparities, climate change and sustainability, migration and displacement, education inequity, technological change, especially AI ethics, among other issues the conference will address.

> We will focus on examining the intersection between individual struggles and systemic barriers. Through discussions and case studies we aim to bridge the gap between personal narratives and broader societal-institutional factors.

> Lastly, our conference Day aims to demonstrate how mixed methods inquiry can be a force for advocating social change and influencing policies that contribute to a transformative historical narrative and working towards "crafting a new history," especially with regard to the enormous potential of applying qualitatively-driven mixed

methods inquiry approaches that can provide exploratory "ways forward" toward tackling complex realities in an ever-changing world. (¶ 7-11)

As can be seen from this ICQI Conference call, our notion of conducting autoethnography in the radical middle represents a great fit! In the 15 minutes allocated to our presentation, we plan to use poetic representation to tell our story of the utility of conducting autoethnography in the radical middle for addressing the "lived experiences of marginalized groups that often go unnoticed" (i.e., "subjugated knowledges"), for examining "topics such as global health disparities, climate change and sustainability, migration and displacement, education inequity, technological change, especially AI ethics," for "examining the intersection between individual struggles and systemic barriers," for helping "to bridge the gap between personal narratives and broader societal-institutional factors," and, especially, for demonstrating how "mixed methods inquiry can be a force for advocating social change and influencing policies that contribute to a transformative historical narrative and working towards 'crafting a new history,' [for the purpose of] tackling complex realities in an ever-changing world."

Please wish us success!

Notes

[1] As I (Tony) have noted recently (i.e., Onwuegbuzie, 2022), "Found poetry involves the creation of poems by selecting and (re-)arranging existing text from research works, emphasizing themes or ideas present in the source text in order to create new meaning. In contrast, research poetry involves integrating academic research and scholarly content into poetic compositions in order to present the concept of integration in mixed methods research in a creative, accessible, understandable, and engaging manner through poetry."

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