Collaborative Autoethnography:

From Rhythm and Harmony to Shared Stories and Truths

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Abstract: This chapter offers a review of the rich and diverse literature on collaborative autoethnography interwoven with a critical, personal and political collaborative autoethnography. We outline the origins and development of collaborative approaches to autoethnography, the diverse approaches that have been used to date, and the relationships that may be called into being when autoethnographic researchers choose to collaborate. We see an important hallmark of collaborative autoethnography to be an openness to, and playful experimentation with, multiple voices and forms. Innovation and multiplicity, we suggest, enrich a field where difference and diversity are not only welcomed and very much at home, but essential.

Marcelo Diversi and Claudio Moreira write, "Alone, despair seems inevitable, paralyzing. Together, we might be able to keep Our bearings toward social justice (2018a, p. 1). Tami Spry asks, "Perhaps autoethnography is not about the self at all; perhaps it is instead about a wilful embodiment of 'we'" (2016, p. 15). And Ken Gale and Jonathan Wyatt remind us, "This writing is experimental, it is transgressive; it expresses a desire to be curious, to destabilise and to trouble the givens of accepted discourses, knowledge constructions and ways of thinking and doing" (2009, p. 8).

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A woman is digging a ditch. It's tough work. The ground is hard, dry and stony. The sun has been up for hours, she's sweating, and beads of perspiration race the contours of her brow, down her neck, across her chest. She feels their course against her skin and knows their appearance is acknowledgment that the work is physically demanding, mentally exhausting

and spiritually draining. Her hands are blistered, bloody and raw, her back, shoulders, arms, in fact every muscle in her body, aches.

A figure walks toward her backlit against the sun's bright rays. She can't make out any details, but he is carrying a shovel. In a moment he takes up position next to her and begins to dig. Shoulder to shoulder, side by side, the two of them dig together. No words are spoken. Yet the burden of the work is shared. The ditch, growing deeper twice as fast now, offers proof of – and testimony to – their collaboration.

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collaborate

labour

band

unite

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What do we say when words fail us? When there is nothing to say? How do we account for the unsaid, the unspoken, the emotions that stir from within, without concrete form? What can we say to the friend who confides in us his trauma, isolation, grief and pain? And what do we have to offer the mother who shares stories bursting with wisdom and insight, alongside hopes and fears for her health, her body, her grandchildren and their future? How do we work with what has been shown to us, shared with us, so that we may pass on the batten, responsibly and ethically? And what do we need to nurture us in this task?

We are not lone wolves. We live in a world where injustice bleeds across boundaries and a world where academics and researchers are most times in a more privileged position than those whose lives we are tasked by funders to understand. With the aim of better understanding, greater transparency and reflexivity, and a desire to break down barriers,

myths and caricatures, we turn an eye to our-selves; expose and explore our own lives, motivations, expectations, failure, vulnerabilities, sadness, grief, loss and hope. Sometimes we do this with others. Sometimes the collaboration is a purposeful decision, sometimes it is not. Sometimes the researchers have a model or methodology in mind, sometimes they do not. Sometimes collaborators claim defining traits for their work and sometimes they clear a path as they go. Here we reflect on some of these relationships, on the collaborations that evolve, are created, and the genesis of this work and what is has to offer our research endeavours.

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Judith Lapadat (2017) traces the origins of collaborative autoethnography to the multi-voiced feminist approaches of *collective memory work* developed by Frigga Haug and her colleagues in the 1980's (Haug et al., 1983/1987). Here, a group of researchers collaborate together to write, share, and analyze personal stories as an approach to critical social research. This "explicitly feminist approach" allowed Haug and her colleagues to "disrupt existing theory by insisting on a starting point in their own experiences as girls and women, and then going back to theory to see how it might be changed in light of their experiences" (Davies & Gannon, 2006, p. 4). It is significant to us that, within this pioneering work, Haug and her colleagues refused to articulate a method; they resisted any impulse to specify how memory-work *should* be done. Instead, they were committed to methodological plurality, a multiplicity of approaches, diverse ways of working. They suggested that "there might well be no single, 'true' method that is alone appropriate to this kind of work … the very heterogeneity of everyday life demands similarly heterogenous methods if it is to be understood" (Haug et al., 1987, pp. 70-71; c.f. Davies & Gannon, 2006, p. 6). This early characterization seems to us to fit well with the diversity of methods used by autoethnographers in current times.

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The term "voice" often refers to the possibility of different experiences being heard, valued, and given space, possibly for the first time. But voice can also reflect the tonal vibrations produced when we talk, hum or sing. When different notes are produced simultaneously in the same melody we refer to it as harmony. This kind of process is characteristic of collaborative autoethnography and the aspiration to share a collective voice which is melodic and harmonious yet preserves individuality and diversity.

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In our collaborative autoethnographies we often use songs, songwriting, music and performance as a way to interrelate, share, communicate, elevate and stand alongside one another. Here, rhythm, melody and harmony – the embodied acts of musical performance – become the means for collaboration. In this way of doing collaborative autoethnography, the words may all be mine. Or they may all be yours. Or it may be the case that no words are written or spoken at all. But a collaboration it is. And the burdens of the work are shared. The *work* of moving towards a more humane, just and equitable world.

We have found music offers us both a literal and a metaphorical way to collaborate. In a literal sense, through the various components and elements of music, we may express our diverse positions, voices, experiences and potentialities. We make our own noise, retain our individuality, yet create some kind of unified whole, within which what makes us unique is not diminished in the process. Rather (perhaps) what we are, or may become, is enhanced and amplified. Songs and music provide an unusual medium where "space" is created in ways that others (or the Other) might also be encouraged to contribute – we have left space for them. Space between the words. Space above the melody, space below the melody. Space between the beats. Space that is created through sound, by the physical movement of air, *noise*. Space

which becomes an invitation to join in, add your part, make some noise, add yourself, move in your own way, take up some space.

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But questions get asked, don't they?

"What is collaboration then?"

"Can you teach it?"

or

"What do I *have* to do? … to pass my coursework?"

or

"What provoked this journey in you?"

or

"What is the point?"

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Bronwyn Davies and Susanne Gannon (2006) describe *collective biography* as "a strategy for post-structuralist work in the social sciences" (p. ix) which builds on the foundation of collective memory work. Their edited collection *Doing Collective Biography* showcases a range of collaborations between groups of women working on particular topics through the shared work of telling, listening and writing. These researchers, too, resist specifying method but write that they "take the talk around our memories, the listening to the detail of each other's memories, as a technology for enabling us to produce … a truth in relation to … the moment as it was lived" (p. 3).

And it is to a series of collective "moments as lived" to which we now turn through a series of interconnecting scenes…

Scene 1

Boxes Nightclub, Summer 1984. It begins with Johnny Marr's wiry, swaggering, electric guitar. Intense, urgent, unhinged. The intro to The Smith's *What Difference Does It Make?* bursts out of a ropy sound system driven to the max. We are fourteen-year-old boys, dancing with fourteen-year-old boys. In the near darkness, our bodies packed tight together before a tower of black speakers. Just starting to move now. The drums kick in. So vital. So alive. Who could resist? Dance! Throw yourself around! Unleash … everything! Let it go! Then come Morrisey's opening lyrics … He sings of men with secrets, hints at one of his own, and declares his desire for it to be revealed. Thirteen words which, it seems to me now, evoke so much of what was otherwise hidden, buried, concealed … yet what was set free in the moment through shared music and movement.

Scene 2

Belvoir Amphitheatre, Summer 1996. We walk across the field, through the late afternoon heat. We are early. The Finn Brothers are doing their soundcheck. A sublime guitar part echoes from the semi-enclosed amphitheatre out into the world. Lush arpeggios ring through minor to major and back again. Picked out, over and over, on a Gretsch electric guitar. I am transported … somewhere. I don't know where. And this is just the rehearsal! Later, midway through their set, Neil Finn starts up that entrancing guitar part, drums and bass fall in, and he gifts us a more explicit glimpse into his interior world through the opening lines of the song *Only Talking Sense.* He sings of devils in closets, wild things he cannot contain, and feelings he would rather hide. Finn has a wife and two sons. I assumed him to be heterosexual. He has never publicly said otherwise. I feel intrigued, surprised, a little unsure, but ultimately excited and connected by his willingness to hint through a song of more complex and diverse set of personal stories and identities.

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My body is more than one story, and others too have multiple stories written on, in and through their bodies. Songs, it seems, can hold story fragments that escape a unified temporal plot, allowing differences and diversity to co-exist in harmony.

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Collaborative writing as method of inquiry comprises a diverse range of approaches to research which has grown exponentially in recent years. Jonathan Wyatt and Ken Gale (2014) trace its development to an intersection of the theory and practice of writing as a method of inquiry (Richardson, 1994) and the development of collaborative writing practices and communities during the early 2000's (e.g., Davies & Gannon, 2006; Gale & Wyatt, 2009; Speedy et al., 2010). One approach to this work has been described as *interactive writing* (Gale & Wyatt, 2009) where collaborators engage in a process of dialogical exchange, responding to each other's words and stories to create together a new story (e.g., Gale, Pelias, Russell, Spry, & Wyatt, 2013; Gale & Wyatt, 2017; Speedy & Wyatt, 2014; Wyatt & Gale, 2013). Another approach consists of a layering of personal stories which may not explicitly respond to each other. Here, autoethnographers create new stories by interweaving their personal stories with those of their collaborator/s, often in artful and inventive ways (e.g., Adams & Holman Jones, 2011; Diversi & Moreira, 2018a; Douglas & Carless, 2014; Grant, Leigh-Phippard & Short, 2015; Holman Jones & Harris, 2018).

This work demonstrates a rich variety of approaches, topics and purposes which include autoethnography, but also sometimes extend outside and beyond the researchers' personal experience to include stories, interactions and perspectives from others, such as research participants or young people (e.g., Diversi & Moreria, 2010; Carless & Douglas, 2017; Ellis & Rawicki, 2013). While authors are generally reluctant to specify method, some explore the methodologies of inquiry to offer backstage snapshots of collaborative writing

(Gale, Martin, Sakellariadis, Speedy & Spry, 2012). Perhaps a key signifier of these methodologies is Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet's (2002) statement that "we do not work together, we work between the two" (c.f. Gale & Wyatt, 2009, p. 2). When it comes to collaboration, therefore, many of us share Marcelo Diversi and Claudio Moreria's (2010) recognition that "words, meanings, intentions, and emotions reside not in me but in *us*" (p. 13).

Scene 3

Bristol, March 2000. I try to start everyday with my guitar. Being six months into a full-time funded PhD I am able to do that. Perhaps I *need* to do that? A needed time to deal with some of the tensions, contradictions and doubts that my scientific research training is already raising. This morning I sit at the worn kitchen table I bought for £40 from an ad in a free newspaper. I'm picking arpeggios very softly, rolling from minor to major and back again. My own acoustic impression of Neil Finn's playing four years before. And I am vanishing into these private sounds, an emerging landscape that is taking shape before my eyes. After a time, some words begin to come:

At this time in the morning

when breathing is too loud

Your heart is a fire

your brain is water that puts it out[1]

Scene 4

Bristol, March 2000. Two PhD students from the same science department. They are learning to become researchers, they are being shaped, boundaries are being claimed ... and rejected.

Because they harbour doubts about what they are seeing and hearing, what they are being taught. They are drinking tea in the afternoon when one says, "Can I play you my new song?" The other nods, excitedly, but tries to downplay her enthusiasm. He picks the opening chords. His voice hums the melody and then, after eight bars, the words begin:

At this time in the morning

when breathing is too loud

Your heart is the fire

your brain is the water that puts it out

There's no pain in the moment

but the cheque is in the post

Talk about living and dying

I've been wondering which part hurts the most[1]

There was something in the mood, something in the music, something within her, she couldn't say what it was. At the same time, the head and the heart had been on her mind, and she was mindful of tensions she couldn't resolve, tensions concerning how to *be* a researcher in the world. That very morning she'd written down her thoughts … but she didn't know how to express what her heart was telling her.

Before he had even finished the song it had lodged in the folds of her story, and like an addict she had to have it. She had to sing it. She took ages working out the chords so that she could possess it, so it could become her. And then she sang it, over and over again. Something in *his* song had mainlined into *her* being.

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What drives this deep desire to be *in* the song? This question compels us. We have both

experienced *that* feeling: the musical itch that must be scratched, hearing a song that so moves

us we have to join in. But what does it bring us to? What are we *connected to* in the process of

singing, playing music or in accepting the invitation to a lyrical journey? And where does it

come from? And what can we take from these experiences that might help us do better

collaborative autoethnographies? We can trace our stories through songs, and perhaps songs

allow us to grasp a story fragment that has yet no breath. But, unlike a storyteller who stops

telling the story, when the lyrics cease, the music fills in and makes it possible for the journey

continue. You might want to find neat logical connections, or you might let go of that idea, of

linearity, and accept the gift however it comes. And, so, with this chapter, it feels more

authentic to indulge the messiness of life, collaboration and experience as a way to more

honestly reveal how collaboration and collaborative possibilities can seed and take hold

within the tradition of autoethnography. Our recognition is that there are multiple ways,

journeys, and moments of insight. *A little magic box of possibilities*.

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Duoethnography (Norris, 2008; Norris and Sawyer, 2012) offers a further set of possibilities

for researchers from diverse disciplines who wish to collaborate and co-research on the basis

of their personal experiences. Building on a "rich tradition of critical self-study,"

duoethnography has been described as "a collaborative research methodology in which two or

more researchers of difference juxtapose their life histories to provide multiple

understandings of the world" (Norris & Sawyer, 2012, p. 9). Rick Breault (2016) describes

duoethnography as a research method where "two participants interrogate the cultural

contexts of autobiographical experiences in order to gain insight into their current

perspectives on and experience of issues related to personal and professional identities" (p.

777). Gregory Hummel and Satoshi Toyosaki (2015) suggest: "Duoethnography offers us a way to relationally (duo) understand our cultural (ethno) bodies, and identities and so to critically engage the implicated present (graphy) through interwoven polyvocal text" (p. 43). For duoethnographers, *difference* between researchers is expected and is the means through which researchers reconceptualize perception and meaning (Sawyer & Norris, 2015). To this end, *dialogue* encourages a collage of interconnected ideas without need for consensus, provoking duoethnographers to bring into focus their "embodiment of differences."

While many aspects of duoethnography resonate with the collaborations mentioned thus far, Joe Norris and Richard Sawyer (2012) suggest duoethnography is distinguished by nine tenets: *currere*, *disruptive metanarratives*, *poyvocal/dialogic*, *difference*, *regenerative transformations*, *trustworthiness, audience/reader*, *ethics, trust.* They suggest these tenets form "an outline of the types of researcher dispositions, principles, and foci required to undertake this work" (p. 12). Recently, Sawyer and Norris (2015) considered the evolution of dueothnography and identified three strands: (a) understanding the self through/from the other, (b) exploring and voicing personal and collective narratives which resist dominant/meta narratives, and (c) making explicit that the researcher and the research is the archeological site for exploring socialization. Thus, for Hilary Brown (2015), duoethnography has moved from a research tool to a way to live in more humanely. These are things we, as collaborative autoethnographers, also aspire to through our work.

Scene 5

Kingswood, May 1966. A saxophone case opened its lid. Inside, deep red velvet. It was magical. So too the golden curvy instrument. Her father gently put it to his lips and blew. A moment of awe.

Scene 6

Portishead, October 1972. Music filled her sleep, sound breaking through silence in an otherwise still bedroom. And in the car, outside her window, her father turned off the engine, but not the song. He sat quietly, listening. She couldn't see, hear or touch him, but there they both were, spellbound and absorbed by the overwhelming and alluring gift of a song.

Scene 7

Portishead, June 1973. It's a still moonlit night, the stars beckon and she is roused from her slumber by her father – the pied-piper of her dreams – enticing her and her sister on a moonlit walk along the cliff path. As they walk together through the darkness, he teaches them to sing marching songs:

You had a good job on your left: your right

You had a good job on your left: your right

Sound off: sound off

One two: one two

One two three four, one two: three four

What more magical moments might a child be given? This six-foot-four-inch man was inclusive, fun, imaginative, creative. But by no means perfect.

An Irish family, he came over on the boat, with his mum, dad, brother, sister, when he was ten. Leaving … Tyranny? Family expectations? Poverty? Unemployment? And what did they find in Bristol? Bigotry. "No dogs or Irish!" He lost his accent pretty quickly, while the school lost his exam results, and his mother, for a while, her mental health, her peace. But he learned to play the bugle with the Boys Brigade, then the trumpet and then the sax.

There were other stories too, the one about painting a white stripe along the car of a man who had wronged him and then going back, months later, and doing it again. Revenge. These were the stories his family affirmed – well, his two brothers.

"Daddy, I don't think that's the right thing to do."

Children notice when parents don't practice what they preach, but its difficult to say anything, nigh on impossible in some families I've learned. But he attended to what she said. He listened, took note, and told his partner: "Do you know what our middle daughter said?"

What an amazing thing to be so valued by a parent that they take your counsel. He listened, and then he slipped from her hands, perhaps his work was done. He was 52 and she was 21.

Keep breathing, keep trying

keep waking everyday

But there's too many calls, too much noise

rarely that much to say[1]

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How do we communicate what we cannot say alone? Those things that stubbornly refuse to be shaped into words. So, when we have no words, yet we have more than words, what *can* we offer? How might we break through silence? "Poetry," Billy Collins said, "is the interruption of silence" (Plimpton, 2001). Songs and music answer that call too, offering us a way to break through silence, to 'speak' when we might otherwise have nothing to 'say.' By doing so, songs and music open further possibilities – new yet overlapping horizons – for collaborating autoethnographers.

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Norman Denzin wrote: "Terms flow together, intermingle; a montage of overlapping projects, images, voices, techniques. Duoethnography, collaborative autoethnography, collective biography, and collaborative writing— alone, together, voices seeking a home" (Wyatt, Gale, Gannon, Davies, Denzin & St. Pierre, 2014, p. 413). And so it is. We see *community autoethnography* (e.g., Pensoneau-Conway, Bolen, Toyosaki, Rudick, & Bolen, 2014; Toyosaki, Pensoneau-Conway, Wendt, & Leathers, 2009) where personal experiences of collaborating researchers come together to illuminate how sociocultural issues unfold within a particular community. We see *collaborative witnessing as relational autoethnography* where researchers "focus on and evocatively tell the lives of others in shared storytelling and conversation" (Ellis & Rawicki, 2013, p. 366). We see *critical co-constructed autoethnography* (e.g., Cann & DeMeulenaere, 2012) and *dialogued collaborative autoethnography* (e.g., Martinez & Andreatta, 2015). We see *twice-told multivoiced autoethnography* offering "a way to bring other voices, subjectivities, and interpretations into autoethnographic accounts" (Ellis et al., 2018, p. 120). Here, multiple author-inquirers write of their personal experience of a shared event (see also Carless & Douglas, 2009; Denshire, 2015; Martinez & Merlino, 2014). And, increasingly, we see researchers gathering and cohering under the broad umbrella term *collaborative autoethnography* which is, in Heewon Chang, Faith Ngunjiri and Kathy-Ann Hernandez's (2012) words, "a process of and product of an ensemble performance, not a solo act" (p. 11).

While the names and labels applied to these diverse collaborative inquiry practices may overlap and sometimes blur, we see all the research cited in this chapter as falling within the inclusive embrace of the term "collaborative autoethnography." Creativity, innovation and multiplicity facilitate, fertilize and enrich the field. We applaud, support and encourage these

qualities. Because in this space, at least, difference and diversity are not only welcomed and very much at home … but essential.

Scene 8

Huddersfield, October 2009. I've been invited to perform a short set at a community charity event coinciding with World Mental Health Day. Midway through the set, I say a few words to introduce *Breathing Too Loud*.

"For several years we've been doing research with people who've been diagnosed with a mental illness. I've been moved, sometimes angered, and sometimes inspired hearing about their lives. I've told stories of their stories and written poems from those stories. But I haven't been able to write a single song. I've tried. But what I wrote just wouldn't sing. It frustrated me. *Why not? What am I doing wrong?* Eventually I understood that I'd been trying to write about mental *illness* – rather than writing around the rich set of universal, human, emotion-full, spiritual experiences people had shared with me. The kinds of experiences and feelings that were companions in my life too. Once I saw it – that *this* is what mental health is*,* that it is *not* what any medical diagnosis tells us it is – I realised that every song I have ever written is about mental health."

I pick the opening chords. Minor to major and back again. After four bars, Kitrina joins in. A deep, soulful, mournful *Hummm.* A sound at once Celtic, ancient, visceral, open, expansive, redemptive. My guitar. Her voice. I sing the opening line: "At this time in the morning when breathing is too loud…" Her voice weaves and interlaces around mine. The guitar a tidal flow, rising and falling around the islands of our voices. We reach the second chorus, both now voicing the words together, one in melody, one in harmony:

While we're sleeping the world is turning

Without us it gets by, just fine

Too much scheming and not enough feeling

And science really isn't the point

You know I would rather feel alright

But I am

Breathing too loud[1]

At this moment, together in performance, among this audience, some of whom sing along too, the story in the song seems to expand, lift off, become something more than mine alone. I question myself, is this *my* story? Is it *her* story? Is it now *their* story? Is it *your* story … is it *our* story? Have we made it something else?

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We perceive an important hallmark of collaborative autoethnography to be an openness to, and playful experimentation with, multiple voices and forms. We read Carla Corroto and Laurel Richardson (2018) shifting position to combine and layer voices which include the personal "I," an academic "we" and a personal "we." We see David Purnell and Daniel Clarke (2019) weave together overt articulations (in normal font), unspoken thoughts (in italics) and poetic renderings. We are absorbed as Gale, Pelias, Russell, Spry and Wyatt (2013) negotiate the voices and stories of five author-inquirers. And we are moved by Stacy Holman Jones and Tony Adams' (2014, p. 103) doublevoiced composition presented as *queer fugue* – "a series of themes and variations on grief, on loss and remembering" (p. 103). So many ways to *do* collaboration, so many ways to *be* collaborative, so many ways to make something of the spaces between us.

Scene 9

Leeds, November 2013. I perform *Suburban Black Suburban Blue* as part of an evening of performative research Kitrina has convened as a public engagement initiative. The banked seating at Yorkshire Dance Theatre in the centre of Leeds is almost full – a hundred adventurous members of the public and students have gathered to see and hear social research as they never have before. Tonight, for this song, I am supported by six backing singers – five drama students and Kitrina – who stand in a semi-circle around a single mic. I begin the song with the lyrics: *I'll meet you off the train tonight and on the platform take your hand in mine/But maybe that's a kiss too far we're just two guys forgetting where we are/Suburban black suburban blue²*.

The backing singers mostly leave the words to me, but as I finish the chorus I hear their voices – together, *so* together – on the sung parts which have no words, the "*Yeahhh, Yeahhh, Yeahhheheh*" sections. The bits that are meaningless when reproduced as text on a page, but if you were there you would have noticed a gear shift as their sounds and energies elevated the meaning of the song. At moments like this the meaning and power of wordless sound is spectacularly revealed. It is *felt*. Then, midway through the song, "my" singers spontaneously link arms, pulling each other tightly together as their harmonies intensify and the sound grows larger still. As I sing and as they sing, I can feel it: *I am not alone anymore. I am not alone on this stage ... in this song ... in this story ... in this ... life?*

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A growing tradition, increasingly evident in conferences, classrooms and in written forms too, is the creation of collaborative autoethnography through group performance. Tami Spry (2016) details "the multifaceted deeply collaborative task of group performance of autoethnography, the committing of a number of politicized bodies to create an embodied dialogical performance of autoethnography" (p. 146). Through a process Spry calls *collage*, a

script is produced by moving back and forth between each collaborator's personal stories. The performance thereby becomes "a dialogic representation of the group's engagement with one another" (p. 151). Many powerful and challenging examples of collaborative autoethnography as performance can be found in recent literature (e.g., Alexander, Moreira & Kumaar, 2015; Crawley & Husakouskaya, 2013; Diversi & Moreira, 2016; 2018b; Denzin, 2018; Douglas & Carless, 2013, 2018; Callier, Hill & Waters, 2017; Spry, 2016).

Scene 10

I'm sitting on a wooden bench across the road from the ocean. I begin another song, *Gwithian Sands* (see Douglas, 2013). This one comes from our research with women in Cornwall, but now it is to the sea in Brittany, France that I sing. A lone female singing in public, but I feel like I am in some private world. Yes, the odd walker, fisherman, or surfer passes me by. But I am disconnected from their lives. Three boys, teenagers, pass on bikes and immediately make a U-turn in the road and head back to me. Then, they stand, legs astride, gripping handlebars, bikes balanced, and stare and smile. They tap a beat on the handlebars or their thighs. I'm moved by their actions, their interest, their respect for the song and how they spontaneously join in. I finish, they clap. "*Bravo!*" one says. Another speaks words in French I don't recognise. Then, they mount their bikes, wave and are gone.

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We find it helpful in our muses about collaboration and autoethnography to consider musical performance as a metaphor for collaboration. To encourage us to seek alternative ways to *do* collaborative autoethnography, new ways to lay our voices, bodies, selves, experiences, vulnerabilities and hopes alongside each other's, alongside the Other. We might seek out new ways to make use of the spaces between us – writing, communicating, expressing, deepening,

amplifying through responding to this invitation. So, while music and songs offer another path for the future of collaborative autoethnography, we suggest this *way* of working is not only possible through song. Music also offers our community of collaborative autoethnographers a metaphor for a way of doing collaboration, an invitation to extend and broaden the scope of what we do, how we do it, where we do it and how it might reach and be received by others. It is a way that leaves space for those others to add their own voices, tones, sounds and rhythms. Or it might just be the thing that makes someone do a U-turn, causes them to stand with us – even for a moment – in harmony.

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How many roads to ride?

Watch the cars go by I'm sitting on the side

How many shows to watch?

I'll stay in tonight coz I'm tired of getting lost

And I am ready now…

to turn this car around[3]

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Collaborations of the type we have been discussing here may seem a far leap from the individual, singular 'auto' traditionally reflected in autoethnographic research. As such, perhaps we have made a U-turn in our understanding of what autoethnography holds for critical, connected researchers? Yet the connections hold firm. As we enter the third decade of this millennium, these developments and turns have only been possible within the safe spaces that have created and nurtured communities within which collaborative autoethnography can develop and flourish. This has included edited book series, journals such as *Qualitative Inquiry, Cultural Studies↔Critical Methodologies, Departures in Critical Qualitative*

Research, Journal of Autoethnography, and *International Review of Qualitative Research* and conferences such as *International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry, International Symposium on Autoethnography and Narrative, Critical Autoethnography, and International Conference of Autoethnography*. We welcome and applaud the growing interest in and openness to collaborative autoethnography across fields as diverse as leadership and management (e.g., Cruz, McDonald, Broadfoot, Chuang & Ganesh, 2018; Ngunjiri & Hernandez, 2017); education and pedagogy (e.g., Carless, Ip & Douglas, 2011; Diversi & Moreira, 2010, 2018a; Douglas, Carless, Milnes, Turner-Moore, Tan & Laredo, 2019; Taylor, Klein, & Abrams, 2014); psychology, counselling and psychotherapy (e.g., Hargons, Lantz, Marks & Voelkel, 2017); healthcare (e.g., Denshire & Lee, 2013); LGBTQ+ studies (e.g., Adams & Holman Jones, 2011; Crawley & Husakouskaya, 2013; Holman Jones & Adams, 2014; Holman Jones & Harris, 2018); mental health (e.g., Carless & Douglas, 2016; Grant et al., 2015); race and ethnicity (e.g., Cruz, McDonald, Broadfoot, Chuang & Ganesh, 2018; Toyosaki et al., 2009) and performance studies (Alexander et al., 2015; Callier et al, 2017; Spry, 2016). What is also evident from the work of all those mentioned above, is perhaps a willingness to work in new ways and in and through different approaches, to create new shapes and in turn *be* shaped by the bodies of those with whom we collaborate.

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Elliot Eisner (2008) wrote that form and content are inseparable, and this is true of collaborative work. In collage, pieces may be laid down next to each other, may overlap. What we see (or learn or understand or feel or come to know) will be shaped by *this particular form* and from the way *these different pieces fit together in this way*. The same goes for how we work with others. *How* we collaborate will influence what we learn, how others may inter*act* with it, and whether it contributes to positive societal change.

<center>*</center>

We are witnessing great creativity and originality as scholars blend and improvise diverse forms and approaches to create impactful, artful, persuasive and insightful collaborative autoethnography. Whether or what we name each style or subgenre is, for us, much less important than the reasons for and purposes of collaboration. Why *do* we collaborate? Why *should* we collaborate? Why *must* we collaborate? What can "we" – as opposed to "I" – achieve through working in these ways?

Collaborative autoethnographers signal to us some directions of travel as we ponder these important questions. Hernandez and Ngunjiri (2013) propose this work be understood as "an artefact of our … collaborative efforts to listen to, care for and represent each other's voices" (p. 263). Diversi and Moreira (2018b) move us to the realisation that the tasks we face are too big for any of us alone: the challenges that confront our communities at this moment in time demand a *we* response. And Holman Jones and Adams (2014, p. 102) help guide us home: "Here, finally, we say the words we have been working toward uttering: We could not write without you. Your lives and deaths are the means through which we are able to speak."

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