Book Review. Hernandez, K.-A. C., Chang, H., & Bilgen, W. A. (2022). Transformative autoethnography for practitioners – change processes and practices for individuals and groups. Stylus.

Vanessa Stafford[A]   [A]   *Director of Academic Learning, Kaplan Business School*

Transformative autoethnography for practitioners – change processes and practices for individuals and groups is one of the latest books within the field of autoethnography. This 2022 contribution was written by experienced autoethnographers Kathy-Anne C. Hernandez, Heewon Chang, and Wendy A. Bilgen. The authors have two aims: the first is to convince the reader that the transformation of the researcher (and those affected by their research) can be the intentional goal of autoethnographic research – transformation can be more than a positive by-product of the methodology. Secondly, when transformation is the goal, it can be applied to make tangible changes to practice. The latter is demonstrated to the reader through their Transformative Autoethnography Model (TAM). Readers of this book will find it an informative and practical guide to applying autoethnographic research to practice. This book is both an ethical call for all qualitative researchers to apply their research to practice for the common good and a practical guide for them to do so.

The authors, Kathy-Anne C. Hernandez, Heewon Chang, and Wendy A. Bilgen, collectively have extensive experience in autoethnographic research. Hailing from research backgrounds in leadership studies, multicultural leadership education, and educational psychology, the authors' current focus is to answer that crucial research question of 'so what?'. In other words, the research is done; now, how can it be useful? This review outlines each chapter and provides insights that may inspire the reader to take up this book themselves.

The purpose of the book

The authors have two aims. The first is to convince the reader that the goal of autoethnographic research can be transformation rather than personal transformation being seen as a mere positive by-product of the researcher's reflective process. This transformation can be achieved by the researcher or others affected by the researcher's autoethnographic product, but in both cases, the authors argue, transformation can be intentional. The second aim is that the authors' model, TAM, be adopted by readers wishing to undergo autoethnographic research, which through intentional transformation, helps to solve real-world problems for practitioners. The book's layout flows clearly through these two aims, scaffolding the reader through a learning journey of theory to practice: beginning with the convincing of the usefulness of TAM, followed by the instructions for applying it.

The authors collaborated largely throughout the global pandemic years, beginning in 2019, with the book being published in 2022 by Stylus and Myers Education Press. The authors point out that it is designed to be a useful, practicable book, written with the reader's needs in mind – the reader being a potential autoethnographic researcher. To be transparent, I am the target audience for the book. At only 167 pages, I find the book to be a highly accessible and practical guide for anyone interested in solving real-world problems through deep, reflective inquiry. For those new to autoethnography, they too may find it useful as an entry point to this qualitative field of research. For those researchers who favour quantitative rigour, this book is not designed to draw you over to this qualitative method of inquiry. However, perhaps the illustrative case studies throughout the book may convince you of the need for its respected inclusion in the healthy range of scientific inquiry available to the academe.

There is a strong multicultural element to the book that most readers can connect to. Accordingly, the strong theme that emerges is the importance of individual stories to the collective research world. For example, there are interwoven personal stories of the three authors that punctuate the book in each chapter. These stories reflect a strong advocacy for storytelling in qualitative research that the authors argue rights the wrongs of (historical?) colonial power structures within the academe that have silenced minority voices. For those interested in the art or healing potential of storytelling, this book will provide interesting insights.

The theoretical first half

In chapter one, the authors introduce the reader to the research method of autoethnography. They argue that autoethnography is an effective inquiry method for change-making, encompassing both individual and collaborative

variations that leads researchers through a self-reflective journey of transformation. They outline six of the method's key characteristics on page 22:

1. It "pursues an in-depth understanding of sociocultural phenomena as an inquiry method".

2. It "captures personal experiences through the power of storying".

3. It "utilizes auto-ethnographers' personal experiences as primary data".

4. It "offers the option of taking the interrogation individually or collaboratively".

5. It "engages the auto-ethnographic process for both research and praxis purposes".

6. It "results in diverse forms of auto-ethnographic products".

This explanation of the research method's key characteristics serves to orient a reader who is unfamiliar with this field of inquiry. On its own, without the later discussion on TAM, it may not convince a sceptic of autoethnography that there is more to the methodology than simply diarising a personal story. If such readers exist, the following book chapters will present stronger arguments for its scientific rigour.

Chapter two delves further into transformation. The authors argue that individual autoethnographic research reaches a scientific conclusion that is true for the author but that, in doing so, seeks to conclude a more generalised truth for the audience, transforming both parties. The authors state that through scaffolded processes, autoethnography as an inquiry process can heal, shape relationships, and dismantle harmful societal power structures. For example, the chapter briefly mentions a medical case involving gender dysphoria, where the autoethnographic researcher offers valuable data from a personalised patient experience navigating an impersonal medical system. These data can reveal insights into patient care and suffering that has the capacity to transform how professionals offer medical care and how other such patients navigate the same experience.

The chapter's overarching point is that "our stories are data with souls" (p. 34). This paragraphed quote by Brene Brown is used to exemplify how a single story in research can be a powerful voice for others. This chapter is the first instance where the reader can see stirring examples of how autoethnography can give a crucial voice to individuals who may ordinarily be seen in other types of research as mere numbers. One compelling section of the chapter discusses "Emancipating and decolonizing" (p. 45) and how autoethnographic research gives voice to historically marginalised groups within and outside of the academe. By providing examples of where research narratives written about indigenous peoples by a colonial white academe are now being authentically re-written by indigenous autoethnographers, readers are shown the power of a single story to decolonise existing bodies of knowledge. For those

interested in areas such as diversity, equity, and inclusion and the critical examination of power structures, this chapter is intriguing.

Chapter three discusses the complexities of collaborative autoethnography (CAE). The authors' goal is to explain how CAE has a unique transformative capacity at the micro and macro levels. It helpfully defines CAE but goes further in addressing the duality challenges of a CAE researcher: that of being at once an individual researcher and participant, and collaborative researcher and participant . For example, the authors explain that CAE members are part of a "dynamic reflexive process as the researchers move back and forth from the roles of researcher and participant" (p. 57), serving as a helpful illustration of CAE's distinct operationalisation. Expanding on the notion of inclusivity touched upon in chapter two, multivocality is a feature of chapter three – specifically, who gets their voices heard within traditional data collection methodologies. This chapter resonated with me, as I personally struggle with a data collection challenge in my workplace. A mostly quantitative student survey dataset with a representative sample is the primary method for making positive changes within most higher education institutions. However, the challenge is found when individual student experiences are not represented in this data set, through, for example, fear of identification within the survey process or technological challenges in completing the survey. This chapter helped strengthen my personal belief that individual, qualitatively sourced voices must be included in a wider quantitative data set for authentic and representative conclusions to be made. In doing so, the bias involved in reducing "data to the most frequent or prevalent observations" (p. 61) can be reduced in favour of a holistic and inclusive data set.

For readers who are passionate about social-constructivist pedagogies, chapter three also includes Mezirow's transformative learning theory. The chapter discusses the potential of CAE to harness the benefits of learning with others to reach individual and collective transformation "through critical dialogic engagement" (p. 63). This is highlighted through examples of where CAE inquirers possess different cultural, gender, philosophical, and demographic elements that enrich, challenge and shape the data-gathering process. For advocates of social constructivism and transformative learning, the linking of CAE to these theories supports the authors' assertion that CAE can be transformative for all involved.

The practical second half

Chapters one to three comprise the theoretical half of the book, and as promised, chapters four to six are dedicated to showing how to conduct the authors' Transformative Autoethnography Model (TAM). In other words, we've learned the why, and now we're learning the how. The authors point out that the intentional design of this flow is to allow readers to directly access either the theory or the practical parts of the book as required.

Chapter four dives in-depth into TAM, orienting the reader to both the skills they will need to conduct TAM as well as the model's stages to work through. The five key research processes required of the researcher are of noticing transformative-worthy conflicts, critically assessing them, grappling with this information, applying new practices, and evaluating them for further action. The authors also explain how self-reflexivity is the essential underpinning skill to using TAM, highlighting the power of understanding the relationships of self to others within certain sociocultural contexts.

Aside from the researcher's required skills, the model itself is explained in chapter four as possessing two distinct parts – the transformative learning cycle (TLC) and the transformative application cycle (TAC). Within the TLC, the researcher progresses through three phases of activities: preparation, exploration, and discovery. The discovery phase directly informs the second cycle, TAC, of planning, implementing, and evaluating. The instructions for using TLC and TAC are supported by helpful diagrams that clarify both phases' interconnectedness.

There are two notable inclusions to chapter four. Firstly, TAM's similarities to the action research cycle are acknowledged, and differences are explained. The authors' note that action research begins from a systems-thinking standpoint, solving closed-ended narrow problems. In contrast, TAM is concerned with the human element – open-ended transformative goals that begin not with a system but with the personal context of the autoethnographer. Accordingly, the warnings on the pitfalls of using TAM are a valuable inclusion for the first-time autoethnographer. For example, the authors reveal five distinct traps to avoid, highlighting the precarious subtleties between storytelling and rigorous research.

Chapters five and six are dedicated to case study scenarios of applying TAM for both individual and collaborative ethnography and are go-to chapters for an in-depth exploration of TAM in use. For example, three fictitious case study researchers are used in Chapter five to exemplify an individual autoethnographer's reasons for, process, and outcome of individual autoethnography – an adult adoptee, a border-control officer, and a community mental health clinician. Chapter six uses the case studies of a team of three US school district liaison offices, a leadership team of a women's leadership organisation, and a team of authors and publishers. As mentioned earlier, the diversity within the case studies and storytelling throughout the book make it likely that any reader will find at least one example to connect with, contextualising the information for each reader. Whilst I appreciate these created best practice examples, I would have liked at least one real case study, perhaps one that shows what can go wrong so that all experiences can be learned from.

The concluding story

Storytelling is skillfully woven through each chapter of this book. It begins with the authors' stories, returns in each chapter to personalise the topic, and it concludes the book within chapter seven. Chapter seven delves further into each author's career biographies and motivations for writing the book. Doing so has created a meta-writing device that exemplifies the authors' belief that the "personal story is at the heart of autoethnographic inquiry' (p. 161). A welcome inclusion to chapter seven is a short commentary on the future of ethnographic research, which raises exciting questions about how emerging technologies and storytelling may affect transformative autoethnography.

There have been other works published in the past two years on autoethnography that deal with similar themes within this book. For example, the deconstructing of colonial power structures within the research academe through storytelling as primary research (see Bartram Scott, 2022; Throne, 2021). Another theme is the 'how to guide' to autoethnography (see Herrmann, 2021). Of course, published ethnographic research itself is available to learn from (see Alhadad et al., 2021), especially ones that focus on transformation (see Medero, 2022). However, the authors' claim to be filling a gap in the market, stating that the evolution from autoethnography's entry into the qualitative research field in the 1970s to now does not provide the specific resource they have written. There is no other guide to transformative autoethnography research that a) focuses on transformation as the intended goal of the research, b) has an explicit aim to create change in practice, and c) provides a useful model to follow.

As someone new to the method of autoethnography, the authors have convinced me of the power of transformative autoethnography to create change. Researchers can use deep, critical analysis and a solid process model to turn traditionally unheard personal stories into valuable insights. Crucially, for an equitable academe and wider society, those insights can then be shared with others to intentionally transform practice for the greater good. For any researcher interested in autoethnographic inquiry, this book will both be an insightful and practical guide.

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