

ICAE 2026 CONNECTIONS

List of abstracts

A

Abíódún Abdul and Yorùbá Yonder

University of Nottingham

From Africa to Europe to Asia in One Childhood: Unravelling Complex Narratives through Autoethnography

This interdisciplinary, phenomenological research project looks at how racism affects isolated Black lives in low diversity regions. Through hybrid life writing, the research focuses on my unique experiences as a Yorùbá-Nigerian secondary school student in Scots-Britain and then Japan, mixing culture-hopping narratives with factual insights into sociology, psychology, anthropology, linguistics, history and more to give essential context to this complex life journey. The main methodology is therefore autoethnography, aiding comprehension of wider cultural experience than fact and reportage allow. However, autoethnography as a hybrid creative/academic methodology is often met with pushback with ethnographers and/or sociologists claiming it's 'too artful', criticising the potential bias of personal experiences as a sole data source. Similarly, creative writers claim autoethnography is 'too scientific', criticising academic features including data storytelling visuals/diagrams for jolting the reader 'out of the narrative'. Therefore, why do reading focus groups contradict both streams of criticism by consistently giving positive feedback on this niche storytelling delivery? This research project consequently also explores the opportunities and limits of the principal autoethnography genre, increasingly described as 'memoir-polemics' in the 21st century, and the effectiveness of hybrid life writing for race-related content when hopping from Africa to Europe to Asia in one childhood.

Luke Anderson

Tennessee Tech University

Please Stop Attacking My Marriage

New legislation in Tennessee is threatening to delegitimize same-sex marriage, which means my marriage. Through this autoethnographic work, I explore what it feels like living in a state where bills against same-sex marriage are consistently proposed. This includes the emotional impact; the legal, social, and relational implications; the cost of vigilance; and why it might be worth staying despite the difficulties. Excerpt: I wonder how others would feel if their marriage was never quite legally secure. It's unsettling you could be living with your husband one day, and then by a stroke of the governor's pen *POOF* he's your roommate. What actually changes? It wouldn't change anything about the nature of our relationship. We would still love each other, still committed and sharing our lives together. But would it change how others perceived us or how we were treated? Would it delegitimize our status in our hometown? Would it prevent us from functioning in society like other couples, making it harder to visit each other in the hospital or get a home loan together. My husband is about to retire and is listed on my insurance, so will he still get health coverage if our marriage is nullified?

B

Jamie Barnes

University of Sussex

Autoethnography to Autoaltergraphy: exploring similarity across difference

Autoethnography, in a traditional sense, offers a personal account (a graphy of an auto) of the experiences of a group of people who have something in common (an ethnos). In my autoethnographic, phenomenological work on mystic experience I have found myself doing something subtly different, which perhaps offers a slightly different paradigm for what autoethnography is (or could be in one of its forms) and what it does. Starting with experience, I have been exploring resonant similarities in experience across difference between oneself (auto) and an other (alter), encounters which themselves leave a trace (graphy). Such work reveals profound, and perhaps unexpected, connections between people, whilst subtly transforming autoethnography into what might be better expressed as autoaltergraphy.

Elazar Ben-Lulu

Ariel University

Israel Celebrating Fifty Years of Jewish Pride: An Autoethnographic View on Queerness, Diaspora and Homeland in an American Gay Synagogue

Anthropologists of religion often examine identity, community, performance, and representation, while also reflecting on their own positionality. This reflexive stance allows scholars to engage not only with others but also with their own identities and backgrounds. This study offers an autoethnographic account of Pride Shabbat, a special service held each June to celebrate the intersection of Judaism and queerness. The service took place at Congregation Beit Simchat Torah (CBST) during its fiftieth anniversary celebrations. Since the 1970s, CBST has been recognized as one of the most prominent LGBTQ+ synagogues worldwide, providing spiritual and communal support to Jewish queer communities. Drawing on my participation in the June 2023 event, I identify differences between Israeli and American Jewish LGBTQ communities, including age dynamics, multigenerational perspectives, gendered power relations, and varying trajectories of queerness, religiosity, and national belonging. Symbolically, while diaspora communities are often perceived as looking toward Israel for meaning, this study suggests the reverse: the homeland can learn from diasporic queer Jewish practices. This inversion exposes tensions within transnational queer identity and highlights complex power relations between Israel and American Jewry. Furthermore, it underscores methodological value of autoethnography in revealing embedded subjectivities, ethical dilemmas, and situated knowledge within religious ethnographic research.

Dee Black

University of Edinburgh

Time Warp

We don't tend to think of our intimate partner struggles as rooted in the same problem responsible for climate collapse. But I am interested in the connection. My autoethnographic PhD, 'Gaslighting from an Animist Perspective', examines my own experience to discern some of the discourses

underlying what I call the 'Man versus Nature' project. Drawing on Val Plumwood's idea of an anthropocentric supremacism that links women with nature and inferiority, Man vs Nature is bent on dominating everything; there is nowhere its tenets don't reach. Its logics rely on un-making : it de-humanises the people it racialises, gender-ises, and disenfranchises; it depersonalises livestock, trees, rivers, mountains in order to justify its exploits. But it goes deeper still. Time and space themselves are at once weaponised and included on the list of that which is to be dominated and controlled. Coloniser gaslights us into believing that time is linear and unidirectional—the arrow of progress; infinite growth in a closed system. All space is his space; my time is his time. This story details how Man vs Nature has played out in my interpersonal struggles with men bent on un-making me, and how animist enchantment lives and breathes otherwise.

Lucinda Bolton,

Keele University

“Living in Nights: Sleep, Motherhood and the Longing to Be Known”

When a child is no longer a baby but still doesn't sleep, there is no language for what the parent endures. This critical, evocative autoethnography uses poetry to illuminate the loneliness, shame, and altered states of reality that emerge in a culture obsessed with productivity and the myth of the selfless mother. Drawing on lived experience of enforced insomnia, these poems explore what sleep deprivation does to connection: connection to self, to identity, and to a society that demands both efficiency and endless maternal giving. “Seeking: One Mum Friend, Night Shifts Preferred” captures the particular ache of 3am- the longing not for advice or judgement, but for a peer who simply recognises the tension between exhaustion and love. “Post Therapy Journaling” sits inside the frantic, fogged mind of a mother trying to hold the motherload together while therapy asks her to go deeper. Together, the poems ask: What is the cost of being unseen in your own home, in the night, for years? I will read both poems. Combined performance time: approximately five minutes.

Michelle Bradley

University of Edinburgh

Exploring Connections between Loss and Desire

This autoethnographic paper draws tentatively from themes emerging from my current doctoral inquiry into the therapeutic relationship. It draws on experiences of loss in human and more-than-human relationships. Family, place, self, and others. The paper explores connections between loss and desire. Traditionally, in psychotherapy discourse, desire is rooted in lack, in unmet childhood needs. However, desire, as conceptualised by Deleuze and Guattari, is a productive, forward-moving force which reaches towards the emergence of new connections, new realities, new life. In this paper I will tell brief stories of family and therapy that engage with these issues.

Tim Buescher

Independent

AdvanceRetreatSurrender

These poems are an early taster of new work on transgenerational effects of war in my family, based on ideas of epigenetic adaptations to trauma and repeating patterns of behaviour (Wollyn).

C

David Carless

University of the West of Scotland

The Hut: A film-based inquiry into yoga, consciousness and mental health

I have recently begun an autoethnographic inquiry into physical activity, embodied consciousness and mental health. This project builds on previous work to utilise of arts-based aesthetic forms of inquiry such as poetry, evocative storytelling, music and filmmaking. The study addresses two research questions: (1) How is in-the-moment consciousness experienced during the movements that comprise varied forms of physical activity? (2) How do these experiences interact with mental health/wellbeing both in-the-moment and over time? *The Hut* presents the first findings from the project in the form of a short film focussing on yoga.

John Cook

Independent Researcher

Visiting my younger self in London at a time of squatting, conflict and cooperation: the discomfort resulting from reconstructing my past

In this work I consider my personal life as an indie musician in relation to my cultural context in the novel and challenging setting of a squatter network in 1980s London. My autoethnographic approach foregrounds an attempt to reconstruct and make sense of my own personal past, but is complicated by my self-imposed notion of 'historical accuracy' and of being 'relevant'. As a consequence of the latter, I discuss the wider conceptual stakes of conflict and cooperation. Three stories are presented. My ongoing reflexivity, since 2020, about the "intersections between self and social life" and the notion that "autoethnography brings together the personal and the cultural" (Adams et al., 2021, 3) can be articulated as the following claim: I am a gamekeeper's son who has travelled a long way. There are two parts to this claim: (i) bottom-up agency, and (ii) epiphany. This presentation does not present a tidy story with a clear narrative arc, but instead invites audiences to sit with the discomfort of its incompleteness. It asks: How do we 'authentically' and 'accurately' document our own past whilst navigating memory, discomfort, relational ethics and uncertainty? I invite conference participants to comment productively on my presentation, observations and discomfort.

D

Jenny Dalzell

University of Warwick

Invited to watch: observing a parole hearing after homicide

For the first time, victims from across England and Wales can apply to observe parole board hearings, held to decide if an offender is safe to be released. These hearings are traditionally private affairs, marking a shift allowing victims and survivors the opportunity to access information about the offender and how the parole panel assesses risk. This paper provides an autoethnographic account of my experience of observing a parole board hearing. The national roll out of victim observations aims to enhance transparency, participation, public confidence and provide reassurance on the robustness of the process. These notions will be explored, as well as questions about the purpose of parole, emotional labour placed on families and the limitations of observation, which is pitched as a form of

inclusion, despite victims being offered no formal decision making power. The autoethnographic focus provides a lens through which to examine the emotional, procedural, and symbolic dimensions of observation, and to connect policy intent to lived experience.

Ann Delilkan

City University of New York

Scrub a Little Harder?

In this piece of poetry-prose, I explore the arc of my travels as an Object, beginning with my childhood roots in the UK, moving on to my youth in Asia, and then tracing my 36 year-long journey through the social jungle that is New York City.

Kirti Devnani

University of Edinburgh

Questioning the Assumption of Safety: A Critical Autoethnographic Exploration of Discriminatory Remarks and Boundary Violations in Counselling Supervision

Supervision within counselling training is often assumed to provide a safe and supportive space for a trainee's development. This study draws on critical autoethnography within a critical theory paradigm, adopting an intersectional standpoint position, to explore a trainee counsellor's experience of discriminatory remarks and boundary violations during a supervisory encounter. Beginning with the immediate bodily sense that something was wrong and the silence that followed, the research traces a process of reflecting on how power, hierarchy, and trainee vulnerability shape responses within supervision. Drawing on Winnicott's holding environment and impingement, it examines the paralysing, preverbal quality of distress, understanding compliance and silence as protective adaptations that conceal the true self. From a person centred perspective, the absence of empathic attunement and unconditional positive regard further compromised relational safety. By centring situated knowledge and attending to how race, gender, nationality, and trainee status intersect, this paper moves from the personal encounter outward to interrogate institutional complicity. It questions assumptions of supervisory safety, highlighting the danger of equating professional accreditation with ethical safety wherein university vetting processes may inadvertently confer a presumption of trustworthiness that is neither earned nor warranted.

Sarah Donaldson

University of Edinburgh

Holding Intention: A Narrative and Critical Autoethnography of Trauma and Responsibility

Sitting in the tension between critical and narrative autoethnography, this paper explores the institutional culture surrounding adverse events in NHS maternity care. Drawing on my experience as a midwife involved in a neonatal death, I examine how storytelling functions within midwifery to socialise practitioners into anticipated blame and scrutiny, long before an adverse event occurs. I argue that adverse events are not just clinical occurrences but institutionally produced experiences. They are shaped by a cultural, moral framework that positions investigations as blame-finding rather than learning, and isolates midwives at the centre to protect the collective. Through narrative autoethnography, I show how this culture operates through everyday storytelling and creates

narratives of good and bad midwives. Through critical autoethnography, I call for an end to blame culture that precedes the inevitable involvement in adverse events, to support midwives' wellbeing and potentially improve retention of midwives within the NHS. Utilising my experience raised complex ethical questions about ownership and confidentiality that I navigate throughout the work. While I doubt the NHS would accept autoethnography as evidence of change required, I feel this work speaks directly to individual midwives and healthcare practitioners navigating similar experiences.

Kitrina Douglas

University of West London

"Searching for slack water"

"Searching for slack water" – extract from Aesthetic inquiry through movement; attending to the consequences of physical immersion in the natural world and competitive sport.

E

Annalise Elliott

University of West London

Neuroquirky Connections: Lived Experience vs Diagnostic Criteria

This presentation examines how neuroquirky traits form a coherent internal picture that often clashes with external expectations, and how those mis connections become points for understanding the self, internal systems, and relationships. Through autoethnographic stories, it traces moments where sensory intensity, pattern driven reasoning, and literal communication created both friction and clarity. These stories reveal a consistent theme: what others misinterpret as difficulty is often an alternative way of being — a strategy for navigating a world designed for others. The narrative unfolds across three domains: experience, interaction, and interpretation. Experience explores the internal, lived reality of being neuroquirky. Interaction focuses on the social mismatches between reality and expectation, including language use, masking, and alternate communication styles. Interpretation shows, through storytelling, how these same traits become tools for advocacy, boundary setting, and navigating complex systems with honesty and structure. Rather than framing neuroquirky experience as deviation, the presentation positions it as a different way of connecting and perceiving — an alternative logic that reveals what others often overlook. The aim is for the audience to leave with a reframed understanding: neuroquirkiness is not a problem to solve but a way of being that, when understood, deepens how humans relate, communicate, and care for one another.

Annalise Elliott

University of West London

"Mother"

Jeanine Balzan Engerer

University of Malta

Narratives of Counselling: Exploring Youths' Stories of Creative Counselling in Adolescence aged 16 to 18" From My Diary to My Doctorate- Making sense of my adolescence

This proposed autoethnographic presentation explores the personal origins of my doctoral research title through a reflexive engagement with my adolescent lived experience. Drawing on personal diary entries and photographs taken at the age of sixteen, the narrative foregrounds themes of angst, confusion, insecurity, and impulsivity. Central to this narrative the role of dance will be brought out as it functioned as a coping mechanism at the time. These mediums will serve as an understanding of the complexity of emotions experienced at that age together with the search for identity and belonging. I intend to show the photographs through powerpoint presentation and read out the diary entries.

F

Bernadette Fitzgerald

University of Edinburgh

Agency in the Agency Job Economy

This piece explores the realities of a shifting job economy as society adapts to Artificial Intelligence. As automation and technological advancement continue to expand production, traditional roles are transforming and, in many cases, disappearing. When I moved to London in 2024, I found that my previous career experience no longer held the value it once had, while my recently earned degree seemed equally unremarkable within a changing labour market. As a result, I moved through myriad jobs—roles that felt less vulnerable to replacement—including serving dinners, painting walls, cleaning flats, and working long twelve-hour shifts alongside strangers whose paths briefly intersected with my own. Within this transient existence of working to survive, I often felt myself becoming like an object: a functional component within a larger economic machine. Woven throughout the work are threads of a poem that follows the journey of a piece of cargo, carrying goods and services from one place to another in fulfilment of its purpose. The work reflects on the human experience as a vessel seeking sustenance and survival, continually reshaping itself to meet the demands of the economy and the needs of those alongside it. Through this parallel between worker and cargo, the

Aly Foy

University of Cumbria

The Fox & The Dog: Folktale in Autoethnography

The Scottish folktale of The Fox & The Dog stories the theme of commitment versus freedom, root versus flow. I came to my PhD proposal with a background in storytelling and knowing that I would gain wisdom from this way of knowledge sharing. Having only just begun my PhD candidacy in March 2026, I am at the very beginning stages of understanding how I will use autoethnography to explore my research question “Why am I crying all the time?”. With Creative-Relational Inquiry and Writing-as-inquiry (Wyatt, 2018) as guiding methodologies I aim to follow autoethnographers in dissolving the boundary between ‘personal’ and ‘academic’ to try to learn experientially - though the tension between committing to a question and subject, and allowing myself freedom to follow my instincts has resulted in many conversations between The Fox & The Dog within my work. Weaving sections of my PhD proposal with Scottish folktale, I will open a conversation about how to embark upon a storied, personal, and academic journey of following my tears to experiences of learning, and how I might find flow whilst growing roots.

Paula Franciulli

University of São Paulo

Leaving Home to Find Oneself: An autoethnographical account of migration, work, and affection

This autoethnographical account addresses the author's decision to leave Brazil for four years, choosing Ireland as the first destination in a journey of self-knowledge. In 2002, at age 26, after being dismissed from a company where she experienced contradictions between professional fulfillment and low pay, and having accumulated eight years of experience in Human Resources, she feels the need for an existential turning point. Single and with few attachments, the dream of living abroad germinates, nourished by travel magazines and the image of Piazza di Spagna in Rome — a place that affectively captures her, also evoking her parents' Italian ancestry. However, the author rationalizes this dream: she justifies leaving by the need to learn English fluently, a recurring professional wound. Ireland is chosen as a pragmatic mediation — work and visa facilities — but also strategically: being in Europe, she would be closer to her dreamed Italy. Arriving in Dublin in March 2003, she faces material and linguistic challenges. The account shows how migration becomes a space for negotiating dreams, practical reason, and self-discovery.

G

Ken Gale and Jonathan Wyatt

University of Edinburgh

Encountering Pete(s) Centre for Creative-Relational Inquiry

Pete appears in our 'betweenings' - in our writings back and forth, during our phone conversations, whenever we meet - and has always done so, ever since, for over twenty years. Pete is Ken's friend. Pete accompanied Ken on the road trip around the United States in 1987, Pete and Ken met in the pub last week, Ken and Pete spoke over the phone last week. Pete, always Pete. Pete is ever-present - is ever-presencing - and Pete is always more-than-one. In humanist terms, we should say that there are, in fact, four Petes - four friends of Ken who happen to be called Pete and who make themselves felt. In this paper, however, we write our way into Pete as concept, into the way in which 'Pete-ing', perhaps, is a force, a flow that animates what happens in our collaborative writing and beyond, and has always done so. Pete as more-than-human engagement, as provocation, as haunting. We were and are never only two. Pete has always taken us out of ourselves into the what else. Only now, after all this time, do we turn to how writing is always already Pete(s)(-ing).

Ashley Gallimore

UWE

Horse Girls

This study focuses on human-horse relationships and explores the extent to which such relationships can shape individuals' identities. My research is autoethnographic in nature, as I have focussed on my own lived experiences in relation to horses and how such relationships have been shaping my multiple identities, including my sense of self as a therapist. I am the third generation of women in

my family whose identity had been continually negotiated through their relationships with horses and many of my childhood experiences are centred around horses alongside my mother and grandmother. Drawing on primary data collected through video footage, journaling and family photographs, I conducted thematic analysis to explore my relationship with horses, and the main themes that emerged to be salient were connection, wealth and social class and gender. I explored how these themes have been influencing my clinical practice, as well as their intergenerational and cultural impact on women's felt identities, such as those of myself, my mother and grandmother. This study adds to the body of research on human-horse relationships and sheds light on the importance of connection to the other through animals and nature, that can foster human connection and healing also in the therapy room.

Iris J. Gildea

University of St. Michael's College in the University of Toronto

Autoethnography of a witch: feminist phenomenology meets autoethnographic poetics in connections between history, spirituality, sexual violence, healing & belonging

My presentation focuses on the question: How can we understand complicated histories of power that intersect gender-based violence and diverse identities, as is the case with the history of the witch trials, if dominant practices of knowledge production continue to silence our bodies' experiences of gender-based violence? While popular spirituality names this silencing in connection to the trials as the 'witch wound,' academic scholarship continues to favor patriarchal and power-over knowledge structures which silence rather than reclaim. My presentation responds to this inquiry through mixed methodologies of autoethnographic poetics, feminist phenomenology and critical autoethnography. Doing so, my embodiment of earth-based spirituality and my being a survivor of childhood sexual violence confronts and engages with critical consideration of the history of witches. This experimental praxis brings embodied ritual onto the page and troubles the very basis of how ideologies of power are structured into the very frameworks of meaning making and interpretation. Doing so enacts an unsilencing that reveals connections between the past and present, spirituality and reclaiming, the earth and healing. The history of the 'witch' is allowed to shed old biases, honour those who were violated and killed, while creating new directions for reclaiming and healing.

Sheona Goodyear

University of Birmingham

The vessel: How serene encounter epiphanies sting

The vessel is real and representative. The inside glitters and hints at delicacy while outside has strength and appears timeworn. It holds memories and represents transformation. It reflects how the past can show up and confront you in the present and how the act of translating epiphanies on the backs of epiphanies into prose and then poetry can unpick default interpretations and release tacit knowing. 'Less is more' (Denzin, 2014, p.78) construction reveals the marks of making yet finely traced sgraffito is almost obscured beneath layers of gloss. The story is of survival; of intrafamilial child sexual abuse; of being confronted by a location unexpectedly linked to the perpetrator and of a surprise encounter in that location which enabled positive growth. My research troubles media messages that children are sexually abused by strangers, monsters, others. My conversations with women survivors revealed deep, rich, nuanced details of their time at primary school after sexual

abuse by men who were or felt like family. I share illustrated, found poetry and processes which incite and help process the epiphanies arising from insider research. The vessel distils the essence of a moment of living experience. It is an artifact representing the quest for understanding.

H

Bethan Habron-James

Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester & Bangor University

Voices present and past

I always knew that my doctoral research was about connections. As a musician hadn't I always been in the business of making connections? Body to instrument, sound to body, movement to sound, movements in space, self to others... And of course I knew about the connection inherent in my pedagogy and practice (of Dalcroze Eurhythmics): the famous bodymind connection. But as I tried to draw my inquiry to a close I felt a resistance, a strange push-pull, to speak and to not speak, to know and to not know, to hear and to not hear, to tell and not to tell. Serendipitous (re-)discoveries set in motion a cascade of re-connections, with a poet, some daffodils, a silent labourer and my long lost grandmother Anne. I invite you to listen in to our encounter, through word, sound and gesture.

Manfath Jabin Haque

Sylhet, Bangladesh

Writing An Incomplete Story: Autoethnographic Reflection, Creative Practice, and Connections in Representing Bangladeshi Women's Lived Experiences

This paper explores how creative writing and autoethnographic reflection create meaningful connections between lived experience, creative practice, and feminist inquiry. Drawing on my MA creative-critical dissertation, *An Incomplete Story*, I examine how a fictional narrative inspired by the lived experiences of a woman I knew became a space to explore the socio-cultural realities of women's lives in Bangladesh. The story transforms lived experience into fiction, allowing individual experiences to speak to broader questions of gender, power, and resilience.

The accompanying critical reflection adopts an autoethnographic approach to examine my position as writer and researcher. It considers how personal engagement with the subject shaped my creative decisions, encouraged reflexivity, and informed my interpretation of the narrative. Feminist perspectives provide the analytical framework for examining domestic violence, patriarchal authority, childhood trauma, and the cultural expectations surrounding marriage and women's roles in Bangladeshi society.

The paper argues that creative-critical practice establishes connections between personal encounter and scholarly analysis, enabling nuanced understandings of experiences often silenced or difficult to represent through conventional academic discourse. It demonstrates how autoethnographic reflexivity enriches creative writing as research while opening dialogue across personal, cultural, and academic contexts.

Kiyoka Hayashi

Keio University

A Sense That It Is Okay to Exist: Within the Cycle That Begins with Chickens and Vegetable Scraps

In spring 2020, I was a second-year university student. University life had moved entirely online. Classes, club activities, and conversations with friends all took place through screens. Yet those days were not simply empty. I connected with friends overseas and immersed myself in research and projects. Looking back at photos from that time, I can see myself smiling. Still, I felt a quiet loneliness. Unless I kept speaking, responding, and making my presence visible, I felt as though I was not really there. My place in those relationships seemed to depend on continually showing that I existed. Around that time, I became drawn to a friend's life among mountains, fields, and animals. Through her introduction, I spent a week as a live-in intern at a farm with chickens and vegetables. There, vegetable scraps fed the chickens; their eggs returned to the table; their droppings nourished the soil; and vegetables grown from that soil also returned to the table. Within this cycle, even my smallest actions did not disappear. They were received into the lives of other beings. This presentation explores how students in the online era may lose, and perhaps regain, a sense that it is okay to exist.

Peter Hone

Northumbria University

The Scared Child. An Autoethnographical Journey of Cultural Awakening

This research, presented as an autoethnography, is grounded in a reflexive exploration of my personal journey; one marked by being directly involved in and struggle with the complexities of cultural understanding. The motivation for this research has evolved from a personal struggle trying to understand and make sense of cross-cultural and business organisation dynamics.

This narrative style research starts with my childhood and maps key social-cultural events across four relevant phases in my life and uses the rich data to understand the reasoning behind the cultural assumptions highlighted in this research. Some of those key socio-cultural experiences along this path are examined through the interpretive framework of Mary Douglas's Cultural Theory (DCT), which provides a lens for analysing the interplay between individual agency and collective norms.

Methodologically, this research utilises a reflexive, interpretivist lens guided by Heewon Chang's framework for transformative autoethnography. A key finding is the identification of the phenomenon that is the "scared child"—a construct that emerges paradoxically from the very social structures designed to offer protection. This research also highlights that humility emerges as a foundational requirement, both for the conduct of reflexive research as well as for delivering more harmonious socio-cultural interactions

K

Sabina Fathima Khan

Independent Scholar

Storytelling as Attempts at Connection: A Strange but Familiar Account

This presentation explores autoethnographic storytelling as a queer method of knowing and ethical practice. Drawing on personal journalling about everyday encounters of silencing - conversational signifiers that organise me as Other - I share narratives that I often hold back: stories of desire,

gendered embodiment, misrecognition, and the quiet labour of moving through spaces that cannot contain me. I offer two 'strange accounts', in poetic prose, to deconstruct ordinary scenes where voice is interrupted, misheard, or rendered incomprehensible. Neither offers explanation nor closure, using repetition, ambiguity, and shifting address to hold the ethical care of telling whilst considering what it means to share personal stories that feel too risky and the responsibilities that accompany making them public. The narratives attend to what lingers and meaning remains unsettled - identities blur and coherence is gently undone. Language does not explain the self but troubles it - resisting being made useful, readable, or whole. Embodying intersecting identities, the narrative evokes therapist, client, friend, stranger, researcher selves - revealing subjectivity as relational and vulnerable to power. Storytelling is explored here not as confession, but as a practice of listening, refusal, and care: a way of staying with queerness, uncertainty and speaking without harming.

Rubina Khatun

University of Hertfordshire

Darn! Exploring trauma, repair and connection through creative practices.

I am writing an Indigenous/Native autoethnography exploring my experiences as a British Bengali Muslim Trainee Clinical Psychologist and am examining (de)coloniality within doctoral training. I will share some events that I have encountered during training and invite you to lean into art and traditional experiences of healing that is held within my cultural heritage. Specifically, Bengali's sew! Sewing together represents a decolonial action towards healing and highlights the need to engage in creative modes of being with others because conventional roots to seek justice are too often not available to all. I will share a bit about where I am in my research and speak about Unani medicine (Bangladeshi healing). I will offer you the opportunity to make your mark on my research and will present fabric which has been already treated using natural dyes (from food waste from a regenerative market garden) and Unani medicine. I will create a drawing on the fabric that map the sites of damage, and these wounds will be torn into and then be carefully darned back together by our collective hands. No prior sewing skills are necessary. We embrace the messy!

Trude Klevan & Knut Tore Sælør

University of South-Eastern Norway

Prescriptions and disruptions: Autoethnography vs. the Central Scrutinizer

How do you write a book chapter about autoethnography when asked to make it fit a strict handbook format? We find that in academic work, there is often an invisible, yet powerful co-worker lurking in the shadows. Inspired by Frank Zappa, we have named this character The Central Scrutinizer. In this presentation, we explore what happens when autoethnography enters—and simultaneously disrupts—the orderly, prescriptive expectations of the academic handbook and the often-hidden rules enforced by the Scrutinizer. Drawing on a collaborative writing process, we ask: what does autoethnography do when it encounters the central scrutinizer of academia—the explicit and implicit rules governing what counts as legitimate research, and how knowledge should be written and shared? Through a dialogical approach, we explore how subjectivity, doubt and relational experience can function not only as valid components, but as driving forces in knowledge production. This positions autoethnography as something much more than a method – it is a way of being, co-existing and resisting. And who knows, maybe the Scrutinizer will make an appearance with us at the ICAE?

Simone Kreher

Fulda University of Applied Sciences

Telling a Story – Creating Connections – Playing a Piece of Music

As a sociologist and auto-ethnographer who, like me, grown up in a non-academic environment, have been educated at an east German university and undergone the reunification, I needed to engage in 'connections' half of my lifetime. Considering that connections don't emerge out of the blue, we are supposed to craft them. We all initiate connections, we love them, we hate them, we maintain them, we connive them, we destroy or hide them, but we couldn't ignore them. One story, two pictures and a piece of music should contribute to our work on connections because they merge past with present and future.

L

Chloe Norton Lamb

University of West London

"Road to Kona"

"So... how did the triathlon go?"

I opened my mouth to answer. Then I realised the question was aimed at my husband.

"My race day was excellent," he said, performing innocence, "I got to drink beer on the sidelines. It was my wife who was racing."

"Of course! You just always assume it's the men, don't you?"

This wasn't the first time this had happened...

Women are participating in triathlon in growing numbers, yet their experiences, motivations, and journeys remain largely untold. Drawing on my own and other women's stories, this presentation explores the gender tensions that shape women's journeys in the sport. I share three short stories and invite you to join the conversation.

Jenn Layton & Ann Lehmann-Kuit

Western Sydney University (Ann) University of Nottingham (Jenn)

Autoethnographic digital collaborations from across the globe- connecting neurodivergent 'neurokin'

Exploring connections between self, subject and place, Ann and Jenn weave words, melody, and soundscapes to think through a digitally established multifaceted relationship. Using asynchronous and synchronous digital collaboration Ann and Jen's collaborations have interspersed their shared personal and professional special interests (music, nature, mental health, neurodivergence). Throughout this process, they have experienced connection, vulnerability and creative risk taking which has included narrative and dialogical flow states. Their arts-based presentation shares insider knowledge of their experiences using collaborative performative ethnography to deepen understanding and gain new insights related to their respective PhD research projects. Both Ann and Jenn are multiply neurodivergent (AuDHD/ Bipolar/ +) drawing directly on their own insider knowledge in their research.

Mia Livingston

University of Edinburgh

Here, the territory is rage

What becomes knowable when the therapy session—its silences, its imagery, its moments of inexplicable shift—becomes a site of relational epistemology? Drawing on a year of intensive somatic psychotherapy, encountered as a qualified practitioner with a longstanding Zen Buddhist formation, I trace how healing from complex trauma unfolds: not through the resolution of traumatic content, but through a transformed relationship to what persists. Here, that territory is rage: its prohibition, its disguises, and what is found when it is finally given its full dimensions. The somatic unease that precedes language, the imaginal that surfaces unbidden, the atmospheric shift that signals something has moved—this is the terrain where somatic psychotherapy and contemplative practice converge. Fully real, fully felt, but resistant to the forms of visibility that dominant systems of knowledge require. The body is re-inhabited and the isolation around it dissolves.

Yang Liu

University of Edinburgh

Names on the Tombstone: The Living and the Dead

Personal names are often taken for granted in everyday life. However, they extend beyond the individual. It is widely believed that names can be decisive in shaping one's life course. Consequently, parents often approach the act of naming with great seriousness, sometimes consulting fortune tellers or literary sources when naming their children. Personal names also function as instruments of surveillance and subjugation (Palsson, 2014), reflecting the operation of biopolitics in modern society. One must possess a name to be legally registered within administrative systems so that their existence is confirmed.

This autoethnographic inquiry seeks to explore the arrangement of names on tombstones in Chinese culture by examining how my own name was positioned on the wreaths and tombstones of my two grandmothers. Within the discourse of death and funerary practices, names inscribed on wreaths and engraved on tombstones form a bond between the living and the deceased. They not only carry emotional value but also produce family politics—for instance, determining who has the authority to decide whose name is inscribed, in what order, and for whom. Names thus construct both belonging and exclusion, a dynamic that is particularly evident on tombstones, where names are inherently relational.

Elena Lomas

University of Southern Queensland

Analogue/handmade Collage as Reflective Space in Creative Practice: An Autoethnographic Exploration and Model

Analogue/handmade collage can be vital to autoethnography because it works directly with embodied, affective experience, not just language. It allows artists to assemble, and reassemble

found materials, making the “messy” dimensions of lived experience visible and open to critique as well as self-reflection. Analogue/handmade collage can disrupt linear autobiography, making the familiar strange and enabling new narrative possibilities through its visual (re)arrangements. This submission for the International Conference of Autoethnography explores analogue/handmade collage as a form of reflective practice that makes thinking visible and supports daily creations. As my contribution to the conference, I will introduce analogue collage work completed in the last two years. Drawing on my PhD practice-based research project, I will discuss how my daily analogue/handmade collages with cutting, assembling, and juxtaposing images and text can externalise inner experience, surface tacit knowledge, foster critical self-awareness and introduce playfulness in everyday life. Analogue/handmade collage offers a tactile mode of inquiry that slows perception, encourages pattern recognition, and enables creatives to reframe experiences through visual metaphors. When integrated with brief written or verbal reflections, collage can prompt questioning of material choices, highlight underlying values and assumptions, and link studio time to broader theoretical and contextual concerns.

M

Jesvir Kaur Mahil

University for Life

Phoenix Rising in Gaza

'Phoenix Rising in Gaza' is an ongoing autoethnographic project grounded in sustained online conversations between myself and international friends located in the UK, Gaza, Egypt, Turkey, and elsewhere during the current genocidal war. Framed by the conference theme of “Connections”, this paper positions connection not as metaphor but as lived, ethical practice under conditions of rupture, displacement, and ongoing existential threat. Drawing on over 35 recorded discussions conducted over a two-year-period between July 2024 and 2026, the project foregrounds relational autoethnography as a form of ethical witnessing. Connection emerges as survival work: connection to land through memory, to identity through storytelling and creativity, to community through digital co-presence, and to hope through shared meaning-making. Participants repeatedly invoke the metaphor of the phoenix, articulating renewal not as recovery from trauma but as collective endurance within the trauma, attempting to rise from the ashes. By situating my own positionality within these dialogues, I examine the tensions of listening, care, and responsibility when research unfolds in real-time. In contrast to individualistic autoethnography, the 'Phoenix Rising in Gaza' project uses a relational, dialogic approach shaped by reciprocity, accountability, and resistance.

Katy Mahood

UWE

Murmurations of the mind: creative writing, internal family systems and the scattered self

The practice of creative writing offers space for connection between inside and outside, past and present, self and other. Dollinger and Dollinger (2017) propose that the self can be imprinted on creative work, uncovered within it or constructed through it. In this auto-ethnographic exploration, I propose there is no clear distinction between self and writing. Within a scattered self, connections are conflictual and dissonant. Using emergent themes of illness, motherhood and murmuration from IFS therapy and my creative practice, I offer a multi-dimensional insight to the scattered self. By

sharing some stories I've written and some that I've lived, I curate a murmuring understanding of the relationship between creative writing, talking therapy and the scattered self.

Carol Maluleke

Henley Business School

Leadership Reputation within South African Community-Based Organisations: An Analytical Autoethnographic Exploration

This paper reflects on the evolving methodological journey of a doctoral study exploring leadership reputation within a South African community-based organisation (CBO). Initially conceived through a broader ethnographic lens, the study increasingly moved towards analytical autoethnography as a means of engaging more critically with lived organisational experience, insider positionality, and relational leadership dynamics. Situated within an interpretivist epistemology and relational ontology, the research examines how leadership reputation is constructed, negotiated, and experienced through everyday interactions, communal trust, ethical accountability, and stakeholder relationships. Drawing on Ubuntu Philosophy and Leadership Reputation Theory, the study positions leadership reputation as a socially constructed and culturally embedded phenomenon rather than a fixed organisational attribute. The paper reflects on the opportunities and tensions associated with conducting research from an insider position within a community-based organisation. Particular attention is given to reflexivity, relational ethics, polyvocality, and the balance between personal experience and analytical interpretation. The discussion considers how analytical autoethnography can contribute to contextually grounded leadership scholarship while simultaneously challenging conventional distinctions between researcher, participant, and organisational member. In doing so, the paper contributes to ongoing conversations regarding methodological innovation, relational inquiry, and the role of lived experience in leadership and organisational research.

Mahreen Mamoon

Purdue University

(Un)Mothering in Academia: A Filmed Autoethnographic Installation Walkthrough

This project presents a filmed autoethnographic installation walkthrough examining (Un)Mothering in Academia as a condition shaped by institutional demands, cultural stigma, transnational mobility, and the moral regulation of maternal identity. This project emerged from an ongoing dissertation on transnational maternal separation and reworks narrative data into exhibition-styled themes (stations). These themes are curated through iterative engagement with memories, images, and spaces that allow the research to move beyond representation into an embodied, spatial, and affective mode of inquiry and public engagement. Through a guided visual narrative, the video leads viewers across a series of curated stations consisting of photographs, video-call archives, fragments of text messages, and poetic voiceover to trace how maternal presence (or absence) becomes fragmented across continents when brown mothers leave their children to pursue higher education. Each station is composed of vignette-based narration interwoven with theoretical reflection, situating lived experience within feminist critiques of intensive mothering and institutional care structures for international Ph.D. students, where institutions sustain belonging through normalized forms of separation. The walkthrough concludes with a speculative "Mother Center," inviting viewers to reimagine care as structural and inclusive, rather than an individual responsibility.

Harriet Marks

University of Plymouth

Creative Self-Expression: Connecting with Autism through Creative Methodology

During my PhD, I have completed 27 qualitative email interviews with autistic people who identify as women and/or autistic people Assigned Female at Birth (AFAB), seeking to understand their lived experiences and perceptions. A key theme found in my data was self-expression and communication - this includes: communication differences/struggles, loneliness, community, and self-expression through appearance such as clothing, makeup, jewellery, tattoos, hair, piercings, goth/emo and (non-)feminine appearances. Participants were encouraged to share their stories via typed emails but I also asked if they would like to make and send anything creative which conveys how they feel about being autistic. Some participants sent me creative data which included poetry, photography, collage, writing in an article format and crafting. My paper explores these creative responses and the art of autistic expression, shining a light on how autistic people might connect with the world around them. I believe I am likely to be autistic myself and I often felt moved by what my participants shared - my paper also covers my connections to what was shared with me. If selected to present at ICAE2026, my paper will explore creativity, self-expression and connecting with autism through creative methodology.

Dione Mifsud

University of Malta

Multiple walls in limited spaces

Multiple enmeshed relationships, multiple roles, problems with confidentiality, a desperate attempt at trying to position Maltese counselling by giving it an identity without making it an island cut off from international professional ethics and research, have been the areas which presented themselves to me, in all their different shades of colours in my career. This autoethnographic presentation will attempt to chronicle the trials and tribulations that I had to go through as a counsellor, academic and Head of Department managing different kinds of relationships in a context of very limited geographical space. Issues emanating from professional boundary management, managing friends, and friends of friends as well as handling appropriate and inappropriate requests made by persons who feel that they are entitled simply because they are acquaintances became the order of the day. This resulted in high anxiety and burnout and a toll on mental and physical health. This story will be narrated in a mix of narrative methods, including poetic writing and stanza form.

Edwina Morris**"Nurse!"**

Poem

Mihoko Motooka

University of the Ryukyus

The Pain I Felt in Transitioning from a Childcare Worker to a Faculty Member at a Childcare Training College: Slowly Healing and Becoming a "Milieu"

I could not support my colleagues' attempt to force students into their mold of a childcare worker and exclude those who couldn't keep up. It was precisely because I had been a childcare worker that I wanted to place a high priority on nurturing students with care. However, this earned me the resentment of my colleagues, and I found myself isolated. So, this past April, I moved all by myself from Hiroshima, Japan—where I had been living—to Okinawa, Japan, 1,000 kilometers away. That's because Okinawa has long been a distant place that I've held dear. And once again, I took a job training childcare workers and teachers. The subtropical climate, the beautiful natural scenery, and the kind-hearted people are warming and healing my wounded heart. Right here, right now, I want to sing, "Take your time," set to the melody of Okinawa. I don't want to just find healing in Okinawa; I want to feel the island more deeply to become a "milieu" (Augustin Berque)—a reciprocal relationship where the environment and I constantly shape each other. (This work was supported by JSPS KAKENHI Grant Number 26K16719.)

Jess Moriarty and Vanessa Marr

University of Brighton

Mothers and Fairy Tales: A collaborative autoethnographic account of our experience as mothers who work in academia

The process of telling and sharing stories can be transformational and empowering, allowing for a more expansive and liberated self. As two white female academics and mothers, privileged in some regards but oppressed in others, we have found that autoethnography enables us to critique and resist but also celebrate and value the juggle of professional and domestic life. In this presentation, we employ a collaborative autoethnographic account and a method of storying ourselves that:

- is about women and can be used by women
- does not oppress women
- develops feminist perspectives that challenge dominant intellectual traditions

We identify a playful approach to storying ourselves in our research that has developed our connection with each other, offering a safe space in our professional lives to discuss our lived experiences as mothers and academics - juggling our time and always feeling guilty – that also offers a critique of the relentless pressure in HE to do more, be more and produce more. Our method of storying ourselves as reimagined characters from established fairy tales and myths (Marr & Moriarty 2021, Moriarty & Marr 2019) involves mutual respect.

O

Yoshiko Ohno,

The University of Osaka

Soft Serve in Midwinter: A Poetic Autoethnography of Living After Suicide Loss

This presentation explores an autoethnographic narrative of bereavement following a spouse's suicide, focusing on embodied grief, relationality, and the fragile re-emergence of a will to live. Through a literary essay, *Soft Serve in Midwinter*, I trace my experience of acute loss and displacement, and my temporary relocation to a rural community in Ehime, Japan. The narrative centers on a journey to a self-help group for suicide bereavement, accompanied by a psychiatrist who practices relational, community-based care. Rather than representing recovery as linear, this work attends to moments of rupture, sensory experience, and interpersonal encounters—such as shared

food, silence, and the witnessing presence of others—that subtly reconfigure isolation. The essay foregrounds the tension between a persistent desire for death and the unexpected emergence of the words “I want to live,” not as resolution but as a fleeting, embodied event. Methodologically, this study situates autoethnography as both inquiry and intervention, where storytelling becomes a site of meaning-making and relational repair. It invites reconsideration of care beyond clinical frameworks, highlighting the role of everyday acts and human connection in sustaining life at the edge of despair.

Michal Ornan-Ephratt

University of Haifa

Israel Dyslexia Is in the Details: An Autoethnography of a Senior Adult Dyslexic

This autoethnography stems from my life-long experience coping with dyslexia. Alongside similarities to younger dyslexics, we senior dyslexics—rarely targeted in studies on dyslexic adults—carry unique experiences: I attended school before awareness to dyslexia, systematic diagnosis and support were available and before the computer era and the accessibility options it offers. Despite lacking practical and emotional support I ended up being a professor. I would doubtlessly be considered a success. But while studies on “successful dyslexics” portray dyslexia as a gift, they overshadow the details of the tedious, endless, daily struggle and effort I still experience attaining basic tasks. To impart my insider experiences, I break down coping with dyslexia in real-life into eleven categories. Each category opens with scenes illustrating my personal experience (auto), succeeded by a discussion incorporating excerpts from the experiences of other dyslexics and relevant academic literature (ethno). The title of each such category iconically enacts my dyslexic symptoms (graphic). I conclude pointing to a meta-autoethnographic level: dyslexia’s exceptional merge of the personal (auto) phase: challenges and experiences; the cultural (ethno) phase: professionals, family and peers diagnosing, accommodating or stigmatising the dyslexic and the graphic phase: inherent to the dyslexic’s difficulties with reading and writing.

Princess Oyewale-Orire

University of Malta

Wearing the Mask: Black African Sub-Saharan Nurses, Belonging, and the Cost of Connection

Black African Sub-Saharan (BASS) nurses are keeping Malta's healthcare system running. Yet their professional lives, the daily negotiations of identity, language, belonging, and survival, remain largely invisible. This presentation draws on my master's dissertation, an autoethnographic narrative inquiry in which I positioned myself as the fifth voice alongside four registered BASS nurses: Amara, Kofi, Zola, and Juma. I grew up in Malta, trained here as a nurse, and I still adapt every day. That lived position is what made this study both possible and necessary. Five narratives emerged: wearing professional masks to survive; facing discrimination with little recourse; being excluded through language, daily and quietly; building resilience at personal cost; and navigating careers largely alone. At the heart of all five is the theme of connection, its presence, its absence, and what it costs when it must be earned rather than given. BASS nurses connect to their patients, their work, and each other. But connection to the system itself remains conditional and fragile. This is the first autoethnographic study of Black African nurses conducted within the Faculty of Health Sciences, Department of Nursing at the University of Malta. It will not be the last.

P

Alexandra Pitt

SOAS and UWS

Every Time I Flip an Egg: Connecting with Ghosts

When my mother died, I kept a scrapbook she hand-crafted as a young woman and it forms a record of her adventures hitchhiking down the Fjords of Norway. It was from a time before I existed. It evokes affection, pride, and curiosity but these days it lives quietly and obscurely, hidden away in my cupboard. Over a decade on, it is not this scrapbook, but my mother's breadknife I cherish the most. It is just an ordinary breadknife with a plastic handle and I kept it purely because I did not have one.

"I wish I had kept more everyday items," I told my friend, "I think of Mum every time I slice a loaf."

"Me too. For me, it's every time I flip an egg."

This shared embodied experience of hauntological objects raises questions regarding what it means to not only sustain thoughts of those we have lost but to create and renew different connections with the dead. Through autoethnographic storying I explore diverse ways I have built connections with those I have lost. I interrogate the nature and purpose of connecting with the dead in a life lived among the living but surrounded by ghosts after extensive bereavement.

Nadia Portelli

University of Malta

2.9 Million Connections

Performance narratives in sport are typically dominated by ideals of speed, winning, and ranking. These narratives privilege controlled, efficient, and victorious bodies, reinforcing narrow definitions of what constitutes a "successful" athletic performance. This autoethnographic account examines how such norms can be unsettled through the visibility of alternative embodied experiences. Drawing on the completion of the TDS race (Sur les Traces des Ducs de Savoie), it focuses on a finish that did not conform to conventional expectations of athletic form. After prolonged exertion, the runner crossed the finish line visibly fatigued and physically compromised. A video of this moment circulated widely on social media, reaching 2.9 million views and eliciting diverse responses, predominantly admiration, alongside concern and judgment. Through narrative and poetic representation, this work highlights how audiences recognised and celebrated resilience, endurance, vulnerability, and humanity over speed and technical perfection. The widespread engagement with this moment suggests that meanings of performance in endurance sport are not fixed but open to challenge. This account invites a reconsideration of dominant performance ideals by foregrounding embodied effort and lived experience, demonstrating how "non-ideal" performances can expand what is valued and celebrated in sport.

Q

Aqeel Qureshi

Keio University

Spring Falls on All — Branches Grow Short and Long: A Deliberative Autoethnography of Sado and Salah

What does it mean to be connected? In everyday life, we are constantly connected—to our phones, to others' opinions, to our past and imagined futures—yet such connections often leave us anxious and divided. Words and labels such as “Muslim,” “Japanese,” or “foreigner” can create distance, even when nothing else has changed. This thesis explores connection through a deliberative autoethnography of Japanese Sado (the Way of Tea) and the Islamic Salah (the 5 daily prayers). In the tea room, where words recede and attention settles on shared gestures and materials—earth, water, and plant—I experienced a quiet shift. Rather than connecting to something new, I was reminded that I was already part of a greater whole. Yet connection among people alone is fragile; it easily returns to division. Learning Arabic reshaped this insight. Salah, often translated as “prayer,” carries the sense of connection—not as a distant ritual, but as a return to what sustains us. I suggest two paths: through the removal of words, we remember connection; through the deepening of words, we rediscover it. Connection is not produced, but remembered. So now, what are you connected to? What am I connected to?

S

Sacha DBK

University of Brighton

(Dis)connections of a non binary, transmasculine genderwright: reflecting my intersectional, gender-refined body into the world

Playing on the idea of a genderwright (a writer of transgender, expert through their own lived experience), I explore the role of autoethnographic writing in connecting the disparate parts of my intersectional identity and my gender-refined body. This is an autoethnographic process of expressing my wholeness as a working-class, non binary, trans masculine, white passing, bicultural person. Feeling connected to autoethnography through my pen on paper, I then explore how I am faced with acts of casual transphobia that seek to disrupt my very acts of writing. I examine the disconnection and separation I feel from the whole (and dominant systems of oppression) that David Bohm, Judith Butler, Kimberle Crenshaw and others describe. Finally, I show how I weave my ways of being into this world, endlessly connecting and disconnecting with humans and non-humans who intersect with my intersections. This is a spoken piece presented live online. It is 5-8 minutes long, depending on the conference requirements. I welcome feedback from participants or panel on the piece, as this is part of my learning and honing my craft.

Pâmela Damilano dos Santos

University of São Paulo

Dwelling in borderlands: weaving psychological care amidst differences

As a Brazilian psychologist and researcher, I share my clinical experience dwelling in the borderlands that emerge when rigid borders between different worlds are moved beyond and inhabited with care — across interdisciplinary, cultural, socio-economic, and ethnic-racial differences. I have been dwelling in borderlands throughout my life, as in my clinical training in psychology. Since 2019, I have offered psychological care to Indigenous people, responding to Indigenous students at the University of São Paulo (USP), Brazil, seeking culturally sensitive support. To meet growing demand directed to the Rede Indígena (a USP extension service established in 2012), we founded a psychotherapy working group within it. I serve as supervisor and volunteer psychologist of this group. My trajectory testifies to the emergence of this service, which transforms the university and many lives, including my own. My clinical training has been shaped through dialogue with Indigenous perspectives, orienting my practice towards valuing difference, inspired by the biodiversity of Indigenous

territories. This artisanal weaving of a clinical practice engaged with diversity constitutes my being and my psychological work wherever I go, crossed and inhabited by these multiple voices that form me, moving through different cultural contexts.

Knut Tore Sælør

University of Southeastern-Norway

I'm not stupid

In this poem, titled "I'm not stupid", I reflect on my connections to my mother and the welfare state, and how these connections are beginning to change as she grows older.

Hanna Schweigert

University of Sussex

Family, Loss, and Anticipatory Grief: A Retrospective Autoethnographic Analysis of Terminal Illness's Impact on the Family

For my undergraduate degree at Sussex University, I completed my first autoethnography. Through my studies, I was inspired by lecturers Susie Scott and Jamie Barnes, who exposed me to micro-sociological and phenomenological aspects of sociological research. As the title suggests, my research explores my experience within the family during my mother's active and ongoing terminal illness, analysed within symbolic interactionist and critical frameworks. I began the process passionately, as the experience has opened my eyes to the bleak reality of embodying both mortality and disability within an increasingly fractured neoliberal society. Conducting an autoethnography allowed me to cathartically analyse themes of chronic sorrow, impacts of neoliberalism on terminal illness, and ways of meaning-making. I attempted to encompass not only the precarity, grief, trauma, invisibility, neglect, burden of care, personal responsibility, but also the joy, spirituality, love, and the changing of core selves, which were experienced simultaneously. My work falls within "connections" as I explore the vital role of human connection, empathy and consideration in shaping the end of life and the family members who are forced to live through and carry these experiences.

Viwe Sigenu

Independent

When Words Will Not Come: Autoethnography, Stuttering, and the Closed Door of Employment in South Africa

This autoethnographic paper examines twenty years of navigating stuttering, higher education, and chronic unemployment in post-apartheid South Africa. Through embodied memory and critical disability theory, the narrative interrogates how fluency functions as an unspoken gatekeeping mechanism in professional spaces. Despite holding a master's degree and meeting formal meritocratic expectations, the author's repeated exclusion from graduate-level employment reveals how dysfluency is routinely misread as a lack of competence, credibility, or intellectual capacity. The paper traces key moments across two decades from the first university interview where stuttering eclipsed demonstrated academic ability, to the cumulative psychological, economic, and existential consequences of persistent rejection. Concepts such as testimonial injustice, ableism, cultural capital, and crip futurity illuminate how structural discrimination becomes embedded in everyday interactions, hiring practices, and institutional norms. Situated within South Africa's multilingual and unequal labour landscape, the narrative highlights how disability intersects with race, class, and voice

to shape access to opportunity. Autoethnography is presented as both method and resistance: a means of naming structural violence that is often obscured in quantitative accounts of employment. The paper calls for a re-examination of fluency-based gatekeeping and for more inclusive understandings of competence in contemporary professional life.

Jane Speedy

University of Bristol

Painting matters

Exploring painting as a slow meditative process of becoming / rewilding/ re/ thinking and re/ pinking what matters ... in/on/ of this damaged planet ...

Niel Stander

University of the West of Scotland

Taking a Question on the Run

The title of my draft thesis is *Running Towards Belonging: An Autoethnography of Transformation through Ultra(trail)running*. This title represents many aspects of my life: ultrarunning, discovering belonging, autoethnography, and transforming through the process. Since writing and submitting a manuscript to *The Journal of Autoethnography*, titled *A Future Viva: Exploring the 'Done' While Doing* (Standar, 2026, in print), I have also written a methodology chapter for my thesis in which I explore doing-the-doing. What is the doing? The doing is running, writing autoethnographically, transforming, and belonging. The process may sound cyclical, like listening to one of my favourite Roxette songs – *How Do You Do!* (Roxette, 1992) – on repeat by rewinding a cassette tape, yet it is messy, convoluted, sometimes conflated, and... like life itself. Doing the doing involves taking a question on the run with me, engaging with it like I would with a running buddy, and learning from it. Like training for an ultramarathon itself, working with the questions on a run demands consistency, bracketing (van Manen, 2016) and resisting the urge to give up. It is methodological, transformational, and performative. It requires practice, attention, and self-compassion. The questions become process, structure, and content... but before that, they become belonging.

V

Amanda Moore Voelker

University of Edinburgh

The Dark Swifts Will Return: An autoethnography of connection without enclosure after totalizing religion

I learned the word in Spanish the day before I moved to Madrid: *vencejo*—in English, *swift*—the dark birds whose screams are heard throughout the city as they dive and twirl through the air. Their freedom, their lightness, seemed to match my own new, hard-won freedom from totalizing religion. There, connection to the group had been contingent on fixing my identity to the one prescribed. Now, I felt lonely, my identity was unstable, but the feeling of lightness was unmatched. Every morning and evening I watched the swifts swooping past my balcony as if to say hello; a connection inviting expansion and offering just enough ground to keep me from falling. And then they left, migrated,

something I should have expected, but had foolishly assumed their permanence. The grief of their loss a clear indication I had taken my ground from creatures defined by flight, clinging to this connection as an anchor. This autoethnographic meditation dwells in the space between emergence from a system of rigid relationships contingent on compliance and the tentative, stumbling attempts to form connections without closure, where the space for becoming remains open, and ground need only be temporary.

W

Pascale Waschnig

University of west London

“Yesterday”

Memory holds a special and unpleasant place for families of missing people. Unlike bereavement, disappearance suspends memory between present and absence. The past is more than just remembered; it is constantly revisited in quest of answers, comfort, and connection. Memory becomes a way to keep relationships alive. It is about the desire to return, if only for a moment, to the life that existed before everything changed, when there was a before and after.

This text is from my autoethnographic PhD which explores the difficulties families of missing people encounter when they are met with undertone of dismissal, from embarrassment, helplessness to disdain and detachment by a clinician. It is about the rejection of the clinical silence, the rather coldly rational tone, the subtle implications that your pain doesn't quite meet the threshold of credibility. Yet, this seemingly atypical forms of grief and experience intertwined with high levels of uncertainty, could form a wonderful educational tool for clinicians. Allowing them to bear witness to the trauma of families of missing people through lived-experience art and body mapping could help improve empathy, communication, family-centered practice, their ability to stay present in the face of ambiguity and uncertainty, and vicarious trauma.

Victoria Wright

Loughborough University

Cultivating a space for education for sustainable development

I was previously an academic working in teacher education. In that role I had started to consider the relevance and possible integration of the UN SDGs (United Nation Sustainable Development Goals) in teacher education. When I joined Loughborough University in 2022, I was in a different role as staff facing academic developer. In looking across the professional development provision to see where I could contribute, I saw that there was no staff development to support education for sustainable development (ESD). Gaining permission to create a workshop on ESD has led to a range of development activities such as online resource creation and curation, leadership of a dedicated community of practice, nomination for the Vice Chancellor Award: Sustainability Champion. What I would like to consider in my talk is how my position within the community has been created and is maintained. In the spirit of telling a story through which to raise awareness of and action around the

UN SDGs (i.e. Reach Alliance, UN SDG Learn), I share an autoethnographic account (mapped to the UN SDGs) of an evolving community in which I am a leader with no formal remit or hierarchical status and limited specialist knowledge. I am still learning.

Jonathan Wyatt

University of Edinburgh

When Writing Ends

I have recently completed writing a book. Writing it occupied my waking and dreaming lives, alongside other writing and other commitments, for more than six years. For better or worse, whatever it is or will become when it is released into the wild, the book is done. I am both happy and sad; its completion is both satisfying and a loss. I now face what next, what follows, what comes after. It is familiar, this ambivalent wondering. It happened when Ken Gale and I finished our doctoral thesis, and again when the solo book before this one was done. In this latest book I speculated that it could be my last, but I realise I was being dramatic. Laurel Richardson has just published her latest book at 90. Bronwyn Davies and Jane Speedy finished their second co-authored volume earlier this year. Both of them are around twenty years into their alleged 'retirements'. Ken is cracking on with a new book. So, this paper reaches into the grief and doubt, the possibilities, the sense of life's continuous motion, the sense that there is always more, and asks what else, what follows, when writing ends.

Y

Naoyuki Yamada

Kansai University

Encountering Difference in Writing: Between Expression and Control in Educational Practice

Educational practices that invite self-expression are often associated with freedom and liberation. However, such practices may also entail subtle forms of control, particularly when embedded within broader historical and cultural contexts. This presentation explores the ambivalence inherent in writing-based pedagogy by focusing on educational encounters with "difference." Drawing on the work of Enosuke Ashida, a key figure in life-writing pedagogy in Japan, I examine how writing can function both as an opening toward others and as a site where normative expectations are reproduced. Rather than treating writing as the expression of an inner self, I approach it as a relational practice that unfolds through unpredictable responses and misunderstandings. In line with the conference theme of "Hosting Difference," this paper reflects on moments in educational practice where difference becomes difficult or resistant. What happens when a learner's response does not align with the teacher's expectations? By foregrounding this tension, the presentation considers how educational practices might remain open to difference without reducing it to something manageable.

Naoyuki Yamada, Mihoko Motooka, Kiyoshi Hamana, Kansai University

University of the Ryukyus

When Connection Becomes Difficult: Knotworking Across Difference in Collaborative Early Childhood Education in Japan

This collaborative presentation explores how early childhood educators and researchers in Japan have attempted to sustain collaborative learning across differences in institutional culture, professional position, and educational context. Our inquiry centres on Ai-maaru, a collaborative platform connecting educators and researchers across ECEC settings since 2019. Within this platform, the Collaborative Inquiry-Based Early Childhood Educator Development Program (CINTDP) has emerged as a formative and dialogical learning practice grounded in cultural-historical activity theory. Drawing on the concept of knotworking, we reflect on how relationships were formed, strained, loosened, and re-woven through dialogue, pedagogical documentation, reflection, and shared concern for children's everyday lives. Rather than presenting a model of successful professional development, we attend to hesitation, silence, misunderstanding, uneven participation, and the emotional labour involved in remaining connected across organisational boundaries. Yamada reflects on researching from within an ongoing collaborative practice. Motooka shares lived episodes and relational memories from the project's history. Hamana, participating online through a pre-recorded video, contributes reflections from interview encounters. Together, the presentation seeks to create a shared reflective space in which participants may experience how collaborative learning can hold difference and tension without prematurely resolving them.