COMING TO AUTOETHNOGRAPHY:
A CULINARY STORY

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PROLOGUE

The following review of learning (ROL) is informed and inspired by my recent explorations within the qualitative research methodology of autoethnography. Since the writing of my master's thesis (Woodhouse, 2015) in which I first encountered autoethnography, I have been drawn closer to this methodology as a tool for self-exploration, professional interrogation and means-making, while allowing its processes to assist me with locating my values and identity within the different fields of culinary arts and academia.

Writing in an autoethnographic manner has been a process that has engaged me in what Bourdieu (1990) would call professional reflexivity; a reflective process that has enabled me to challenge my personal biases and, in turn, allowed me to make greater and deeper connections between the social-historical and cultural-political influencers located within my culinary career and now my academic life. Like other autoethnographic researchers situated within the field of education (Starr, 2010), the inherent processes of reflexivity and conscientisation within the methodology have been the catalyst for the transformation of my previous professional identity, and have led me to where I now see myself positioned within the culinary and academic fields.

In light of these reflections, I have made the personal and professional decision to construct the following ROL in an alternative manner to the canonical ways of communicating the reflective practice of professionals. The crafting of my ROL marks the commencement of a learning journey in which I intend to transition my current academic professional practice and identity into the epistemologies and ontologies of an academic who embraces the construction of personal stories as a legitimate form of sense-making. In simple terms, I wish to become known as an academic who crafts stories *from* the mind and heart, *for* the hearts and minds of the culinary arts community of practice.

As a chef for over 25 years, I have never seen anyone read an academic journal in a professional kitchen. However, what I *have* witnessed is the graphic contents of Anthony Bourdian's *Kitchen Confidential* being discussed with intrigue by a band of chefs, while they smoked a cigarette, on an upturned mop bucket at the back door of the kitchen. Likewise, the kitchen changing room becomes a place where chefs trade copies of *Lucky Peach* and at the same time talk about the latest series of *Mind of the Chef* or *Ugly Delicious*. What all of these forms of communication have in common is that they are raw and honest accounts of the culinary profession, told by members of the profession. These forms of media are meaningful and heartfelt stories from culinary practice that connect at the emotional level with the reader and result in a sense of reality that only an insider can feel.

Warning

The following text contains language from the community and institution of haute cuisine

"Cultural Reflexivity is Advised"

For the first step on my storytelling journey, I have tried to model the writing of my ROL on the methodology utilised by seminal autoethnographic authors, Arthur Bochner and Carolyn Ellis, in their book *Evocative Autoethnography: Writing Lives and Telling Stories* (2016). Bochner and Ellis write in a colloquial, conversational and at times evocative manner, with the intention of allowing readers to imagine themselves immersed within the situation itself; here, within their actual workshop. The book is written in such a way that you feel that you are a fly on the wall; listening, observing and at times feeling the tensions in the room, but with the benefits of distance and ambiguity.

Adopting this approach has presented me with a number of stylistic writing challenges, as well as those relating to the integration of material. As Wall (2008) notes, writing according to the autoethnographic research paradigm is much easier said than done. These challenges arise from the methodologies of autoethnography, which require the storyteller to artistically blend the emotional and evocative stories of the subject's lived experience (Ellis & Bochner, 2000) with the systematic analysis and analytical rigour (Anderson, 2006) that some academics desire. As such, writing autoethnography becomes an intertwined process of research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyse (graphy) the subject's personal lived experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experiences (ethno). As Ellis and Bochner (2000) state, it is both a process and a product in which the creative and skilled storyteller must meld the interpretive methodologies of the human sciences with the aesthetics of the arts and humanities (Benson, 1993). According to Ellis and Bochner (2016, p. 80):

> In autoethnography, writing is not an activity that stands apart from the rest of the research process. Autoethnographers twist and turn the reader's heads and make their hearts skip a beat now and then. We want to evoke feeling and induce readers to make a personal connection to the stories we are telling. Our writing is not simply academic: it's personal and artistic too.

It is thus the burden of the academic storyteller to *find the story in the experience* and to activate the reader's inner subjectivity by bringing them closer to the story (Stone, 1998). Likewise, the act of telling a story is a performance in itself, "a process of communication in which the teller and the listener collaborate in a sense-making process" (Bochner & Ellis, 2016, p. 93).

For the above reasons, I have chosen to provide writing practice notes to support my ROL. Since I started this first project, I have found it almost impossible to turn off from it. I started my research process by trying to identify some key literature to underpin my writing. From my initial investigations, I have realised that my research (informed practice) will derive from three main sources.

- The first of these is the autoethnographic methodology itself, and relates to both its methods and ethical considerations.

- The second research focus area relates to academic theories which might be used to explain the social phenomena discernible within the stories.

- The third type of research is associated with the creative field, and is required to assist in the crafting of the stories that I wish to write.

In my practice as a lecturer in food design, research involving the creative elements of my work would normally be embodied in visual diary in which all of my practice influencers are captured, beyond those of traditional desktop research. While I feel most comfortable in the first two research areas listed above, it is the third which I know will present me with the most challenges.

So as you turn the page to join me on the start of my professional journey, I want to underline that all the meetings and conversations described in the ROL are fictional. However, and as portrayed in Bochner and Ellis's (2016) book, the dialogue you are about to engage in is informed by actual professional and reflective conversations between myself, my supervisor and many of my culinary and academic peers.

One of the main characters in the text that follows is Pierre Leroux, who for ethical reasons (Carter, 2002) is portrayed here as a symbolic character with a nom de plume. Needless to say, he represents a real person and a personal acquaintance of mine. Every couple of days, we meet on an impromptu basis at a local café where we habitually engage in the deep, intense and, at times, lengthy academic and philosophical conversations that you are about to experience. He is the ultimate antagonist for this reflective narrative, for he is one of the few people I know who has walked in the worlds of culinary arts and academia and who can authentically feel the tensions between the institutional logic of both. However, the dialogue constructed between Pierre and myself is all the fruit of my own theoretical unpacking, even if at times the story behind the dialogue suggests that it is not. Thus my work is not concerned with reproducing events that happened, but the creation of a reality I wish to depict (Bochner & Ellis, 2016).

Curious and intrigued by my approach to knowledge construction? Then come join me on the first steps of my storytelling journey.

THE MORNING RITUAL

I stand at the end of the queue and close to the coffee machine, once again performing the daily ritual of consuming an offering that I have come to believe will be of benefit to me. The gentle purr of the coffee grinder in the morning often sends me into a semi-detached and trance-like state. I stare into a void of emptiness, blank and expressionless at times. I am not alone in this performance, but wait patiently in a group with other practitioners of the same ritual. Caffeine is powerful … but so are many things in this world.

I raise my head; as I look up I see my friend Pierre Leroux standing eight bodies back, performing the same daily ritual. We are both academics who have once been practitioners of the culinary discipline. As his name suggests, he is French; he is a lean man who always wears a shirt and a well-pressed suit. Today's suit is a shade of steely blue – nothing too expensive, but smart enough to impress the passing eye. As he moves slowly to the counter, I can see that he is in deep discussion with another person, most likely a fellow academic from his university. His hands are risen and are in loud, thunderous motion, swift and rapid at times, like the jolting movements of a symphonic conductor. The corners of his eyes are squinted, reflecting his intensity of thought. He pauses briefly, before thrusting out the deepest thoughts of his inner philosophical mind.

On the other hand, I wear a casual faded tee shirt and blue denim jeans. As academics with an enthusiasm for philosophy and sociology, we are both aware that what we chose to wear is a form of cultural capital and an enactment of our habitus and legitimacy within our respective institutional fields (Bourdieu, 1984). As an academic at the university, Pierre's suit speaks of authority and hierarchy; as a teacher at the polytechnic, my tee shirt and jeans speak of equality and connectedness.

Unlike now, in our past lives we once both wore the same clothing: the white chef's jacket. I am a chef from haute cuisine and he is a boulanger and patisserie[1] chef. We are different, but we are brothers of a shared culinary blood. Our convivial conversations sit comfortably amid the philosophical theories of Foucault and Bourdieu, but we are equally at home talking about our craft and its idiosyncratic ways of knowing.

My black coffee has finally arrived; as I grasp the hot cup I bring it to my lips for the first quick sip. Its bitterness quickly coats my tongue, but it's the thud and hit of the caffeine that I crave. It's one of the few hangovers that I have left over from a career as a professional chef. It's probably the easiest one to deal with; the little voices in your culinary subconscious saying "harden the fuck up" are much more difficult to battle.

From the distance I hear, "How are you, my friend?" Pierre's rich Parisian accent is loud and unmistakable.

"I am great, and how about you?" I quickly reply.

"Well, I'm tired as I had to teach a summer school paper recently and, you know, I'm not used to working that hard these days. Actually, I really need to find some time to write another research paper, but this teaching thing is getting in the way. But as you know, it's very important that I feed the PBRF[2] monster from time to time" replies Pierre, now looking smug and smirking quietly to himself.

I grin to myself, then reply: "On the topic of work Pierre, there is something that I should tell you. Something that I think will interest your philosophical and curious French mind. You know that I have been considering doing some

more study recently, so I've bitten the bullet and just enrolled in the new doctorate programme offered here at OP. It's a professional doctorate, not a PhD, so it will have a different emphasis on the purpose of the knowledge component – but basically what I am looking at developing is a *new way of knowing* at the practice level, as opposed to the more traditional *what to know* at the theoretical level. So right now I am trying to come up with a project that I can work on, so that I can give something meaningful back to the community of culinary arts."

Pierre's head and hand gesture towards an empty table in the corner of the room. "You're right, my friend, this does interest me. Let's talk some more – I am intrigued to know more about your study. Of course, you do know you need to be a little crazy and slightly mad to do doctorate study. I mean, look at me with my PhD – you do know it stands for Permanent Head Disorder!!"

We head over to a small table in the corner of the room. We both inherently know that it is strategically positioned so that if others get too close, we can talk in legitimate academic rhetoric, but far enough away from "the others"[3] that our wicked culinary tongues cannot be heard.

"Adrian, before you get started, you do know that these professional doctorates aren't seen as *real* doctorates in academia. The PhD is the only doctorate which is viewed as the real knowledge in the institution of academia. I know its academic snobbery, but it's the truth within the higher education system. And before you pull out your interpretivist line, 'there isn't a truth, only truths,' you know that's bullshit in this situation, this is the fucking truth."

I calmly reply, "Of all people, *you* should know that I am acutely aware of what knowledge is considered more legitimate and powerful within the dominant logic of education. Yes, I realise that the PhD sits at the top of the hierarchical totem pole of academia, and that's one of the doxas of the dominant logic within the field, but to be honest I'm in a new professional space now. I've played the *homage to the hierarchy of academia* game for a while now, and I have finally started to find a place where I feel comfortable within academia.

"After my master's thesis, in which I explored traditional Western culinary arts education through the critical lens of Freire (1970), Apple (1982), Illich (1971), and Bowles and Gintus (1976),[4] I realised that the overt and hidden structures of education can be a means to indoctrinate people into the dominant logics of education and society in general. As we discuss regularly, Pierre, education often acts within a field of cultural reproduction and, within this field, the habitus of the social agent or individual is significantly influenced by their respective cultural capital. From my personal experiences, unfortunately the knowledge or epistemologies of the professional fields are often not valued by certain communities within education.

"Pierre, both you and I know that this can impact negatively on the habitus or identity of the professional practitioner when operating within the traditional academic field (Bourdieu, 1993). I guess what I am saying is, I don't buy into the cultural and symbolic power hierarchy game anymore – I've broken free from the shackles of that cultural field. This is what happens to people when they start to read critical theory and emancipate themselves through conscientisation. What happens to some people in the process of conscientisation is that you actually realise that you have the ability to change your own state of reality. I guess I can thank Paulo Freire (1970) for that."

Pierre pauses for a few seconds, then says: "As a philosopher, I would probably thank the Greek philosophers for this, actually Plato (1945) in particular. Plato's Allegory of the Cave would probably also explain why, after writing your master's thesis, most of your peers and colleagues now think you are fucking crazy. It's the burden of enlightenment that the philosopher must carry on their shoulders. The bit in the allegory when you re-enter the cave after enlightenment – and now people think you have gone mad because you now talk in riddles. That's you right now, my friend – people are nice to you about it, but your peers think you're a crazy man."

I snigger and reply. "You raise an interesting idea, Pierre, and one that I have been reflecting on a bit recently. What was the process or that 'thing' in my master's that freed me from the shackles of my self-constructed belief that formal institutionalised education was the most legitimate form of knowledge? How did I come to realise that I was

an actually just an actor[5] within an institution which enabled social stratification and cultural reproduction, and who was at the same time actually happy to go about indoctrinating students into the values, beliefs and morals of the Francophiled world of fine dining? These questions are challenging, but what I want to know is what triggered this transformation in my thinking and practice? I also want to know how I came to believe so strongly in the values and practices of the fine dining world in the first place."

Pierre: "You propose two interesting questions here. I think in the first instance you are talking about the concept of transformative and emancipatory learning. Mezirow (1990) is a seminal author on the topic, and he proposes that adulthood can be a time in our lives in which we can reassess the beliefs and assumptions of our upbringing that have resulted in distorted and limited views of our realities. This sounds similar to what you are saying, and your master's obviously provided you with the opportunity to challenge and interrogate your beliefs. The question I have for you, Adrian, is this: What were the moments of enlightenment for you – when did you start to see things differently? It will be finding these 'moments' and the exploration of them that will probably provide you with the answers you seek.

"Your second question relates more to the idea of identity construction and how you see the world and how you see yourself fitting into it. It's a massive field, but you are probably talking about how communities of practice are formed and legitimatised. So symbolic interactionism theory will probably come into your studies at some point. Mead (1934) and Blumer (1973) are key theorists within symbolic interactionism, and they propose that the social situations we immerse ourselves in play a part in developing our personalities and how we come to be accepted into groups. I would also recommend Cohen's (1985) book *The Symbolic Construction of Community* on this subject, as Cohen explores how group identities are formed through the development of group boundaries. For your studies, his work might help explain the everyday implicit and explicit activities or rituals that chefs perform to reinforce their identity within the culinary community. You know, the ways in which we go about excluding people from the identity of the chef – how we create the *us* and *them* groups within our chef psyche."

"You mean *us* as in professional chefs and *them* whom we may consider more as cooks?"

Pierre ponders briefly, then replies. "Something like that, maybe just outsiders in general, but I would also read Prus's (1996) book, *Symbolic Interaction and Ethnographic Research: Inter-subjectivity and the Study of Human Lived Experience*. His work is more focused on how the use of language, clothing and non-verbal gestures are all symbols that can be used to communicate meanings amongst individuals. I could see this being very applicable to the culinary world. Turner (1975) and Tajfel (1981) have also both written extensively on the subject of social identity formation; their social identity theory (SIT) has a particular interest in looking at how individuals willingly adopt the behavioural characteristics of a group in which they want to be accepted. These are some of the seminal theories which you might be able to use to help explain why 'you' or, more broadly, 'we chefs,' put up with the crap and shit in the kitchen every day, just so we can practice our craft and to call yourself a chef!

"As for acting and believing in the ways that you do, it is probably part of some form of institutional logic that you have formed. Mary Douglas (1986) wrote a book titled *How Institutions Think* which is a good starting point for understanding the formation of institutional logic and how their conventions are developed and reinforced; it also builds on Durkhiem's (2014) earlier structural functionalist theories. Reading it will give you some insights into how your relationship with the natural world has developed and, in turn, reinforced your beliefs, conventions and institutional logic. According to Douglas, it is your logic which creates the everyday conventions of your institution; and we operate in many institutions including the madhouse called the culinary arts. You see, Adrian, institutions are spaces of moral control and can create *in* and *out* groups.

"You know when I said everyone thinks you're fucking crazy now, it's because you are no longer in the *in* group, but are now part of the *out* group because you broke the rules or beliefs of the traditional and dominant culinary institution. The irony is that by now being in the *out* group, you have now simply joined another *in* group."

I quickly raise my eyebrows and reply: "Yes, this is true; I have defiantly joined the group of culinary academics[6] who are challenging the dominant logic of culinary education. But, Pierre, what are these rules and beliefs of these communities and institutions that you talk about? They aren't written down anywhere, but I kind of know what you are taking about."

"This will be something that you will need to explore for yourself, Adrian, but I suspect you will need to research into the theories of the construction of the self, the community and the institution. How groups go about constructing the rituals and structures of authority and sacredness will provide you with some insights into the belief systems underpinning these groups – issues of morality will come in here as well. I read a good article the other day about this by Haidt and Graham (2009) that I can send to you. Of course, you can't explore community without looking at culture."

"Pierre, I always love these chats with you because they always provide me with so many interesting perspectives to think about. Look mate, I'm pressed for time because I've got to head off to class now, but can we catch up for a drink on Friday after work and maybe talk some more? I haven't mentioned my other thoughts about my doctorate – this one might take a bit longer to unpack, so we should do it over a drink."

"OK, let's meet at the usual spot for a catch up. We can have a drink then and talk some more bullshit."

THE AFTER-WORK RITUAL

It's Friday already and I need a drink. Not from an alcoholic perspective, but for a chance to meet with others, chill and unwind from the week that has been. When you're a chef it's called the "staffie," a free post-shift drink at the bar or in the corner of the restaurant. It is where the kitchen crew can get together and talk about the previous dinner service or, at times, the drunken after-work escapades from the night before. It usually occurs when the last few tables are being cleared and the front-of-house are going about resetting the restaurant. Sometimes there are diners still around, and occasionally they will come up to you and thank you for the meal. This is a nice touch, but from my experience many young chefs wish to remain out of the limelight and public accolades – instead, they prefer to retreat to the sanctuary of their respective kitchen caves.

Like most things, it's part of the ritual of being a chef. It's primal in its nature, it's our collegial camp fire where we tell and re-enact stories of the kitchen. These stories often have the common theme of shared blood and kinship – the time when we smashed out a fully packed restaurant with limited chefs, or when we completely fucked up because we under-prepped for service. This place of communal storytelling allows us to connect with the symbolic identifiers[1] of our community of practice, the physical scars we bear from the kitchen cuts and burns on our bodies. I too have a scar on the left side of my mouth, a cut from where I slashed my face open steeling my knife – a moment's lapse in concentration, cocky some might say. A finger on my right hand is also badly scarred, imprinted with the raised pattern of a braided river bed from having hot caramel drizzled over it by an incompetent commis chef.

The staffie is not only a ritual, but it is sacred action as well. We don't drink the staffie with others – it must only be consumed by legitimate members of our community.[2]

Some employers don't provide a "staffie." These people simply see the work and role of the chef as a business arrangement, an economic exchange of money for labour – for them, the job is purely transactional in nature. These people usually don't come from a hospitality background and, in my experiences, they get no loyalty from their chefs either.

"What are you drinking, my friend?" I hear as Pierre slams his hand on the back of my shoulder. "It's my shout for you starting your doctorate. Maybe something a little stronger to anaesthetise your brain from the study?"

"I'm OK for now, Pierre, just a hoppy IPA will be fine for me – something new from the brewer's reserve range will be great."

"Well, I'll get you your fucking hipster IPA and I'll get myself a nice glass of Central Otago pinot noir. I've been in this country for four years now and, as much as I try, I still can't bring myself to like this hoppy beer stuff."

As I chuckle to myself, I reply with a cheeky, "I think it's the cultural, not the sensory, taste that you don't like. Now, with you being French, what would Bourdieu say about that?"

Pierre smiles smugly and quickly heads to the bar and orders our drinks.

He returns with glasses in hand. "Here's your beer, my friend, now tell me about these other thoughts you have been having regarding your doctorate. You said something about them being complex and taking longer to unpack."

"Did you ever read my master's, Pierre? I mean the whole thing from beginning to the end. Even chapter six, which criticised the traditional French culinary canon and challenged the role of the culinary teacher. It's the chapter in which I say the culinary teacher is a key agent in perpetuating the system of controlling the identity of the culinary student."

"Yes, I have read your master's and I must say that I like you. However, I will admit your master's did piss me off. For me, it was like a stab to the heart of an education system that had served so many so well. Admittedly I'm French, so it hurt me a little more deeply than others, maybe."

"I know, but as I reflect back now, I realise that early in my teaching career, I too was that teacher that I challenged in my work. It was easy at the time of writing my master's to challenge the actions of my early culinary teachers, to paint those teachers in a negative light, but when I reflect back to when I started teaching, I was also that type of teacher. In my early years of teaching, I honestly believed I was doing the right thing. It made perfectly logical sense to me back then."

Pierre takes a sip of his wine before placing the glass back on the table. "As reflective practitioners and educators, it's normal for us to discover we have multiple selves and to understand that our professional identities are part of our self-constructed realities."

"I know what you mean, Pierre – I was reading an article the other day by Renner (2001) about this. He described the journey of his professional doctorate within the field of education as being a process of witnessing identity death and rebirth through a process of transformative enlightenment. Within my own master's I noticed the same transformation in myself. I felt that the identity of the pragmatic fine dining chef within me was dying, but out of the ashes rose the phoenix of the postmodern, post-structuralist, critical academic.

"For me, it was the critical examination of my own professional story that I found so empowering. Every time I engaged in critical theory, I could see it in practice within my past and current professional experiences. This is why every chapter of my thesis opens with a personal vignette which is often written in the evocative autoethnographic style. I was never explicit or claimed any truths in my writing, but instead wrote these vignettes, as Bruner (1990) would say, to be read and interpreted as *acts of meaning*. In light of this, I am thinking that my doctoral studies will now be about adopting autoethnography as a sense-making process for culinary educators, maybe even a method for pedagogic emancipation. For me, autoethnography allowed me to find my inner voice and to stand up to the dominant logic within the culinary education community.

"Since I wrote my master's, some culinary practitioners who have read my work have spoken to me about the connection that those stories made with them. As I reflect back, I am now in the same storytelling space as seminal autoethnographic writers Bochner and Ellis (2016),[7] in the sense that I am now most interested in undertaking qualitative research into human longing, pleasure, pain, loss, suffering and grief. Tragic elements of the human experience which are designed to emotionally evoke and arouse readers in a way that invites them to think about the social injustices, institutional powers and moral dilemmas within our societies, a phenomenon that Bochner (2012) calls "autoethnography's ethics of sympathy."

"OK, so what you are saying is that you want to examine your lived experiences – your past experiences – so that you can understand more about the moral choices we make in our culinary lives. So do you mean that this research project is more about *how to live* than about *what we should know*? This sounds very postmodern to me, which means some in the academy could view this whole thing as totally subjective; they will say, where is the objectivity that science brings to this research? Plus, if it's just writing stories about being a chef, then that won't sound very academic to some people. On a separate note, what journal would want to publish this kind of material? Its subjectivity would mean it would be thrown out instantly."

Feeling slightly pissed off, I reply, "So the points you raise are all very common in autoethnographic research. Before I start to explain them, how is your drink – would you like another one?"

"No, I am OK for now, but I think I need to find a noose, my friend, because you are just about to hang yourself academically. This better be fucking good, because it's going to take some strong convincing for others to understand this. You know, I'm a philosopher, so I'm probably quite sympathetic to your postmodernist views. Anyhow, go ahead and explain how this autoethnography research works and I will play devil's advocate for now."

Game on! I quietly think to myself. "Let's get rid of your last point first. There are journals specifically for autoethnography writing but, as I mentioned earlier, I am more interested in writing for the culinary community. As Bochner and Ellis (2016) state, I want to write in a way that connects with my readers – in this case, culinary practitioners who don't always engage in the world of academia. Writers of evocative autoethnography are unimpressed by the jargon of academia and try to write in the ways most human beings talk. Because evocative autoethnographers operate daily in the world of their readers, they believe that their readers should not have to struggle to understand the writing, and it should be easily relatable to their lives.[8] As Laurel Richardson (1990) notes, seasoned academics don't finish half the research studies they start to read because the writing is dry. Billig (2013) also states that the rhetoric used by social scientists is uninviting and their work is often lost in academic jargon. You see, Pierre, traditional academia is very verbose in its nature – the irony of that statement isn't lost on me either! At the end of the day, Pierre, it should just be about communicating knowledge in ways which are meaningful to your audience.

"Have you seen the recent culinary series on Netflix called *Ugly Delicious* (Schmidt, 2018) in which acclaimed chef David Chang and food writer Peter Meehan explore various ostracised and popular cuisines of the world and the cultures surrounding them?"

"Yeah," replies Pierre, "That show is fucking amazing! It's filled with philosophy as well as the social, cultural and political stuff about food. Actually, I've been bingeing on it, to be honest."

His excitement was palpable – I run with that. "So you know the episode titled "Stuffed" where Chang asks the question, Why is it that Chinese dumplings, which have the same cultural traditions and craft elements of an Italian ravioli, can be sold for only $8 for a whole steamer basket, yet you can charge $27 for three perfect raviolis on a white plate in certain restaurants? What he is querying is why both stuffed dishes aren't treated equally in our society if they both share the same quintessential craft elements and, ultimately, both dishes make people feel fulfilled. Why have certain members of society placed more value on one dish than the other? So you could say, in my writing I don't want to make plates of unattainable ravioli stylised towards a certain cultural taste and hierarchy, but I would now rather make baskets of affordable dumplings that the majority of people can feast from."

A look comes across Pierre's face that suggests the penny just dropped. "OK, so I get that you don't want to write in what some might call the academic babble anymore. You are talking about writing in a way that basically more chefs can read and access. You know there are some criticisms out there about academic knowledge being locked away in articles, as well."

"Like most fields, there are tensions that exist. Within autoethnography, the tensions exist between the writer and where the writer places the emphasis within their writing. As such, you will find that autoethnographers vary their writing emphasis between the research process (graphy), the culture (ethno) and the self (auto), such that different approaches to autoethnography are located on different positions on the continuum of each of these three axes (see Ellis & Bochner, 2000). Some scholars have categorised these different writing styles as being located on the positions of *evocative* (see Ellis & Bochner, 2006) versus *analytical* (see Anderson, 2006) autoethnographic practice. It was Polkinghorne (1995) who stated that there are two different types of narrative inquiry – narrative analysis and analysis of narrative. The work of narrative analysis results in a research outcome in the form of a story that the writer constructs to represent the people, the situ and the associated events that unfolded. This method is closely aligned to the evocative autoethnographic position, and its purpose is more concerned with *how to live* our lives.

"On the other hand, analysis of narrative treats the stories that we write as forms of data that can be analysed. It is inductive in its nature, in a similar manner to grounded theory, from which we can draw themes and present insights in a way similar to a social science report. This method of inquiry is primarily interested in what you *can get out of* the story and how we can understand social phenomena.

"Therefore, the tension for the storyteller then becomes, where one does positions their work on the continuum of autoethnographic practice? Ultimately, Pierre, and as some academics state (see Ngunjiri, Hernandez, & Chang, 2010), it becomes a professional choice, as it is ultimately the role of the researcher to decide on the appropriate balance of evocative emotion and analytical rigour, so as to reflect the intended purpose of the project."

Pierre inquisitively responds: "Can you blend the styles, like sugar and cream? You know, whipped cream is very nice on its own and a little dusting of sugar makes a strawberry taste much sweeter, but when you add the sugar to the whipped cream and now you have chantilly cream, and it's…. très bon! Is it possible to intertwine the evocative with the analytical, and for it all to still make sense? The evocative approach feels more interpretivist in its nature and analytical sounds more realist or positivist – from my experience these paradigms usually don't come together well."

"That's a good question, and the answer is yes. It's all about understanding the reader and how you want to engage them. At the extreme end of evocative autoethnography, there is no literature included in the writing and the story is based around constructing a sense of verisimilitude – which is when a sense of reality is created within the work and the readers can comprehend and feel what the writer is describing. As Bochner and Ellis (2016) note, this method can be hard to get past some institutions, but it is a legitimate form of research practice. Many of my opening vignettes in my master's were written in this style.

If you were to adopt an analytical position, then you would use the story as a social phenomenon to be studied, and there are many ways of blending the story and the academic theory. Some writers like to present a theoretical position, followed by the story and then a theoretical analysis of that story. As I reflect back on my master's, it is evident that this was the method I used throughout my work. It is a traditional approach within the methodology, but probably speaks more of my writing confidence and the influence of my first academic supervisor at the time.

"A more integrated writing method is called *seamless writing*, and weaves the theoretical aspects and the evocative emotions seamlessly throughout the story. Bochner (2016) and others (see Durham, 2013; Gingrich-Philbrook, 2005; Spry, 2001) are noted writers of this style. There is also the method coined 'layered account' by Ronai (1995), which is a multi-method approach combining multiple ways of knowing. In this method, you can combine differing knowledges, such as statistics, along with stories and ethnography."

"OK, so this autoethnography is basically an 'anything goes' approach, as long as it makes a connection emotionally or cognitively with the reader. Personally – and I'm just giving you my two cents' worth – I would stay away from the straight-out evocative autoethnography that doesn't include any literature. I mean, I get what you are saying about writing as a sense-making process, but it would be too hard to convince the institution of its validity and you won't really be able to publish afterwards. I know you say you don't care about publishing, but in your position as an academic you need to fucking publish! Have you heard of the saying, 'publish or perish' in academia! In my opinion, adopting a straight-out evocative autoethnographic methodology would be academic suicide."

"I've already decided that I'm not going to adopt an evocative autoethnogeraphic-only method, but not for the reasons you suggest. Anthropologist Michael Jackson (1989) claims that our research is always heavily influenced by our lived experiences, values and beliefs. The reality is that I am personally interested in the theoretical perceptions that can help me understand the birth and ultimate death of my culinary identity. That means that, eventually, my research project will be a blend of both the evocative and the analytical. At this moment in time, I haven't decided on the final stylistic approach, but it needs to function as an easily read piece on its own for the culinary community, but also be underpinned by academic theories, so that if I choose to publish later in more conventional journals I will have that ability to do so. There is also the fact that because I work in the APL (Assessment of Prior Learning) space,

I apply the tools of analytical autoethnography to the decoding and theorising of professional stories every day. So by integrating a narrative analysis element into my research project, I have the ability to develop some thematic analysis tools to assist other facilitators in the APL field."

"Ahh, you mean you are placing a bet each way – that way you can't lose. A foot in each camp, as they would say."

"You could look at it that way, but I prefer to see my project as developing a set of professional encoding and decoding storytelling skills that can be used in practice-based education, a body of culinary academic knowledge and, eventually, a philosophical way of knowing that would be of benefit to the culinary community of practice, including myself."

Pierre interrupts: "And you can do all of this in your doctorate, while engaging in professional storytelling?"

"I believe so, but first I have to get my ideas approved, and that starts with a review of learning of my current professional practice. I've written my current thoughts down, but in doing so I haven't conformed to the word limit. You know, Pierre, last year I facilitated an APL Bachelor of Culinary Arts student who did the same thing. At the beginning of his written work he wrote the following comments:

> Some assignments are submitted because they are required tasks. One completes them to attain a grade that serves to increase one's quality of 'pass' in a subject. But just occasionally we enter into an assignment with something deeper than a desire to 'score.' We see the inherent value of a question and, in exploring it, we will therefore forsake limitations that might constrain the richness of our commitment. (Anonymous BCA APL student, 2018)

"His writing was the most powerful piece of work I have experienced from a student in my 15 years of teaching. So, Pierre, for me teaching is no longer about conforming to a hegemonic cultural performance of an idealised legitimate concept of education, but it is instead about developing a meaningful relationship between individuals which leads to deep and transformative learning experiences. I believe that it is only in these intimate moments of human exchange that we truly realise what it means to become fully human."

THE END … SORT OF

EPILOGUE

As I type the final words of my ROL, the academic insecurities within me ask the question, *Did they get it?* If they didn't get it, then maybe my attached autoethnographic Communication Design Model[9] will shed some light on my reflective practices and where my work is heading.

I recognise that I have embraced a different approach to the construction and dissemination of reflective knowledge. Perhaps, in doing so, it is not obvious how this meets the course learning outcomes. Likewise, I could be wrong and those little voices in my head are taking over again. What I do know is that many of my peers will have conformed to the known, and will have started the ROL process with an unpacking of personal upbringing and professional journeys. I too could have done this, but instead I intend my learning journey to be different from theirs. By adopting an autoethnographic enquiry methodology as my research project, the time to **deeply** unpack and **make sense** of these experiences will come later – but, for now, it is about how I have arrived at this point. As an academic operating within a postmodern framework of practice, I am aware that there is always the possibility that my work will be misinterpreted, due to us all operating within own views of the world and self-constructed realities.

The writing process within my ROL has been one of excitement and nervousness as I now feel empowered to abandon a self-constructed hierarchy of legitimate knowledge and a dominant rhetoric in my academic communication. The process hasn't been without its challenges as I have tried to find and convey a meaningful voice to connect cognitively and emotionally with both the institutions of academia and the culinary arts.

There were many times within the reflective writing process when I have wanted to return to my previous academic practice and critically interrogate many of the scenes that I have depicted.[10] A social scientist reading this ROL would have been saying to themselves while reading this work, *But I know the theory that explains this phenomena.* If you did feel this way, then I achieved what I set out to do – to provoke you with stories that were intentionally baited with some of the seminal concepts associated with the fields of psychology and sociology. Although I have already read many of these seminal works, now is not the time to do justice to these theories, and I hope that my attached Communication Design Model will illuminate where my theoretical position is heading.

As I reflect back to the time when I commenced this review of learning, I never realised that this reflective autoethnographic process would provide illuminating or new learning opportunities for me. The greatest surprise has been the indirect development of my initial Communication Design Model, which is a visualisation of the reflective and research processes that I have undertaken within this first project, and provides me with a platform for my future work. It contains the theories that have informed my work to date but, more importantly, I can now see the tensions that have existed within my practice. At a meta level, these tensions have existed between the interpretive/impressionist and the realist ethnographer, while at the marco level they operate between the self and the divided academic and culinary communities.

While this work is only the beginning of my Doctorate of Professional Practice studies, it forms the first steps down a new road of academic being.
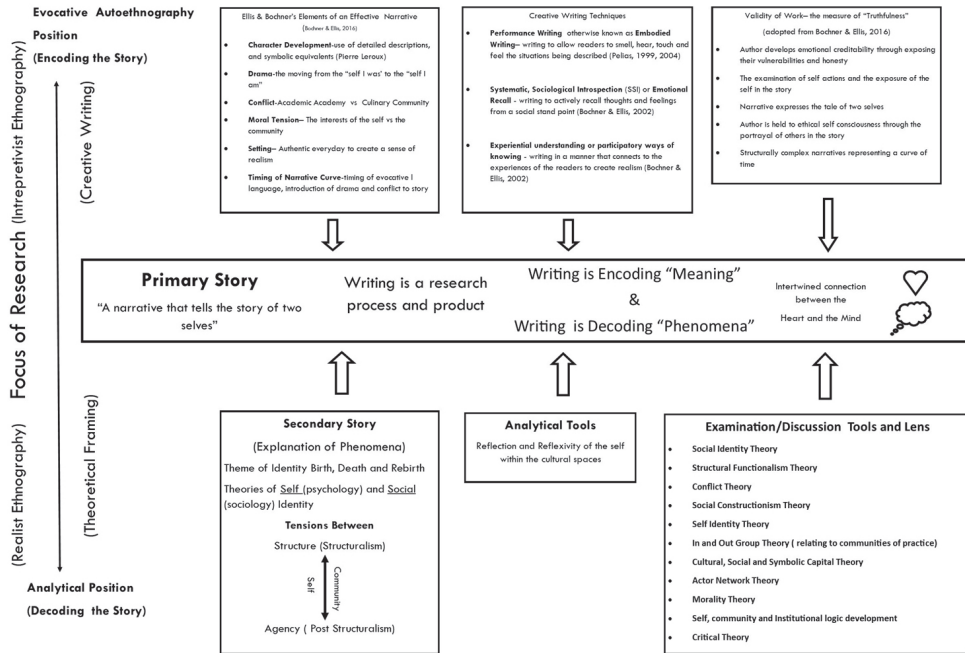
New Communication Model

Evocative Autoethnography

Position

(Encoding the Story)

Focus of Research (Interpretivist Ethnography)

(Creative Writing)

Ellis & Bochner's Elements of an Effective Narrative
(Bochner & Ellis, 2016)

- **Character Development**-use of detailed descriptions, and symbolic equivalents (Pierre Leroux)
- **Drama**-the moving from the "self I was" to the "self I am"
- **Conflict**-Academic Academy vs Culinary Community
- **Moral Tension**– The interests of the self vs the community
- **Setting**– Authentic everyday to create a sense of realism
- **Timing of Narrative Curve**-timing of evocative I language, introduction of drama and conflict to story

Creative Writing Techniques

- **Performance Writing** otherwise known as **Embodied Writing**– writing to allow readers to smell, hear, touch and feel the situations being described (Pelias, 1999, 2004)
- **Systematic, Sociological Introspection** (SSI) or **Emotional Recall** - writing to actively recall thoughts and feelings from a social stand point (Bochner & Ellis, 2002)
- **Experiential understanding or participatory ways of knowing** - writing in a manner that connects to the experiences of the readers to create realism (Bochner & Ellis, 2002)

Validity of Work– the measure of "Truthfulness"
(adopted from Bochner & Ellis, 2016)

- Author develops emotional creditability through exposing their vulnerabilities and honesty
- The examination of self actions and the exposure of the self in the story
- Narrative expresses the tale of two selves
- Author is held to ethical self consciousness through the portrayal of others in the story
- Structurally complex narratives representing a curve of time

Primary Story

"A narrative that tells the story of two selves"

Writing is a research process and product

Writing is Encoding "Meaning"
&
Writing is Decoding "Phenomena"

Intertwined connection between the Heart and the Mind

Secondary Story

(Explanation of Phenomena)

Theme of Identity Birth, Death and Rebirth

Theories of <u>Self</u> (psychology) and <u>Social</u> (sociology) Identity

Tensions Between

Structure (Structuralism)

Self / Community

Agency (Post Structuralism)

Analytical Tools

Reflection and Reflexivity of the self within the cultural spaces

Examination/Discussion Tools and Lens

- Social Identity Theory
- Structural Functionalism Theory
- Conflict Theory
- Social Constructionism Theory
- Self Identity Theory
- In and Out Group Theory (relating to communities of practice)
- Cultural, Social and Symbolic Capital Theory
- Actor Network Theory
- Morality Theory
- Self, community and Institutional logic development
- Critical Theory

(Realist Ethnography)

(Theoretical Framing)

Analytical Position

(Decoding the Story)

Fig1. Autoethnographic Model.

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ENDNOTES

1   A boulanger is the French term for someone who specialises in bread making, while a patisserie chef is someone who specialises in cakes and desserts. It is common for chefs in France to specialise in both of these crafts. However, in New Zealand, chefs generally need to be more adaptive and are required to be skilled in all areas of kitchen craft.

2   Performance Based Research Funding (PBRF) is a performance-based funding system designed to encourage and reward research in New Zealand's degree-granting organisations. Researchers collate and curate their research outputs into research portfolios over a six-year period before submitting them to an external panel for assessment. The results determine the extent of the organisation's research funding from the Investment Plan overseen by the New Zealand Tertiary Education Commission (TEC).

3   Chefs operate in a community of practice that views the world from a perspective of "us and them." Coarse language, along with physical scars from burns, are important symbols in admitting a person as a legitimate member of the culinary community. These symbols also reinforce the psychological mind-set of the chefly identity (see Palmer, Cooper, & Burns, 2010).

4   Educational institutions have been criticised by academics as social structures which reproduce the norms, values and behaviours of cultures within society. This system of cultural reproduction favours the ideological hegemony of the dominant group.

5   Actor Network Theory (ANT) proposes that everything operates equally within the social and natural worlds. Within these worlds, there are networks of relationships linking the material (between things) and the semiotic (between concepts). As such, these elements take on the role of actors within the network relationship. Thus in education, the teacher and the materials and objects they interact with can create semiotic meanings for students. To reinforce these meanings, these interactions need to be regularly "performed" by the actors – otherwise the networks will be dissolved (see Fenwick & Edwards, 2012).

6   As part of the process of critical enlightenment involving my master's studies, I have connected with other academics who share similar critical positions on culinary pedagogy, such as I Deutsch (2014), who claims that traditional culinary arts education devalues the individual and, in turn, their creative thinking process. The lack of questioning of conventional modes of practice inhibits a student's ability to prepare for the challenges they will face when having to think innovatively within the industry. O'Mahony (2007) also encourages culinary educators to shift their curricula from operational to a focus on critical enquiry, as this will better prepare students for the ever-changing marketplace. Such changes will require new ways of thinking, and fundamental to this will be the embracing of the culinary imagination. Supporting these positions is Hegarty (2011), who calls for culinary education to emancipate itself from traditional universal 'truths' and power structures and to rethink "how we know what we know." Central to this liberation is critical reflexivity through reflective practice for both the teacher and the student. Teachers are being called to embrace critical pedagogy within their curricula so as to allow for alternative knowledge bases within hospitality and tourism teaching.

7   Cohen (1985) discusses how communities construct their own meanings associated with their respective symbols. While outside of the culinary community, scarring can simply signify dangerous work, in my experience, scarring is a symbolic representation of unequivocal commitment to a community and its enduring quest to enhance its craft. Scars also function as symbols of mental, physical and psychological strength, qualities which are desired and respected by chefs within professional kitchens.

8   From my personal experiences, chefs often develop strong in-group and out-group boundaries within their community. The simple act of drinking only with fellow chefs, and excluding members of the public from this social activity, is a way in which the power of the group identity if reinforced (see Tajfel, 1981).

9   The work of Bochner and Ellis (2016) has been fundamental in allowing me to find an emotionally valid voice within the culinary academy. As an educator with humanistic values and a practitioner in the hospitality sector, the embedding of lived experiences and the inclusion of emotions is quintessential to my practice.

10   Bochner and Ellis (2016) are critical of traditional academic rhetoric, as it excludes certain members of society from interpreting the knowledge presented within the relevant work. They also believe that many academics are trained in a formulaic style of journal writing, to the detriment of alternative forms of communication which are more likely to engage readers.

11   I developed a "Communication Design Model" (Fig 1) as part of my ROL paper. In my experience, the APL process typically focusses on the primary professional story and adopts an analytical position to the autoethnography process. I have utilised this approach in many of my own facilitation APL processes. However, I believe that by integrating an evocative methodology into the APL process, new opportunities will arise for alternative forms of postgraduate work and/or practice-based study. As part of this ROL process, I believe that I have indirectly developed a tool which could assist in the facilitation of reflective practice-based study. In addition, in my research into autoethnography I have not found any significant models which would facilitate the autoethnography process.

12   In my master's thesis, I critically examined the banal act of a culinary lecturer teaching a class to cut a carrot into a dice. I often joke that it only took 3000 words to describe cutting the carrot, but another 20,000 words were needed to understand the meaning of the original 3000. As a side note, I often take great pleasure in telling people that my master's is in cutting carrots!