
Article

**In Search of Moral Coherence:
Reconciling Uneasy Histories and Identities**

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Abstract

Through an autoethnographic account the authors explore the various entanglements, ambiguities, and conflicts inherent in the research relationships of institutionally marginalized communities. Agency and moral coherence are constructs with which personal, political, and sociocultural dimensions of negotiating a research identity

are framed. They use a feminist lens to examine relations, autoethnography to reflexively examine these relations, and poststructuralist notions to illuminate cultural influences on the shifting identity of one actor.

Keywords: mentoring, graduate students, autoethnography, identity

In this paper I offer an autoethnographic account of my struggle during a research project to negotiate and reconcile multiple conflicting social identities as

- a senior faculty member in an institution that follows the cultural norm for making new appointments from external candidates and from which I received all of my degrees;
- a female instructional designer and researcher in a field dominated by ethnocentric Western values and technological determinism;
- a practitioner whose institution fundamentally distrusts learning design;
- an often ambivalent female academic administrator in a faculty accused of having no intellectual domain and little relevance; and
- a daughter and sister of social activists who, like me, have never really felt deserving of intellectual respect from peers, even as we strive to secure it.

Framed by four Rs—responsibility, resistance, resilience, and reconciliation—this story represents my various roles in the project, the institution, and the research community and reflects shifting forms, allegiances, motivations, authorities, and identities. These shifting roles challenged relational obligations with researchers and researched, and students and supervisors in an “inextricably linked” pattern of “power, knowledge, ideology and culture” (Tierney, 1993, p. 3). By offering this reflexive account, I hope to interrogate the “political, cultural, and social” mechanisms at work to negotiate shifting social identities and the nature of the research itself (Warren & Fassett, 2002), primarily through the experience of a middle-aged female academic who, like many colleagues, struggles constantly to find a zone of moral coherence in the academy. Representing a scholarship that foregrounds “our speaking and listening bodies as the basis of our reading of others” (p. 576) suggests a way in which researchers in, and of, marginalized communities can celebrate their relational practices as valid modes of inquiry. Finally, I want to share my current understanding of the ideas of agency and moral coherence, as they are integral to my practices and potentially offer a way to reconcile uneasy histories and identities.

In his discussion of the impact of Aoki’s curriculum theory on social change, den Heyer (2003) has called on social psychology, cultural theory, and philosophy. Community ties these ideas together, suggesting that the commitments of social relationships underlie a shared culture of ideas, understandings, values, and practices, leading to social action. Further, social change, identity, and agency are linked in the personal interpretations that lead to action in the community. Moments of conflict, dilemma, or contradiction relate agency to moral coherence when the problem is nested in “the active interpretation of personal experience, [and] the application of lessons to present socially interpreted situations . . . projecting ways to re-establish epistemological and moral coherence” (p. 9). Because moral agency implies action, I take Foucault’s (1980, cited in Francis, 1999) discussion of positionality in (cultural) discourse as my understanding of the difficult work implicated in moral coherence. Foucault argued that multiple

subjectivities occur as the self is positioned and positions itself in socially and culturally produced patterns of language, or discourse. Discourses construe power relations through the passive positioning of self in one context and the active positioning of self in another.

In the following account, I attempt to untangle moments of the “unsatisfactory fit” of leadership, interpretation of the implicated experiences, and social practices that rendered various subjectivities and actions incoherent. In the end, seeking to reestablish moral coherence among multiple roles alternating between authority and fraudulence, I am reconciled with a social identity of mentor.

Institutional cultures and tangled discourses

The research context

As in other countries with institutionalized programs for lifelong learning such as those in university departments of continuing education, the Canadian government has identified a set of skills or competencies for employability for targeted communities, for example new Canadians, with associated research and development funding for educational organizations working with these communities (cf. Kingston, 2007). Some new immigrants are perceived to have “weak capital,” lacking certain skills that will ensure employment (Human Resource Development Canada, 2002). Federally identified research questions are intended to determine clear solutions for this perceived problem. Immigrant service organizations (ISOs) are important partners in a relationship that the literature portrays as complex at best. Some studies have shown the relation of state and ISO to be mutually dependent with shared goals (cf. Holder, 1998), but also potentially subjugating, turning ethnic organizations into extensions of state-coordinated activities and instruments of social control (e.g., Ng, 1996), whereas others have argued that ISOs act in a positive role as social service providers to maintain ethnic identities and promote integration (e.g., Guo, 2002). Working with ISOs, academic researchers have joined the protest over issues such as deskilling and decredentializing of qualifications (Henry, Tator, Mattis, & Rees, 2000; Mojab, 1999; Reitz, 2003) and the sexism combined with racism experienced by women immigrants often laboring in exploitive conditions (Gannage, 1999; Ng, 1996).

In 2003 our research team secured funding from a federal program to develop case studies of four ISOs in Western Canada (cf. Campbell, Fenwick, et al., 2006; Fenwick, Campbell, Gibb, Hamdon, & Jamal, 2006, 2007). Our questions were more about understanding how immigrant services organizations and their clients conceptualized and developed the knowledge and identities that they believed would secure long-term and, they hoped, satisfying employment for immigrant women. The community organizations had their own layers of research questions emerging from their everyday work with immigrant women related to everyday practices of teaching/learning and craftsmanship as well as broader issues of immigrants’ skill recognition, subtle racism in workplaces, and their external positioning relative to immediate political issues (e.g., sharia law). Methodologically each case involved observation of everyday routines in the organizations, selected classes, and meetings. Documents such as annual reports and informational materials prepared for clients were examined. Interviews were conducted with immigrant clients, volunteer and paid staff, and organizational administrators to understand their different perspectives about the organization’s activities that were the most valuable in terms of finding employment and what they needed most to become integrated into the labor force. Although the research study and the emerging relational issues provide the context for this paper, the ISO (A) with which I worked is not the focus here except as a backdrop against which my learning unfolded.

The research team: Entanglements and obligations

The research team consisted of four researchers and four graduate research assistants (GRAs). Two of the researchers (including me) were senior academics; two were junior, untenured scholars. We originally proposed to explore the research theme of cultural differences in how people acquire essential skills, but, in fact, the authenticity of this question was challenged early in the study as we began to build relationships with each other and with our community partners. These relationships shaped emergent senses of responsibility, indebtedness, and reciprocity. Four members of the research team shared close cultural ties with communities served by the ISO, and two of these, who were GRAs, were intimately connected through volunteer and leadership activities. The latter brought capital that was both helpful for establishing trust and problematic because it also carried an implicit understanding that this tie ought to secure some sort of influence within the research relationship.

Negotiating this “something” underscores multiple understandings of responsibility and reciprocity. For example, a request from one organization to compensate for time and resources (e.g., space for interviews, use of staff time, or borrowing of materials for document analysis) sparked a dialogue within the research team about the efficacy, ethics, and equity of contributing to one site when we could not contribute to all. This dilemma highlighted internal ideological differences and multiple cultural orientations. It also highlighted differences in alignment to our graduate students, who were at once research partners with cultural capital and research servants with little political capital on the team. Across the team we did not share a cultural understanding of the professor–graduate student relationship and its moral and ethical responsibilities. Three of the four GRAs were from the same department in critical/cultural studies, whereas one was in a different discipline at a different university. Two of the academic researchers were linked through similar epistemologies; one was from a completely different discipline and research tradition. I was the fourth, connected primarily by personal and shared relationships and principles to one of my research partners, although she was from a different faculty, theoretical tradition, and experiential background. Our relationships and our perspectives of responsibility and reciprocity to our ISO collaborators and to each other were thus influenced by our various positionalities and complicated by particular cultural and structural issues (Fenwick et al., 2006, 2007).

Negotiating culture and identity: An autoethnographic take

Tierney (1998) has asserted, “Autoethnography confronts dominant forms of representation and power in an attempt to reclaim, through self-reflective response, representational spaces that have marginalized those of us at the borders” (p. 66). The autoethnographic form encourages me to bring my “outsider” eyes to the intersecting and often conflicting cultures in which I felt marginalized; that is, the research culture of critical/cultural studies, the mainstream academic culture at the university, the sociopolitical culture of the ISO, and the disciplinary culture of adult learning. At the same time, as a senior academic, administrator, and graduate supervisor I bring “insider” eyes to the cultures in which I have some hard-won status. My insider/outsider view opens up a cultural conflict, a space that autoethnography problematizes.

As a genre that connects the personal to the cultural, and in harmony with my primary work in narrative, autoethnography felt like the most productive approach for situating myself within these social contexts (Reed-Danahay, 1997). Usually writing in the first person, authors reflexively use their experiences in a culture, looking more deeply at self-other interactions, and writing themselves in as major characters. These texts can feature dialogue, emotion, and self-consciousness in relational and institutional stories affected by history, social structure, and

culture (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). Not surprisingly, this use of self as the only data source has been roundly challenged and autoethnographers criticized as self-indulgent, narcissistic, egocentric, and tunnel visioned (cf. Coffey, 1999; Sparkes, 2002). However, autoethnography is not necessarily limited in these ways because we accumulate our experiences not in a social vacuum (Stanley, 1993) but, rather, as actors in chains of relationships with others. We are protagonists in the narratives of others, as they are in ours. As we struggle to make some sense of who, what, and especially how we are in a narrative, autoethnography allows us to situate ourselves in the social and institutional frameworks that contextualize our personal and professional identities.

Sparkes (2002) has suggested that autoethnography is at the boundaries of academic research because such accounts do not sit comfortably with traditional criteria used to judge qualitative inquiry. Charmaz (2005) cited Christians' (2000) and Denzin's (1989) call for "interpretive sufficiency" that "takes into account cultural complexity and multiple interpretations of life" (p. 528). She argued that a strong combination of credibility and originality increases resonance and the usefulness of the narrative. I hope that providing a "method of questioning identity and difference constructed within different communities" (Fenwick, 2000, p. 54) will resonate with feminist researchers and students who, depending on the context, find themselves at once on the inside looking out and the outside looking in at cultures to which they somewhat belong: experienced and novice researcher, protector and protected, member and interloper, authoritative and lacking confidence, nuanced and detached; guilt ridden and forgiven.

The cultural interloper: Responsibility and resilience

"Time to put my money where my mouth is," I thought as the weekend wore on and I became more silent and guilt ridden. My claim to feminist narrative inquiry was unchallenged, my "expert" scholarly reputation in gender-technology-learning interactions was not in danger; for hours delegates to WomenSpace had been congratulating me on my paper and sharing their stories of alienation from technology.

I felt fraudulent, however, an impostor to feminism. I had been working and writing out of my experience as the lone female instructional designer in a unit of young men with technolust; a female faculty member who, along with my colleagues, struggled with learning technologies; an online learner; a manager of an instructional development team; and an academic administrator in a faculty on the fringes of the academic culture (cf. Campbell, 2004; Campbell & Gramlich, 2002). I was writing about agency but failing to take the plunge into moral action. I felt a lack of moral coherence among my various social and political identities. Stacey (1988) has helped me understand this when she talked about the researcher's struggle with empowerment, requiring a personal transformation from awareness (my current state) to activism (my borderland). Likewise, Overall (1997) has explored the origins of feeling fraudulent from the perspective of a feminist instructor and "sketches some ways of revisioning, if not resolving, the moral quandaries the feeling of fraudulence reveals" (p. 1). For me, this was a learning project with its usual attendant fears, tensions, disorientations, and confrontations, all necessary ingredients for a new frame: a perspectives transformation. To become morally active was to risk "getting roughed up [and] losing battles and projects" (LeCompte, 1993, p. 14) in multiple intersecting cultures.

Being "roughed up" is a shared women's experience in my family. Both sisters work in particular dominant and often incoherent cultures. One is a feminist philosopher and women's studies scholar in a historically traditional university explicitly resisting the suspicion of women in philosophy, let alone one who grounds her work in resistance to mainstream academic and sexual culture. The other is a (White) adult educator working for an energy company and straddling the political and cultural agendas of academic, corporate, and First Nations communities. An English

war bride, my grandmother had married a detective in the juvenile division of the Edmonton Police Service shortly after the Great War. Trying to find authentic ways to stay productive and socially engaged in her rough Prairie home, she parlayed her experience as a British headmistress into social action, running a “home for wayward boys.” My mother and her sisters grew up in this extended family.

My mother, an English teacher, asked for the troubled students, the 16-year-old boys in the 7th grade waiting to appear in juvenile court. She fought for permission to substitute popular adolescent literature, including *Mad* magazine, with which she taught satire, for the grade-level anthologies of the day. She encouraged the boys to write about their lives, subsequently using their own narratives as texts. She was a leader in a growing, collaborative community of educators who created and shared authentic learning activities and affected educational policy and curriculum decisions at a regional level. In the 1960s being a working mother was a source of social and professional tension, but still she attended evening and summer classes, working toward an advanced degree in curriculum development.

I remember her self-doubt and hurt when criticized by her male colleagues for “hoarding” a job that should rightfully go to a young man with a family to support. In spite of social resistance to her role, however, Mom exemplified moral agency and critical reflective practice. Although she would not have described herself as a feminist teacher, for her, teaching was a critical, relational, purposive moral and political act that embodied inclusion, collaboration, and social action. Her work represented a small slice of personal authority, a challenge to her carefully protected relationships with the important men in her life: principals, educational colleagues, and my father. Much later I began to understand how my mother and my grandmother were engaged in a relational process of identity construction with their friends and colleagues in the narratives “we create and tell about our lives; how we externalize ourselves to ourselves and to others” (Watson, 2006, p. 510). The dilemma for me, living as I do in a political culture of assumed equity, relates to the legitimacy of silent action that could be criticized as unfulfilled promise. I characterize my grandmother and mother as “witnessing” for their social values and my sisters acting directly for theirs. I think my behavior has been closer to that of my ancestors, and I worry that it is no longer sufficient or agentic in light of my social obligations.

Fraudulent identities: Responsibilities and resistance

Therefore, it was not until I was asked to participate in the 2002 national WomenSpace symposium and listened to the stories of authentic women that I confronted my moral incoherence. There was a lawyer identifying spaces for human rights challenges in the Charter related to the Canadian Tri-Councils’ Canada Research Chairs program.¹ The fierce director of an immigrant women’s service organization was there to force conversation about the denial of professional accreditation for new Canadians. The chair of a volunteer board working with women living in poverty was exhausted from writing grants to replace dwindling government support for literacy programs and the required quarterly accountability reports. A community activist described responding to the disappearances of sex trade workers by leading a local campaign against Internet pornography and recruitment sites for the sex trade. My research and teaching made not one whit of difference to the lives of these women, although later, when I realized that access to my intellectual and political credibility as a university administrator did, I was able to partially reconcile this tension.

Returning home, I laid down my burden of guilt to Donna, my colleague from the Faculty of Education. A new strategic grants program had just been announced: The federal government's department of human resources had an agenda based on the identification of essential skills for employability. After our chat we invited a junior colleague onto the team as the main investigator, Donna sketched out a proposal to partner with the ISO, and we identified graduate students in Donna's department.

I was pleased to be able to work with Donna, but at the same time I needed the connection to legitimate my involvement. As Overall (1997) has expressed, feeling fraudulent was not a matter of "insincerity or dishonesty" but, rather, a "disjunction between who I am expected to be and . . . what I think I actually can do" (p. 2). Certainly, at least implicitly, the institutional culture has made university continuing education faculties like mine complicit in our identities of "research impostors." With partner communities such as abused women, immigrants, seniors, those isolated by distance, urban-rural alliances, struggling farmers, second-language learners, Alzheimer's advocacy groups, Aboriginal health educators, and many others, multidisciplinary both defines and separates us. Forms of emancipatory action research, often validated through informal as well as formal learning contexts, have located us on the margins in academe. This situates many faculty members uneasily in the liminal spaces (Lugones, 2003) between community-based participatory research in its many collaborative forms of knowledge mobilization and the expectation to recover program costs and participate in the more familiar research economy of externally funded multiyear studies and peer-reviewed communication. My explicit charge as associate dean of research to grow the research culture (i.e., do "real" research) produced stern resistance inside the faculty and benign skepticism among associate dean peers.

The institutional expectation to recover costs has jeopardized the programs serving communities least able to afford rising costs to access. The women's program, for example, could not sustain its programming and was forced to close in the mid 1990s. This program, along with the program in public legal education, had led the social justice work in our faculty. Still, legacy relationships provided an introduction to the director of ISO A to propose a collaborative action research project, working with staff and clients to explore ISO A as a learning organization. Gail, my GRA, and I were to work directly with the women in the computer literacy classes while developing a profile of the organization. Gail could claim credibility as a teacher of English as a second language, and I came imbued with the status afforded me as a professor and researcher in learning technologies. My faculty's professional master's program made access to full-time GRAs rare; I was delighted to work with one from Education and resolved to shape a collegial experience. Our theoretical backgrounds did not at first overlap, but we were connected through Donna and were each determined to exceed her expectations of us as researchers. We sat down with our calendars and blocked out every Friday afternoon for one year to work in the field; the larger study would draw together a synthesis from each project site.

We quickly realized, however, that the essential skills identified by the funding agency were contrary to the women's sociocultural experiences and needs. ISO A's board approved the general tenor of the questions but appeared to have little interest in the study's results. They began to negotiate obliquely, through stories and allusions, the direction they felt the research ought to follow, and this continued throughout the research. For example, at a community forum presenting research on immigrant elders, one administrator drew Gail aside to discuss her concerns about such research being taken up from a neoliberal standpoint. We soon discovered that telling us directly that our research questions were not helpful was considered disrespectful.

We slowly learned that they placed more value on the ability to deal with differences of opinion through subtle nuance, not explicitly naming issues or personal agendas but referring to preferred outcomes and directions. Building strong relationships with us was critical to the whole research process for them.

Mentoring: Resistance and reconciliation

To acquire initial access to the organizations, we had relied on our prior relationships with key organizational insiders; these relationships began to invoke obligations that moved well beyond and sometimes conflicted with our roles as researchers. This was illustrated when I received a call from a program manager for a funding organization for women-oriented research and development programs in the province. ISO A had included my name and university affiliation as a reference in a proposal to develop educational materials and activities on arranged marriages. Apparently, I could contribute to their political capital through my perceived institutional status and affiliation, signaling implicit institutional support for the project, but I was momentarily discomfited because I had not been directly involved in developing the proposal. Feeling entangled in a relational web of shifting responsibilities—ethical, institutional, and personal—I started talking about the critical social work of the ISO while quickly searching my memory for any discussion of the project. Did my political frame oblige me to support the proposal in any event? Related programs in my faculty in which I had had a small role meant that I could reconcile any issues of academic integrity. I might also be able to confront my guilt over my false research identity and flabby participation. Moral crisis averted, however: I heard the program manager acknowledge the skills needed for these organizations to circumnavigate the formal intent and expectations of the funders to win support for critical social action. They knew how to barter their moral authority for our academic voice of political authority, a fair enough trade.

Most of the organization's clients, some of whom were political refugees, were well-educated professionals with high socioeconomic status in their cultures who needed survival skills that were socially related, for example learning how to navigate the health care system or parent teenagers attending a culturally incompatible school system. We arrived at the door, presumptuously thinking of ourselves as voices for the oppressed, wanting to provide a vehicle for them to tell their stories of betrayal and reluctant enculturation, expecting them to trust us as bridges to and translators of the dominant culture. This would go a long way in my project of personal redemption for being an inauthentic researcher and supervisor. Such arrogance: We recorded mostly silence! As the study progressed, growing frustration with our ineffectiveness prompted Gail and me to become members of the organization, joining political and social events and agreeing to participate on working committees. At the same time, as an insider serving for several years adjudicating research proposals I tried to interpret the granting agency's policies in ways that would subvert their employability agenda and permit us to negotiate what the guarded and political ISO boards set for us as the ways into their communities.

As I began to find legitimate ways to contribute to the project, however, the social and political climate in the faculty began to deteriorate, and my responsibilities as associate dean steadily increased. We encountered implicit institutional resistance to their administrators' research programs. Site trips with Gail had to be cancelled, rescheduled, and cancelled again, and finally Gail managed them herself. She faithfully continued to visit the organization and develop the analysis protocols, always aware that she had little political status either with our community partners or in the larger research team. I felt fraudulent as the authoritative, mentoring academic.

What would my mother have sacrificed to stay faithful to her curriculum group? I felt that my zone of moral incoherence was widening and that it was unlikely that I would be able to reconcile personal integrity with moral obligation and professional face.

At the end of the first year all national research teams funded by the federal department met for a project research overseen by several bureaucrats from the funding agencies. Our team planned and hosted the event. My administrative status was useful for securing meeting space and leveraging additional faculty resources. Each national team was able to support the attendance of one community partner, and three of our ISO participated. At this point in the project we fixed the funders with the calm gaze of moral authority and asked questions designed to highlight the wrongheadedness of the essential skills approach. What surprised us was the indifference (or contempt) with which some of the external research teams treated their graduate students. We facilitated one session at which one researcher, without making eye contact, directed Gail to “take notes” of the conversation. Certainly such a task is routinely expected of graduate students, but underlining the unequal power structure in so casual a way aroused a sense of protectiveness. I took notes instead: Gail was my research partner and I acknowledged her as my guide to, and more active partner in, critical research. This reflection of our relationship, developed as more of a practical necessity than an explicit value, was a challenge to the dominant notion of the supervisory relationship held by the external teams. Nevertheless, this experience catalyzed a cycle of reflection about graduate supervision and how I was constructing it.

Reflecting on her metaphor of academic supervision, MacKinnon (2004) contrasted the concept of paternalism with fiduciary relationship, which is “essentially an ethical one of promoting the welfare of the student” (p. 403) depending on trust and respecting but not exploiting knowledge and power differentials. Greater knowledge and power have “correspondingly greater obligations” (p. 403) in a fiduciary relationship. Mutuality and reciprocity are at the core of this relationship. MacKinnon acknowledged that her experience as a lawyer influences her construction of the metaphor of fiduciary responsibility. My moral development within a family of female social activists, then, must frame my cycle of critical reflection into facilitation of social action. This process is captured in Andresen’s (1999) notion of mentoring into scholarship; mentorship as pedagogy, facilitating social action; and mentoring into agency.

Accepting that agency is authentically located in a caring ethic, I found other ways to enact it. In the second year of the study two coinciding events suddenly opened up a space where I felt could legitimately, authoritatively contribute to the project: My senior colleague took a study leave in a different province, and my junior colleagues relocated to a different university. From feeling the least integral, intellectually honest member of the team, I found a valuable role as servant-mentor and organized a regular learning circle for the three resident graduate students. We met on Fridays and shared relational work, bringing food and gifts of works-in-progress, fluidly shifting and often permeating the boundaries of teacher/learner, personal life/professional life, and spheres of authentic knowing and practice while acting from within them as constituted by the institutional culture (cf. Lal, 1996), resolving the hurts of unequal status in the team, working the tangled gut of cultural insider: theoretical, social, and political. After Andresen’s (1999) characterization of effective supervision as “the point at which scholarship gives birth to scholarship” (p. 30), I would characterize this interplay as the point at which mentorship gives birth to moral agency.

Concluding thoughts

In previous work I have used the notions of disorienting dilemmas to understand transformative learning and action of designers and the faculty with whom they work. I have also explored agency as a framework for instructional designers' practice with faculty clients (cf. Schwier, Campbell, & Kenny, 2007), nibbling at the challenge of moral coherence and institutional culture. In this paper I again pick up the thread of moral coherence to weave together recurring themes of dilemma, conflict, and transformative action, in my "responsibility to offer the gift of reasonable insight and, if possible, relational bridge building" (Berry, 2006) to colleagues similarly engaged in identity work with their communities.

Using a poststructuralist lens, Ropers-Huilman (1995) explored the ever-shifting power relationships and multiple sites of knowledge socially constructed between students and feminist teachers. She reminded me that this account of the tensions and alignments and realignments of my relationships within institutionalized cultures is informed by multiple voices and conversations but is ultimately constructed to be self-centric. The interlinked relational, political, and social issues of collaboration surfaced individual reflection and collective discussion of multiple and sometimes conflicting roles, even though it did not always engage us consistently or equitably. A sense of responsibility in our relationships was differently constituted by the various researchers and influenced by our particular orientations to the community and the academy, and our various senses of research protocol in general and especially this project. The feminist research principles many of us shared pulled us to respond to inequities between and among the researchers (Naples, 2003) and were in constant tension. Would we—would I—be able to make a substantive contribution acting out of a "sacred epistemology" that is ethical, political, and transformative, and based in reciprocity and care (Lincoln & Denzin, 2000)? Would I be able to reconcile my former research life with the evolution of my research identity as feminist mentor? Would I redeem myself as an authentic social activist in my limited sociocultural and generational spheres? If, as Overall (1997) has suggested, the feeling of fraudulence helps keep me honest and compels the integrity of my feminist research and practice, these questions may be reconciled but need not be finally resolved. In fact, the "ability to produce and understand *conflicting* moral systems" is a tool for challenging the "anaesthetic grip of the normal" and a "cultural and personal resource of enormous value" (Boyle, 1999, p. 521, emphasis in the original).

The poststructural text demands a critical exorcism in which we confront and reveal our positionalities at various times and in different relationships. Constructing an autoethnographic text through the lens of feminist poststructuralism "works to hold self and culture together . . . writes a world in a state of flux and movement—between story and context, writer and reader, crisis and denouement . . . creating charged moments of clarity, connection and change" (Holman Jones, 2006, p. 766). Revisioning my sociopolitical context through this public text underlines the importance of writing as a basis for personal and social change. In the writing and the reading, then, autoethnographies may be redemptive texts.

Notes

1. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (<http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/charter>) prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender. The Canada Research Chairs program was established in 1987 by the Federal research funding agencies, the Tri-Council, to “strengthen Canada’s academic research base and help Canada play a leading role in natural sciences and engineering health, and the social sciences and humanities . . . (increasing) capacity to generate new knowledge”(Begin-Heick, 2002, p. 7). After the first three cycles of the program, the CRC Secretariat observed that women appeared to be nominated for Chairs in lower proportions than men and that the nominations did not reflect their representation among university faculty.

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