he smiled, and his mind continued to amass memories. But the one thing that I am certain did not enter this mind in that precise moment was that a daughter he had yet to meet, or even consider (she would come five years later), would write about his first step onto Afghan soil some 30 years in the future: write about that first step he took into the Afghan-Soviet War; the same first step that set off a contagion that impacted our family for three decades.

Thirty years—for thirty years my father let the events that led to his posttraumatic stress sit on the inside, buried somewhere in the crevices of his mind. The war we read about, but really knew nothing about, followed my family for two generations. And as a third one began through my sister’s children, my father finally began to speak of the events that led to this moment: he began to tell me about the war, what he saw and what he did, and what he smelt and felt and could never forget. We’re now at the beginning of trying to understand how that day in 1985 led to a family taunted by violence, and hate, and silence.

“War is romantic. But that romance fades away when you’ve seen your first two or three dead bodies. And whatever is left turns into hatred when you see bodies as torn, ripped apart, as masses of flesh,” he said to me in 2016.

“Returning home, no one waited for us,” he explained.

“Life continued while we were at war, and no one seemed to be aware of the carnage. Returning, we were not heroes, we couldn’t get jobs. And so the Afghan war birthed many killers, drug addicts, alcoholics—they’re all the same. You stopped seeing people as humans, after the war. If before the war killing a person was difficult, after the war it became nothing, because you didn’t see them as people, you saw them as meat. This happened because we lost our humanity.”

(Interview with author, 2016)
My father and Mother met in Afghanistan—she was a civil employee working in a warehouse laundromat in Shindand Air Base in Western Afghanistan. Her role was distributing fresh uniforms, linen and other textiles to Soviet soldiers. My Ukrainian-Russian Mother ended up working in the war after an argument with her mother, my grandmother. She was saving and planning to take a cruise on the Danube, which culminated in my grandmother accusing my Mother of abandoning her. So, in her stubborn might, my Mother decided to forget the holiday and go to Afghanistan instead, where she stayed and worked for two years, from 1983 to 1985.

My parents married in 1986 after my father’s first tour. My Mother was already pregnant with my sister, who was conceived in Afghanistan—something none of the children knew until 2017 because no one bothered to tell us, much like our family history in general: everything is shrouded in silence, as if it didn’t occur in the first place. And the thing is, we never even knew what to ask our parents about for more information, because we never knew what was, and is, missing in the first place.

My sister was born in 1987 in Russia; I came in 1990 in Ukraine, as did my little brother three years later in 1993.

In her seminal book, *Trauma and Recovery*, Judith Herman (1992) writes that “[t]he ordinary response to atrocities is to banish them from consciousness” (p. 1). This book brings the atrocities back into consciousness. The leaders of the former Soviet Union turned their invasion of Afghanistan into a hidden war—but though the events may be long gone, the trauma of the war continues and moves through generations, and until it is confronted it will continue to cast its shadow forward.

In this book I uncover the private as it connects to the public, because no matter how hard they tried to hide the war, it is public, and it continues to impact the people of the former Soviet Union, and lives on through the first post-Soviet generation.

(Denejkina, 2019, pp. 200–203)

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The above is an excerpt from Чёрный Тюльпан (*Black Tulip*), a novella-length exo-autoethnography. Чёрный Тюльпан was written as part of my Ph.D. research into intergenerational trauma transmission from veteran parents to children. This excerpt was part of the introduction to Чёрный Тюльпан and now serves as the introduction to the story I am sharing with you today about the emergence and development of exo-autoethnography. I do this to let this methodology out into the world and into your hands, in the hope that your stories and the stories of your community can be told using exo-autoethnography.

Autoethnography brings the social sciences closer to literature (Ellis, 1995, pp. 3–4). In its merger of academic research with creative writing, autoethnography connects the personal with the cultural, producing scholarship that “at minimum, places the author’s lived experience within a social and cultural context” (Reed-Danahay, 2009, p. 30). As a research method and method of writing, autoethnography is defined as “an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno)” (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011).

Challenging the “scientific approaches to inquiry that intentionally separate the Observer and the Observed” (Anderson & Glass-Coffin, 2013, p. 58), within the autoethnographic method the researcher is both the examiner and the initial focus of the research. This autoethnographic research is the starting point and filter for a cultural analysis, producing an ethnographic account of the “I”: the personal experience in order to understand broader cultural experience.

In a conversation with Luigi Gariglio, Carolyn Ellis states that “good ethnography is also auto-ethnographic and good autoethnography is also ethnographic” (Ellis & Gariglio, 2018, p. 564). As a magnification and expansion of ethnographic research and writing, therefore, an ethnography must “make use of personal experience, memories, or storytelling techniques” (Denejkina, 2017; see also Adams & Manning, 2015; Denzin, 2014; Ellis et al., 2011) to be considered autoethnographic, while an autobiography “without any fieldwork, observation, acknowledgement of extant research or theories, or cultural participation and analysis cannot be an autoethnography” (Adams & Manning, 2015, p. 352).

Exo-autoethnography is a step further in the expansion and magnification of ethnographic research and writing. The idea of exo-autoethnography came to my mind in the first few weeks of my Ph.D. candidature in sociology. In fact, it came to me on a train on my way to campus as I was reading about meta-autoethnography in Carolyn Ellis’ *Revision: Autoethnographic Reflections on Life and Work* (2009). I emailed my supervisor for validation and advice. The response was positive. From that day I began to develop the method of exo-autoethnographic research and writing for a mixed-methods study of intergenerational transmission of trauma, moving beyond the personal experience of the researcher. In this first conception, the method is used to connect the present with a history of “the other” (in my case, the parent) through...
intergenerational transmission of trauma and experiences of an upbringing influenced by parental trauma.

Exo-autoethnography was developed as part of my research into transmission of combat-related trauma from parent to child. Preeminent Russian journalist Artyom Borovik (1990) wrote that “Afghanistan became part of each person who fought there. And each of the half million soldiers who went through this war became part of Afghanistan” (p. 1). My research asked: Did Afghanistan become part of even more than the people who fought there? Do its remnants persist in the children of the Soviet veterans who returned home?

This research was directly inspired and influenced by my personal and familial experiences of war and trauma (my father served in the Soviet army during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan), and used a mixed-methods approach to data collection and analysis through interviews and questionnaires.

Returning to the opening excerpt of this chapter, the short passage I’ve included is used to illustrate how the exo-autoethnographic study was set up. It briefly contextualizes my personal experience, growing up with a father traumatized from his two tours of Afghanistan, and provides two settings to the story: that of the Soviet-Afghan War and that of the home in which the war had a forever presence. This passage ends by mentioning the broader impact of the war, that on my community, which is vital in exo-autoethnographic research, as this methodology incorporates four distinct groups of participants (detailed in the section “Steps in Conducting an Exo-autoethnographic Inquiry”) to tell a holistic story of trauma transmission through the voices of all participants. Here, the excerpt sets up two domains that will be investigated in their relationship to the ongoing impact of the war—the private (familial) and the cultural public (communal).

**EXO-AUTOETHNOGRAPHY: DEFINITION AND (INITIAL) PURPOSE**

Exo-autoethnography builds on Ellis et al.’s definition of autoethnography (2011) to become:

> Exo-autoethnography is an approach to research that seeks to analyse (graphy) individual and private experience (auto) as directed by the other’s experience or history (exo) to better understand a history that impacted the researcher by proxy, and personal and community experience (ethno) as related to that history.

(Chylavski, 2017)

In building and expanding on autoethnographic research and writing, exo-autoethnography encompasses the aims and elements of good autoethnography, particularly commenting and critiquing cultural practices, contributing to existing research, and compelling a response from its audience (Holman Jones, Adams, & Ellis, 2013).

Exo-autoethnography utilizes a rigorous approach to the ethnographic exploration of the self by combining evocative and analytic autoethnographies with a third element: Exo-autoethnography places focus on a history that impacted the researcher by proxy, rather than focusing only on events directly experienced by the researcher.

Exo-autoethnography connects the researcher’s life with a history never directly experienced by focusing on the intergenerational transmission of trauma as well as personal experiences of an upbringing influenced by parental trauma. As there are surface similarities—particularly due to their focus on trauma—it is important that exo-autoethnography and “post-memory” are not confused: Exo-autoethnography analyzes parental trauma and its impact on the researcher through the familial processes, resulting in the direct or indirect transmission of trauma, while post-memory is about “the relationship of the second generation to powerful, often traumatic, experiences that preceded their births but that were nevertheless transmitted to them so deeply as to seem to constitute memories in their own right” (Hirsch, 2008, p. 103).

A 2017 review and study into the transmission of trauma in refugee families highlights how limited the knowledge is on intergenerational trauma, noting that a considerable amount of work is still needed to address the current gap in research (Sangalang & Vang, 2017, p. 10). By using exo-autoethnography, my research worked to address this gap by interrogating the notion of intergenerational transmission of trauma from the experiences of veterans and children of veterans of the Soviet-Afghan War.

Trauma transmission is an important part of the human experience and its history (Danieli, 1998), so too is its relationship to culture. Therefore, beyond the familial environment (or transmission from parent to child), “entire bodies of human endeavor are vehicles of transmission: oral history, literature and drama, history and politics, religious ritual and writings, cultural traditions and the study thereof, such as anthropology, biology, and genetics” (Danieli, 1998, pp. 9–10). John P. Wilson and Boris Drozdek (2007) call the relation of trauma and culture an important connection “because traumatic experiences are part of the life cycle, universal in manifestation and occurrence, and typically demand a response from culture in terms of healing.
and care” (p. 367). Though human beings are equal in their susceptibility to pain, culture is a factor that creates a difference to the human response to pain and trauma: Culture plays a part in both the identification and the treatment of its sufferers, “even in the individual’s willingness to be identified as a victim” (Merridale, 2000, p. 40).

Similar, or analogous, trauma may be experienced differently between cultures, communities, and even homes. This can lead to feelings of an isolated experience of a trauma that has occurred across a whole community, or even generation. The sharing of personal experience through research and writing, produced by exo-autoethnographic practice, aims to give voice to the silent stories of others. Further, the exo-autoethnographic process may be purgative for the researcher and a tool to reclaim their agency.

Wilson and Drozdek (2007) ask, “How does a culture define trauma?” “Is the experience of psychological trauma the same in all cultures?” and “Is trauma in one culture necessarily viewed as a trauma in another culture?” (pp. 371–375). These questions highlight the gap in information pertaining to trauma studies, our understanding of trauma, the gap in information relating to the transmission of trauma between generations, and its impact on cultures. Trauma and the multidimensional nature of cultures necessitate a theoretical framework to address issues relating to these questions and our understanding of trauma in culture (Wilson & Drozdek, 2007, p. 371). In its initial development, exo-autoethnography works to address this gap in knowledge by producing research and writing to address trauma transmission from a personal perspective and the perspective and experiences of participants.

**STEPS IN CONDUCTING AN EXO-AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC INQUIRY**

Exo-autoethnography analyzes the personal experiences of children of parents with combat-related post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in order to understand the broader cultural impact of trauma transmission from parents to children. Combat-related PTSD affects familial relationships and psychological adjustments of family members through direct transmission (PTSD symptoms, such as anxiety and dissociation, transmitted to the child through projection and identification) and indirect transmission (PTSD symptoms impacting or affecting the child’s distress through problems in the functioning of the family unit) [Galovski & Lyons, 2004; see also Dekel & Goldblatt, 2008]). To analyze the impact of direct and indirect trauma transmission from parents to children, approaches to understanding intergenerational transmission of trauma include four models: sociocultural and socialization model (Danieli, 1998); psychodynamic relational model (Dekel & Goldblatt, 2008); family systems and familial communication (Kellermann, 2009); and the biological or genetic model (Kellermann, 2001, p. 263). My study used these four theoretical approaches within an exo-autoethnographic framework to understand the level of impact the Soviet-Afghan War had, and continues to have, on the first post-Soviet generation (for a detailed account of these approaches to understanding intergenerational transmission of trauma, see Denejkina, 2019, pp. 7–13).

The impact of the event analyzed by exo-autoethnography can begin generations prior to the birth of the researcher (Denejkina, 2017), and it is this event—in the case of my Ph.D. research, the Soviet-Afghan War—that influences the researcher and has shaped their life through the process of trauma transmission. To understand the personal and cultural experiences and impact of the Soviet-Afghan War on the first post-Soviet generation, in conducting my exo-autoethnographic study four distinct primary informants were identified:

1. **The Self**: The primary researcher of this study (the primary researcher, who was impacted by the event through the intergenerational transmission of parental trauma)

2. **The Other**: The father of the researcher, who is a returned Soviet veteran of the Soviet-Afghan War (the individual whose initial trauma influences their offspring [the researcher] through intergenerational transmission of trauma)

3. **The Others**: The returned Soviet veterans of the same war, who have children who fall into the first post-Soviet generation (a group of individuals who were traumatized by the same event as The Other and who are connected by said event) and whose initial trauma influenced their own offspring through intergenerational transmission of trauma)

4. **The Community**: The offspring of the returned Soviet veterans of the Soviet-Afghan War, who like the researcher are part of the first post-Soviet generation (a group of individuals who were impacted by the same event through the intergenerational transmission of parental trauma [and are connected by the said event], similarly to the researcher)

As with ethnographic immersion, in exo-autoethnographic data collection the researcher returns to the place of the traumatic event, which, in
my case, was returning to the former Soviet Union (post-Soviet society) to conduct fieldwork interviews. The return to that initial place of the traumatic event is about connecting the past with the present. The return can be physical (geographical: here, I returned to Ulyanovsk, Russia; though not my place of birth, which was Mykolaiv, Ukraine, it was the place of my formative years, and where I made the earliest memories of my relationship with my father), and theoretical and emotive (by collecting data through photo albums, journal entries, oral histories, photographs: here, I began my return by looking at photo albums from my childhood, and from my parents’ childhoods, collecting oral histories from family members, and interviews with participants, including The Other, The Others, and The Community). I expanded The Community participant group to include other family members (not just children) of Soviet veterans. This was done due to the collective trauma resulting from the war and the Soviet Union more broadly, and shows how the exo-autoethnographic method can be adapted to the specifics of the study.

As exo-autoethnography seeks to analyze the individual experience to better understand a history that impacted the researcher by proxy, as well as the personal and community experience as related to that history, the beginning of my research needed to look at collective trauma as an outcome of the Soviet Union. To understand the impact of trauma transmission from parents to children in a post-Soviet society, part of my research included an inquiry into the impact of collective trauma on post-Soviet society in general (for a discussion on collective trauma, see Dobrenko & Sheherbenok, 2011; Kellermann, 2007; Somasundaram, 2007). This was due, in part, to Russia’s ongoing issues with the understanding, acceptance, and treatment of psychological trauma being connected to the disappearance of individual trauma during the Soviet Union era. This disappearance is part of the zeitgeist of the USSR, and it helped to explain the qualitative data I collected as part of my interviews during fieldwork.

To do exo-autoethnography, the researcher engages with themselves to produce the evocative autoethnographic portion of the study and in an analytic exploration and analysis of individual and The Other’s experience. To attain broader cultural understanding of the issue, the researcher also engages with participants beyond the self, which take the aforementioned three forms:

1. The Other, directing the experience of the researcher (The Self) impacted by proxy
2. The Others, directing the experience of The Community by proxy
3. The Community, impacted by the experience of The Others by proxy

Exo-autoethnography can be used in qualitative and mixed-methods research. In a qualitative approach to data collection and analysis, this can be achieved in narrative inquiry and thematic analyses of interviews, including introspection of the self through autoethnography. The process of collecting oral history data through open-ended interviews allows the researcher and participants to form a collaborative relationship, providing a personal understanding of the subjective experience of the traumatic event(s) and gathering firsthand accounts of the said event(s) (Leavy, 2011). A mixed-methods approach might provide deeper insight, and, in this case, a quantitative method can be used alongside the aforementioned qualitative inquiry, using questionnaires and statistical analyses. Though my quantitative sample was too small to generalize (the low power for the analysis means that caution must be used in interpreting these findings), in my research, the use of interviews and surveys allowed me to compare the findings in both methods, as well as to make a comparison between my qualitative and quantitative data analyses, which provided more insight into the attitudes presented in the interviews and explained the questionnaire results.

Black Tulip, Excerpt Two

Intergenerational trauma transmission was first observed in 1966 when large numbers of children of Nazi Holocaust survivors sought treatment in clinics in Canada (Danieli, 1998). The process of trauma transmission is connected—the transmission of characteristics from parents to their children (Kellermann, 2013, p. 33). The focus on intergenerational transmission of trauma is new; what is even more recent is the recognition of PTSD by the American Psychiatric Association. Only in 1980 was PTSD officially recognized in the third edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM); we are still awaiting the inclusion of intergenerational trauma transmission in the DSM.

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Last time I was here everything was big, tall, spacious. This time I am no longer a nine-year-old child at my grandmother’s apartment in Ulyanovsk, and it turns
out nothing was as big as it seemed back then, and yet everything is still the same. The bedroom my great-grandmother slept in is now my grandmother’s. The lounge room has the same sofa with a pull-out bed, or maybe it’s been updated—I can’t tell. The anteroom remains cosy and full of coats and shoes and boots, and hats in coat pockets and scarves draped on the coats.


I have not seen her for more than a decade. She is frail, unwell, older. So much older than I remembered. So much thinner, so much shorter. Before I finish writing this text, she is gone completely from the universe.

My grandmother spent her days with her next-door neighbor—her best friend. They were partners, partners in everything from grocery shopping together, to watching television, to eating and cooking, to merging their pensions and keeping the money hidden in my grandmother’s apartment, safe from her best friend’s son—who, they told me, was everything bad, and an addict.

I stayed at my grandmother’s home for the two weeks I conducted fieldwork interviews in the city. I slept on the foldout sofa like she used to when my great-grandmother was still alive.

Each night I would count how many days I had left here, including the first night: I still have fifteen days, today doesn’t count because it’s already night time; so that’s 14 days left. The last day doesn’t count because I will be leaving that day, so really, I only have 13 days left. Tomorrow doesn’t count because my interviews don’t start yet, plus I’m jetlagged; as such the day will be blurry. So really, I only have 12 days left here.

Okay, go to sleep.

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Was he always like this? I asked my grandmother one morning when my father was out of the apartment.

“Yes, but the war made him worse,” she replied.

“The day he came back, I was grilling cutlets for lunch. He ran into the kitchen screaming for me to stop.”

“He said it smelt like people.”

To this day, my father has not spoken about the atrocities he saw in the war without first censoring himself. And I don’t doubt that he never will.

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I do not remember a time I was not afraid of my father; there are glimpses of happiness, of course, but never safety or an absence of eggshells, or an absence of emotional abuse, or physical abuse, for that matter. I know he loved me, and I know he loves me, still. But there is a hate that burns within, switched on by something big, or something small—like the time I asked to hold my own passport in Frankfurt and he erupted yelling into my face as if I had my Mother’s face and every face and every other thing he hated; or the time my Mother was helping me with homework and couldn’t go to the store around the corner to purchase whatever it was that he wanted because he was too lazy and again he erupted and I cried in fear at my desk frozen to the chair in a single position not moving my eyes away from the same white page until he disappeared somewhere just so he wouldn’t notice me; or that one time when I was 12, sitting on the sofa in our beautiful new house in Kellyville Ridge, in North-Western Sydney, when he came up to my face with a closed fist—his red face was almost glowing, and I could see the waves of hatred floating out of his head like ribbons as he told me that he would smash up my face if I said another word about whatever it was his was screaming about.

I was always aware that our family has a military background. The story came to me in fragmented parts, but I learnt of my father’s tour in Afghanistan from stories of how my parents met. My Mother, who worked in a military laundromat in Shindand, Herat Province, during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, told me this story once, or twice: they had mutual friends, and met one night when the group played cards. She didn’t like him at first, she told me, but then she did, and then he proposed while hospitalised, and then they were married, and then they had children, and then we are here.

In Slavic, Communist tradition, we grew up with the tragic rule to never discuss feelings, and so finding out that my father was a troubled man in his formative years came as no surprise. When he finally joined a military college at the age of 16, he was thrown into the violence of the Soviet army, swiftly climbed the ranks, and eventually served in Afghanistan as a lieutenant from 1984 to 1986, over two tours in Shindand and Kabul, completing his post at the age of 23.

We know that he was not a captive, but no one knows exactly what happened to my father during the war, or what he saw. He wrote my Mother letters—she threw these out following our migration to Australia in 1999, but says they were about missing her, and nothing else.

As we decided to adopt some Western traditions into our family, on Christmas Day of 2006 my father was setting up a barbeque to cook Shashlik, and I took the jovial opportunity of his good mood to ask about Afghanistan, and ultimately ruin his smile. His eyes turned glassy, pink, and he told me that he lost many friends. And then silence; our conversation ended with one question, and one sentence in response.

(Denejkina, 2019, pp. 231–233)
Within Чёрный Тюльпан (Black Tulip), my ex-autoethnography, I weave between my personal narrative in the present and reflections on past interactions and the relationship with my father. The present is the story of my time back in Russia, where I went to conduct my fieldwork and where my father was present. The past vignettes were of my childhood years, where I selected impactful, lasting moments of trauma and stress with my father as a central figure. I must add that I did not write about these events exhaustively, and to offer myself some protection in the process of writing, only those events that I have been able to reconcile were included in the writing. My exo-autoethnography does not start and end with me, as throughout I continue to weave the verbatim voices of my participants and scholarship on trauma transmission processes.

I adopted a rigid structure to Black Tulip for clarity and consistency for the reader. Within each chapter (bar the preface, introduction, and epilogue) this structure followed: element one—scholarly writing on psychological trauma and trauma transmission to provide an academic framework and context for the forthcoming narrative (this academic writing was written separately and was then broken into shorter sections, one across each chapter of Black Tulip); element two—my present narrative; element three—my past narrative (demarcated with italics) for the first six chapters of the text and the voices of my research participants for the next 11. This structure was developed with advice from my mentor and Ph.D. principal supervisor, Dr. Sue Joseph, as we discussed how best to integrate four distinct narrative elements into a single written work, while retaining clarity, consistency, and, importantly, a narrative. This structure is individual to this work of exo-autoethnography and might not be suitable to others—as long as the voice of all four distinct groups of participants are present, and the narrative is buttressed with scholarship, the structure you take in how you write your exo-autoethnography is as unique as your story.

The excerpt included here is a chapter that incorporated my past narrative as the third element. In this excerpt I begin with a brief discussion on trauma transmission and PTSD. My narrative then moves into the present, as I write about my time in Ulyanovsk, staying with my grandmother during my fieldwork. Every element of the work is connected to psychotraumatology, from the context of my surroundings and their impact on my psychology to the discussion I have with my grandmother about my father—everything is linked to the emotive and to the core of this work: traumatic stress and its ongoing impact. This excerpt ends with my past narrative, which touches not only on the familial and individual but also on the cultural and communal, all vital to research and narrative that incorporates four distinct groups of participants within two domains: the private (familial) and the cultural public (communal).

Because Black Tulip was written as part of my Ph.D. dissertation, results of the qualitative and quantitative data analyses were not incorporated into Black Tulip itself but remained within the dissertation analyses chapters. Were Black Tulip to stand alone from the dissertation, data results would need to be incorporated within the writing to be in line with the exo-autoethnographic approach. As exo-autoethnography is a branch out of autoethnographic research and writing, for this method to be considered academic like autoethnography, in addition to its use of memories, storytelling techniques, and personal experience, it must integrate fieldwork and analyses of data from the four distinct groups of participants.

VULNERABILITY AND SAFETY OF THE RESEARCHER

In an article concerning self-protection in autoethnographic research and writing, Chatham-Carpenter (2010) argues that though autoethnographers have made great considerations about the representation of others in their research and writing, “very few have written about the need to protect themselves in the process of doing autoethnographic writing” (p. 1). In her research on anorexia, with others and autoethnographically, Chatham-Carpenter concludes that “revisiting the pain is necessary in many types of autoethnographies”; however, meta-autoethnographic accounts of the writing process are needed for a discussion of how the autoethnographic work impacted the scholar, otherwise the “potential effects of such writing for autoethnographers is not always clear” (p. 10). Within autoethnographic research and writing, “secrets are disclosed and histories are made known” (Holman Jones et al., 2013, p. 24). These revelations open scholars up to potential criticism and attack but are revealed through autoethnography in “order to call attention to the vulnerabilities that other human beings may endure in silence and in shame” (p. 24). This means that on an individual, case-by-case basis, autoethnographers must consider and weigh up the benefits of the vulnerabilities they create for themselves through their disclosures with the impact and good that they believe these disclosures can do for others through their writing and research.
The exo-autoethnographic component of my research, Чёрный Тюльпан (Black Tulip), did not include a dedicated meta-autoethnography as suggested by the work of Chatham-Carpenter. However, it embraced vulnerability using an ethics of care with the purpose of bringing attention to the impact of intergenerational trauma within a familial environment: Part of my protecting myself in writing about childhood trauma and intergenerational trauma in Чёрный Тюльпан has been enacting an ethics of (self) care by controlling what is revealed (see Wall, 2008; Ellis, 1999)—that is, limiting myself in my exploration of my personal trauma “as a way of mitigating [psychosomatic] vulnerability” (Holman Jones et al., 2013, p. 24).

Autoethnography exposes the researcher, and to do exo-autoethnography well may well be damaging. Following my personal experience of a deep dive into exo-autoethnographic research into the impact of intergenerational trauma transmission, I have now made the decision to give myself time away from conducting autoethnography-related empirical research. I have made this decision as an ethics of (self) care. Interrogating the self and familial history exposes those secrets and histories, not only to the reader, but also to the researcher. My experience meant I had to relive instances of abuse and trauma from childhood, and I now need to recover and heal from these vulnerabilities, disclosures, and memories.

The dismissal of autoethnographic research as a navel-gazing exercise simply suggests that the critics do not understand the process of the research, because when done well, when done rigorously, when done with veracity and a yearning to understand the cultural phenomenon being interrogated, an autoethnographer must pick at themselves with rigor, must expose themselves to authenticity, and must do this to honor the participants who, like themselves, have given their raw stories, their raw histories, and their truth in the hope that we can learn from and not repeat the mistakes of the past.

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