

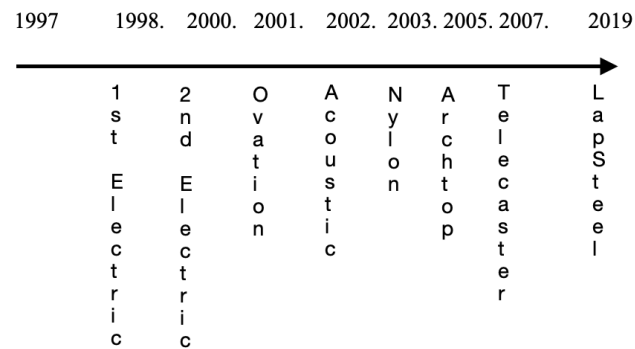
Autoethnographic Timelines

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Due to the nature of creating Autoethnographic timelines, documentation of its activity was chosen to be presented in text format. This is due to the personal nature involved in researching the self through an autoethnographic timeline. Created a personal timeline may have a deep emotional impact on some individuals, and sharing these experiences in an openly published online resource would be inappropriate and disrespectful towards individual privacy. In this case a small article documents the exercise, its practical application, as well as provides some examples from the bootcamp in cases where students felt secure enough to share their timelines publicly. Much of the method's theme and context of thought is derived from Hewn Chang's book *Autoethnography as Method* (Chang: 2016).

Autoethnographic Timelines were applied as part of the Memory Day section of our bootcamp. The exercise is meant to discover repetitions of behaviours, critical moments in self development, or overlooked reoccurring phenomenon in one's past which has contributed to formation of self and/or is representational of their ethnographic experience. The amount of 'time' framed when applying this method can vary in size. We could be discussing the repetitions of some event throughout an individual's whole life or the daily morning routines associated with a specific profession. The amount of years taken into account is decided upon by the researcher in relationship to the information they wish to extract from the method. For example, if I as an improviser wish to document the evolution of my understanding of the word 'improvisation' then I perhaps would document the amount of times important ideas about improvisation were communicated to me throughout my entire life. However, if I wish to expose the daily lifestyle an improviser experiences in western culture, I may simply create a timeline which follows my day to day activities, searching for interesting patterns or occurrences which resonate or exemplify the core attributes of an improviser. A timeline is provided for visual reference in **Example 1**. In this example I simply document the history of the types of guitars I have used throughout my life.



Example 1

Autoethnographic Timeline

Initially, participants were asked to reflect on what types of questions, concerns, or routines they would like to use for collecting events to document in their individual timelines. No particular idea was forced upon them, as we assumed that our participants would have a deeper experience of the exercise if they chose individually the types of events they wished to document. It is important that the individual chooses something relevant for themselves if they are to understand how or when such a method could be beneficial for their artistic practice. Nonetheless, some suggestions were provided to our participants in case they had difficulty in conceptualising a focus point. Suggestions included documenting creative moments, practicing routine, evolution of compositional ideas, life of an artist, ensemble history, or first musical influences. Once everyone had decided upon an idea of what to document in their timeline, they set up a loose frame to start investigating. This could be as broad as their whole life or as small as the recent morning. In some cases it was necessary to help participants individually with choosing a concept or idea and/or even a time frame. In my own experience, this often happens because of the generality of the exercise. There are simply too many possibilities for an individual and they can feel overwhelmed with what to do. It should be noted that this can happen quite frequently with creative individuals, as the sheer nature of being creative seems to cause a degree of openness which can distract from rigid focus on an exercise.

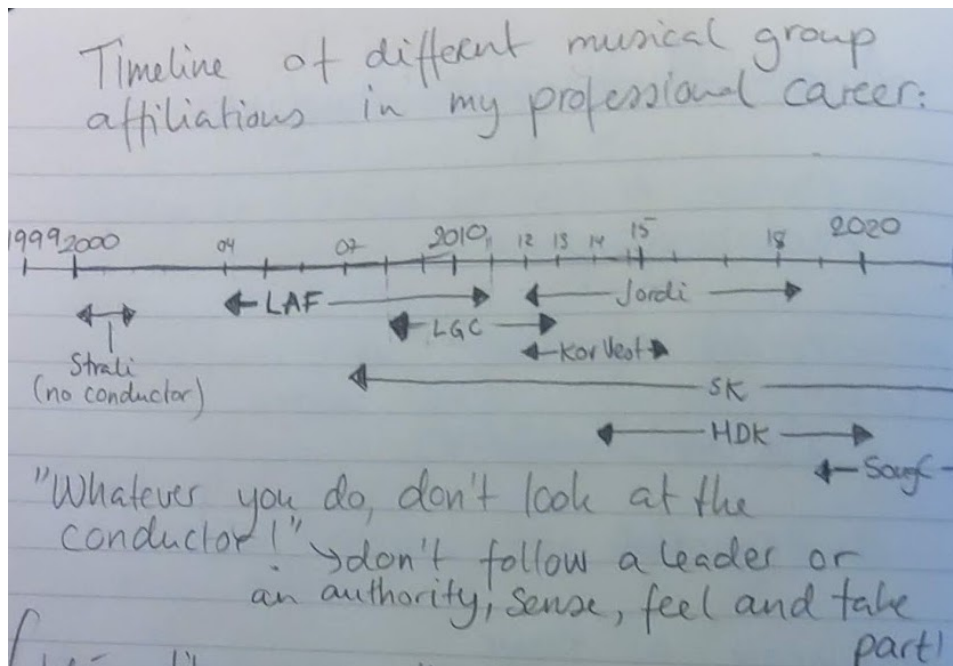
After each participant had clearly chosen a theme, the participants were then asked to focus on a handful of things in order to discern what to include in the timeline. The first point of focus could be 'flashbulb moments'. These are moments in our lives when we look into our past and can clearly point to them as situations in which important information was communicated, realised, or discovered. Often these are easy to document as they clearly pop into our heads the second we begin to reflect on some theme in our lives. A second possibility is to focus on moment of great insecurity, in which the individual felt they were being placed outside of their comfort zone for

either positive or negative reasons. A third focus can be on the repetition of commonly spoken phrases around a theme. In the pedagogy of music, there are certainly idiomatic phrases which are repeated throughout one's education, "play more together" or "never stop counting" are common examples of this. Lastly, if a lifestyle is under investigation the researcher may want to simply write a timeline of common daily events, without any special or emotional character. In this case, the banal may be of significance as reflecting on the common day to day activities of a certain profession or way of life may reveal something to ourselves which remained hidden from our conscious experience. The most important aspect for the researcher to keep in mind is to not overthink individual events which they place into their timeline. This first step in the process should be a bit freer and not so critical as to whether one specific event truly qualifies for inclusion. Editing processes can always occur later after the the timeline is completed.

After filling in the timeline with events the researcher is now asked to reflect on either individual moments, or in the whole creation of the timeline itself. Individual events should be investigated more thoroughly, reflecting on the memories meaningful to the individual. Focusing on external information to the main contents of the memory can help gain access to deeper thoughts and feelings, such as remembering the design of the room, the type of weather which occurred that day, or the location of various people in the room. Any significant thoughts and/or feelings should be added to the timeline in small one or two word notes. Additionally, and verbal expressions which happened in the moment and are clearly poignant should also be added to the timeline. When reflecting on the entirety of the timeline, notes should be made regarding any repetitions which are surprising and/or revealing. Concerning lifestyle orientated themes, the researcher should also keep track of any reoccurring thoughts or feelings which repeat alongside the daily activities, monitoring for any repetitions in mental states which were previously unnoticed.

Finally, additional timelines could be made for comparison in cases where the researcher is interested in investigating routines related to their identity. This should be done over a broader period of time as a practice, in which case the researcher attempts to notice a pattern in thoughts, feelings, and behaviours.

The following examples are directly taken from our own bootcamp. In **Example 2**, is an auto ethnographic timeline where our participant focused on the rehearsal strategies of several different ensembles in which she had participated. In this timeline, the participant started by simply listing the ensembles individually and their respected time frames of activity. While reflecting on individual ensembles she kept remembering a common reoccurring saying she experienced in every ensemble which was: "*Whatever you do, don't look at the conductor*". Interestingly enough, the



Example 2

Autoethnographic Timeline Ensemble Participation

interpretation she extracted from this was to avoid following the main authority on group issues, and instead take part and sense the main ethos of the group. Though such an example is only a snippet into this participants own artistic practice, it already elicits themes which could motivate or provide data for an artistic research project.

Example 3 is a timeline which represents the “first times” a participant had experienced throughout the year 2022. This timeline is particularly interesting as its main conceptualisation revolves around a common theme which we rarely document or note in our everyday lives. Perhaps in this case, the individual may realise how often they are trying out new things and extract from this an interesting aspect of their own personality.

used repetitive rhythm. This opened up for the participant a reflection on his own creative work, which was to create DJ sets which was to switch sharply between one form of repetitiveness to another.

Additional creative uses of timelines could also be investigated. The idea of composing sound based on the collection of events could produce interesting results. Staging a dramaturgy for the stage or cutting scenes together for a video installation could contribute interesting working methods to an artist's individual practice. In terms of creative use, experimentation with an individual timeline could occur in many ways, even simply as a starting point into researching a general concept. Such activities should be investigated at a longer and deeper level than the time afforded in a short introductory bootcamp to Autoethnography.

It should be noted that there are a few dangers when conducting this method in one's practice. Firstly, the individual must be relatively clear with themselves what theme the timeline shall be investigating. Without clarity, this exercise can produce meaningless data which is hard to investigate. Secondly, it may be necessary to try out this method several times before one finally starts to see into its capabilities for eliciting interesting material. The process of awakening something which we are not aware of is not always easy and individuals must take great care to experiment with the method in order to discover its benefits.

Bibliography

Chang, Heewong (2016). *Autoethnography as Method*. New York: Routledge Press.