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# Problematic Autoethnographic Research: Researcher's Failure in Positioning

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## Problematic Autoethnographic Research: Researcher's Failure in Positioning

### Abstract

This article problematizes and discusses the “auto”ethnographical approach, which has recently become pervasive in research-oriented writings, to “tell the story of self and subject” in order to analyze wider cultural and social conditions. This method can be found in the remarkable array of a variety of disciplines in which scholars have explicitly and implicitly highlighted identity-related issues. One problem with this approach is its failure to recognize the ideological generalization in identifying the researcher’s position, with the risk of eventually becoming a neutral “truth through the researcher’s reality.” This paper focuses on the crisis between history and memory in contextualizing a researcher’s collective identity, and the crisis between insidership and outsidership in research. As a researcher and writer, I apply my examples to the conceptual framework built in this study on the identity crisis of my life, struggles, and conflicts. Considering researchers’ struggles and conflicts in determining self with regard to the identity established in research, my impetus for writing this paper is to provide a roadmap that critically examines the contexts that should be considered when a researcher positions self in the study and writing.

### Keywords

Autoethnography, Qualitative Research, Researcher Identity, Identity Crisis

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## **Problematic Autoethnographic Research: Researcher's Failure in Positioning**

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### **Background**

For many years and throughout an array of social, political, natural science, and arts and humanities disciplines, scholars have explicitly and implicitly highlighted pervasive identity-related issues, demonstrating the growing importance of self-realization and “identity” as crucial areas in delineating the potential scope of the discursive fields (Snow, 2004) in which discourse and meaning-making processes such as framing and narration are generally embedded. What is interesting is that the more scholars take an intense interest in questions concerning identity, the more the concept itself remains something of an enigma (Fearon, 1999). The definition of identity as we currently use it is not properly captured by dictionaries, which reflect the traditional senses of the word. However, our present idea of identity is a fairly recent social construct and a rather complicated one at that. Although everyone understands how to properly use the word in everyday discourse, providing a short and adequate summary statement that captures the range of its present meanings has proven quite difficult (Fearon, 1999). An increasing use of national, cross-national, and international survey items ask quantitative researchers and their variables about their identities regarding biological and psychological aspects. Such items include popular survey data used in social and political science research to explain dominant tendencies to take action on such issues as affirmative action, tax policies, and political participation (Kuo & Margait, 2012), as well as new types of research on identity politics and political theory regarding nationality, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality in relation to liberalism and its alternatives (Connolly, 1991; McAdam, McCarthy, & Zald, 1996; Snow, Soule, & Kriesi, 2004; Tarrow, 2011; Taylor, 1989). The conceptualization of identity may play a significant role in framing meaning-making processes in socioeconomic and political opportunities, as well as ethnic conflicts in various fields. Among the atmosphere

of emphasizing the identity of both researchers and participants, qualitative researchers have recently been applying an “auto”ethnographical approach to “tell the story of self” in order to analyze wider cultural and social conditions. The *transpersonal* approach goes beyond the researcher’s personality to encompass a broader sense of consciousness. Some justifications of the transpersonal may include compassion, wisdom, intuition, mindfulness, creativity, self-awareness, and empathy because this research method utilizes autobiographical writing in examining the personal experience of the researcher and participants (Raab, 2013).

Academic researchers and educators are considered to be at the core of shaping pervasive social discourses. Their roles include conveying their perspectives on the history of mankind to the next generation, contributing to scholarship and research, teaching and supervising both students and student teachers, designing curriculums, and shaping academic inclinations and generational transformations. Such a mobilization of ideas and beliefs has been associated with social movements and related phenomena (Snow, 2004). Considering problematic aspects, some relevant questions are: what forces educators to position themselves as insiders in their research? What would be the plausible and applicable theorization of framing and meaning-making process in positioning themselves in their works? What risks do we have to keep in mind in conceptualizing self and variables? As George Herbert Mead (1967) reminds us in his classic text, *Mind, Self, and Society*, social identities are created through our ongoing social interaction with other people and our subsequently reciprocal reflection regarding who we think we are according to these social exchanges. An identity is never settled or fixed but is constantly moving and changing. The interaction of identity factors, such as ethnicity, sexuality, class, gender, occupation, and nationality, generate feelings of insiderness and outsiderness depending on the context. Based on that concept, my impetus for writing this paper is to provide a roadmap for critically examining what contexts should be considered when dealing with identity issues and positionality in global context to guide the future generation of this movement society onto a better path with the visionary lens of cultural differences. Therefore, my focus is on the history and memory crisis in contextualizing a researcher’s collective identity, and the crisis between insiderness and outsiderness in research as well as language game that standardizes emancipating knowledge in writing. Researchers need to acknowledge that the process of ideology construction that stems from belief and knowledge is a fatal weak point. However, it could become a strength if they critically perceive and use such a construction. Various sociologists and social movement theorists relating to the concept of identity have made important contributions to the paradigm shift in relation to the construction of deviance and knowledge, but those are somewhat specialized fields in sociology. Therefore, application of those perspectives, as well as that of certain philosophies, provides a trans- and interdisciplinary framework for researchers.

### **Methodology**

This study primarily examines exiting literatures from various fields including philosophy, social science, education, and art to build conceptual frameworks for interdisciplinary analysis. I apply my examples to the frameworks with an emphasis on the crisis between history and memory in contextualizing a researcher’s collective identity, and the crisis between insiderness and outsiderness in research. Since I have decided to study in America, it has been one of the biggest struggles to balance two cultures, Korean and American, in me. The factors such as my nationality, ethnicity, and language that put me in a privileged position in my mother country ironically place me in a minority group in America. The same ‘me’ receives different reactions depending on the location in which I am positioning myself. I have realized that something one culture considers ordinary can be turned into something unpredictable, unacceptable, and extremely challenging when placed in a different culture. My

misfit feeling as an insider and outsider is a virtue of research that scholars must acknowledge because nothing can be “normalized.” I tend to highlight the loopholes of autoethnographic approach to rearrange the way of thinking to meet the “normally acceptable” social norms of American academia not to be isolated or even expelled. As a researcher and writer, my examples on the identity crisis of my life, struggles, and conflicts as a researcher will help facilitate a successful research journey to lead educators and researchers with a critical lens to perceive the researcher self through a variety of ways.

### **History, Memory, and Collective Identity as a “Socialized” Lens**

When narrating a story of an observer and a participant, as Ellis and Bochner (2000) remind us, if the story recalled and written is too close to the lived experience, there is a temptation to get too caught up in the living the experience to be able to write about it. A certain range of distance supposedly provides clarity with a more helpful and healthy perspective from which the readers can learn. Since living through chaos makes reflection and subsequent storytelling impossible, memoirs about childhood are most often written in middle or old age (Raab, 2013). Once enough distance from the lived experience has been established, the researcher becomes empowered by sharing his or her story. However, does such memory and its articulation convey “truth?” Contrary to historians’ famous dictum that “those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it,” forgetting is not so much the problem as too much memory causing preoccupations with historical wrongs and injuries and too many competing versions of history itself. This sense of crisis of forgetting and remembering history pervades scholarship on collective memory in the Western world (Eyal, 2004). With so many suspicions and complaints, one starts to suspect that the problem may not lie with the societies in question and their purported preferences to forget or to remember, but rather with the concept of “collective memory” itself. When discussed, it immediately elicits doubt, which touches not only on its quantity in a precise manner, but also more generally on its authenticity, validity, and significance (Eyal, 2004). This collective memory is often at the center of cultural conflicts because it is where *collective identity* is formed and strengthened. Collective identity is the tendency of many social movements in political, economic, cultural, and academic fields to form a self-image shaped by the collectives and, in turn, shaping the consciousness of individuals. Social movement theorist Alberto Melucci (1996) pointed out that such collective identities are not so much fixed as they are in process and offers this more specialized definition, saying that collective identity is an interactive, shared definition produced by several individuals or groups that must be conceived as a process because it is constructed and negotiated by repeated activation of the relationships that link individuals or groups to social conditions and movements. Melucci (1996) saw collective identity as a process that can be analytically divided and seen from both internal and external points of view. This separation of two sides is an obvious way to describe what should be seen as a basically unified process through which collective identity contains an unresolved and unresolvable tension between the definition that a movement gives itself and the recognition granted it by the rest of society. With regard to this, Melucci (1996) explained the dynamics of collective identity and conflict as an example of this discrepancy as follows:

Conflict is the extreme example of the discrepancy and of the tension it provokes. In social conflicts, reciprocity becomes impossible and competition for scarce resources begins. Both subjects involved deny each other’s identities and refuse to grant to their adversary what they demand for themselves. The conflict severs the reciprocity of the interaction; the adversaries clash over something that is common to both of them but that each refuses to grant to the

other. ... Social actors enter a conflict to affirm the identity that their opponent has denied them, to reappropriate something that belongs to them because they are able to recognize it as their own. (p. 48)

Melucci (1996) also conceptualized the lens of collective identity as an *analytic tool* of researchers through which he/she can see a certain social condition and context. In his words, collective identity is a concept and analytical tool, not a datum or an essence, not a “thing” with a “real” existence. Therefore, in dealing with concepts and conditions, one must never forget that we are not talking about “reality,” but of instruments or lenses through which we view reality. Similarly, philosopher Maxine Greene (1995) says that we create our identities through the situations of our lives. Establishment of identity is an individual’s way of seeing and thinking about his/her self in the world to which he/she belongs as a conceptual form suitable for human use and sense. Cultural critic John Berger (1972) said that such seeing establishes our place in the surrounding world; we explain that world with words, but words can never undo the fact that we are surrounded by it. Academic society requires individuals to gain a high or higher level of education to solve or mitigate perceived and/or potential risks. This implicit rule has incited competition in academia for each individual’s own dominating school of thought and doctrine. In this circumstance, to challenge something requires learning from previous literature and dominant discourse in academia; therefore, we cannot challenge something unless we have obtained the necessary education from the relevant context to do so. However, this learning process cannot be done outside society because it is a type of social activity as well. Therefore, we must acknowledge that the lens of collective identity is a myopic keyhole when examining the world, but this lens also has reflexivity. While my learning, analyzing, reflecting, and sharing can introduce others to a new and different way of looking at the world as a social intervention, that cycle in turn affects my own perspective, thinking, and strategies as well. Therefore, as with all who have participated in the history of literature, this cycle is a never-ending process that sends others into different directions. Shared individual experiences become social as the combined experiences of many individuals make up a culture, a society, or a history. Within cultures and societies, shared experiences are organized into categories of events referred to variously as concepts, robust constructs, or even ideological stereotypes. That is, the constructed concept involves as much as and nothing more than the set of operations by which the conceptualized subject is determined. In criticizing the hidden ‘ideology’ in the visible and our perception of it, Berger (1972) argues that the relation between what we see and what we know is never settled. For example, each evening we *see* the sun set. We *know* that the earth is turning away from it, yet the knowledge and the explanation, never quite fit the sight (Berger, 1972). To understand how we see self and society, we first need to acknowledge that both reality and knowledge are socially constructed and that the researcher’s position must be analyzed through the process in which this occurs.

### **Researcher’s Struggle between Insiderness and Outsiderness**

Autoethnography in literature is defined as a genre of autobiographical writing and an approach to research that describes and analyzes personal experience as a way to understand cultural experiences. Researchers that choose the autoethnographic approach are unique in that they have a preference for writing about epiphanies or remembered moments that may have greatly impacted their life (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011). One major problem with this approach in its attempt to framework the identity of the researcher in writing is its failure to recognize the ideological generalization in identifying self. Although the motivation for research comes from the hope to discover the unknown, research carries the risk of eventually become a notoriously neutral ‘truth’ through the researcher’s method of articulating ‘reality.

Potential problems surrounding autoethnographic research stem from issues of validity. It also includes a researcher's bias and prejudices that originate from indoctrinated knowledge and a belief in the researcher's collectives. An autoethnographic study may appear to not be a real study. According to Van Maanen, "From the outside (it) looks to the uninitiated as a semi-respectable form of hanging out, requiring only a little time and the effort to sally forth with notebook and pen (or tape recorder) in hand" (as cited in Raab, 2013, p. 16). The issues inherent to memoir writing are also correlated with autoethnographical writing, in particular, the inaccuracy of memory since memory is often inaccurate or unreliable, especially when writing about a lived experience that occurred years earlier (Ellis et al., 2011).

Autoethnographical writing receives even more scrutiny in academic circles. Despite the extensive bravery and effort of such use of autobiography, it may become just "cheerful" versions of teacher research. What often gets normalized in such uses is a singularity of story in that a subject is encouraged to talk about oneself as an articulator with the feeling of "insiderness." Such singularity closes the doors to multiple, conflicting, and even odd and abnormal stories and identities (Miller, 2005, p. 221). In a way to discuss singularity, Jones and McEwen (2000) first examined an individual's identity development by applying Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity (MMDI) and found that they could not understand the full picture if they address each component of identity separately. This model emphasized only one contextual influence on the salience of identity. For example, an Asian's racial identity becomes more prominent when this person moved from Taiwan to the United States. In other words, it is problematic in that only Asians can understand an Asian, and only African Americans can understand an African American. Therefore, Abes, Jones, and McEwen (2007) later revised the MMDI model to consider the impact of an individual's cognitive and interpersonal development on multiple dimensions of identity development. This Revised Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity (RMMDI) introduces the meaning-making filter that people use to interpret a variety of external contexts and to make sense of their identities. With this new model, Abes, Jones, and McEwen (2007) found that people with the ability to engage in complex framing and meaning-making processes are better at filtering external influences. However, in reality, researchers have mostly applied the MMDI model either intentionally or unintentionally. Under one purpose of research, autoethnographic writing that articulates the researcher's identity by juxtaposing it with the identity of students, in an attempt to evoke identical empathy with the students, inevitably contains vagueness and of the potential for misinterpretation.

Another problem for many higher education level educators, who are also researchers, is that they encourage students to write or speak autobiographically to "tell their stories" as a way of examining and constructing their educational assumptions and practices (Miller, 2005) while simultaneously romanticizing the learning lifespan of their teaching and research. This practice risks the reduction of plurality. Such narratives of a researcher's personal position centered on conceptualizing identity force a one-dimensional way of identification of others—students—as well. It also becomes a falsifiable attempt in that the learning process already has the potential risk of reducing plurality. More specifically, the idea of education as a form of instruction runs the risk of erasing the very plurality that can open doors. Furthermore, the idea of education as a form of learning is limited because learning itself is not some kind of open and natural process that can go in any direction but is a very particular and specific regime that demands a particular relation of the self to self—that is, a relation of awareness, reflection, and of drawing conclusions and acting upon them (Biesta, 2014). Therefore, the generalization of students' identities through the lens of the teacher's identity harshly simplifies the complex identity of a person, thus eventually reducing the plurality of a multidimensional concept of identity of the variables, as well as that of the potential of a variety of societies due to excessive subject analysis from only an insider's perspective.

Whenever I write the word “traditional,” “conservative,” “normal,” or “typical,” in my papers, I benefit from leaning on equivocation and hedging: “sort of” this, “kind of” that, and “a bit of” something, to avoid the polar extremes of expression in order to arrange my current bearings. Today, as sociological research of both quantitative and qualitative researchers have many implications and suggestions in their “conversation,” but not much declaration or insistence, polite speech now, most particularly among academics, relies on such equivocation and hedging (Sica, 2014). This strange inclination of scholarship brings us back to one of the most perplexing figures in twentieth century social analysis, Lewis Mumford, whose stylistic and substantive research has not been equaled by any other social analysis for decades (Sica, 2014). When one of his most important works, *The Condition of Man*, was first published in 1944, the varying tones of the many reviews expressed either appraisal or condemnation. In looking at the criticism of his work, many of those evoked by Mumford’s refusal to write “politely” with the “requisite modesty” in the world of intellectuals have caused even today’s resistance to him in part. Despite years of investigating and accumulating whatever data he could find with regard to his argument, in addition to the time-consuming effort of thinking and reading them all, his hectoring voice in writing arouses controversies and criticism. This was not to say that he was always “right;” one cannot even establish such a position today (Sica, 2014). Why does the hectoring voice of a researcher become a problem and why should a researcher want to be an insider? What is noticeable is that no one wants to be criticized by or expelled from his or her society and group. If a person’s language is labeled the language of an “outsider,” this may produce a different view of the matter. Social rules define situations and the kinds of behavior appropriate to them, specifying some actions as “right” and some as “wrong” (Becker, 1963). Howard Becker (1963) explains using the concept of an outsider that when a rule is enforced, a person who is believed to have broken it may be seen as a special kind of person, one who cannot be trusted to live by the rules agreed on by the group, thus relegating him to the position of an outsider. In the researcher’s society, academia always has dominant power. If his or her language is labeled untruthful not because of the research itself, but because it deviates from social norms and challenges academic tradition, such a researcher may lose his/her position in the group. Regarding the concept of deviance, it asserts that deviance and conformity are not the result of what we necessarily do, but how others respond to what we do. As a part of sociology of deviance (Becker, 1963) relating to “labeling,” labeling theory includes a primary deviance that refers to passing episodes of deviant behavior that most people participate in, and secondary deviance that occurs when someone makes something out of that deviant behavior and is given a negative social label that changes said person’s self-concept and social identity. The negative label is what we call stigma. In his classic work *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, Goffman (1986) argues that placing deviant labels on individuals negatively “marks” them in the eyes of others. Stigma is a person’s feelings about oneself and relationship to people whom society deems “normal.” People on the receiving end of social stigmas are spoiled, devalued, and undesirable (Goffman, 1986). Despite how they are acquired, the associated redefinitions of identity and social statuses rarely fare well for the bearers of this mark. Although we define ourselves by our membership of groups, we also define ourselves by comparison and contrast with others. If we have more than others, we feel superior. If everyone has the same as us, we feel equal. However, no matter what we have, if we cannot fit “within” social norms and academic ethics, we are likely to be expelled from the group. For example, as mentioned before, I have been struggling to balance two cultures, Korean and American, in me. The fact that I grew up in South Korea and now live in America confuses me when my identity is revealed in my research because something acceptable in one location may be unacceptable or extremely challenging in the other. I consider myself a minority in the United States because of my ethnicity, language, nationality, and other factors that ironically put me in a privileged position in South Korea. In a Korean

academic context, my perception of the “normal” is entirely different from the “normal” in the American academic context. In the U.S., I need to rearrange my way of thinking to meet the “normally acceptable” social norms of American academia so that I will not be isolated, or in extreme cases, expelled. However, my misfit feelings help me to realize that something that one culture considers ordinary can be turned into something valuable, rare, unpredictable, and precious when placed in a different culture. The crisis of position as an insider and outsider is a virtue of research that scholars must acknowledge, as we are always located in between the two realms.

### **Interpretation and Discussion**

The feeling of crisis between insiderness and outsiderness, different ways of looking at history, and struggles of the language game have been affected by shifting political, locational, and generational factors that have helped diverse identities develop within me, combining the social, cultural, and historical aspects of each.

### **Language Game of Standardizing Speculative Knowledge**

Whenever I see myself as a communicator that has to convey written research to the reader in the position of an informant, observer, participant, and insider of the context, I confront the crisis of identity in use of language, especially when determining appropriate words in writing. For example, when discussing “conservatism,” I have difficulty clearly positioning myself in the discussion. In the socio-political context of South Korea where I grew up, I belong to the rightwing, which values tradition, market-based equity, and the survival of the fittest. I have been influenced by my father, who is a leading politician of the governing Grand National Party, which is considered parallel to the Republican Party in the United States. I have also been influenced by my mother, a professor at a college of natural sciences, where the language of quantitative research to be “objective” is dominant. Furthermore, my brother and sister-in-law are both judicial conservatives. However, in the United States, I have studied progressive movements with relatively liberal beliefs that society is best served by an expanded role of the government, which is considered leftwing. Therefore, when discussing “conservatives” in South Korea, I become “one of them,” and in the United States, I become “not one of them.” Second, discussing “traditionalism” also takes two different paths. In a sociocultural context, I see myself as a member of the “privileged” class due to my family’s background in South Korea, clinging to vegetative patterns and to old ways of life that may very well be considered as fairly ubiquitous and universal in relation to a historically constructed manner of social-consciousness, self-consciousness, and ethics, at least in South Korea. This is exactly what traditionalism signifies in Karl Mannheim’s (1927) demarcation of traditionalism and conservatism. Answering the question “Is conservatism a phenomenon universal to all mankind, or is it an entirely new product of the historical and sociological conditions of our own time,” Mannheim (1927) contends that “natural conservatism” is the product of particular historical and social circumstances, and “modern conservatism” has its own peculiar traditions, form, and structure. Therefore, it is better to adopt Max Weber’s term “traditionalism” to denote “natural conservatism; so that when we speak of “conservatism” we shall always mean “modern” conservatism—something essentially different from mere ‘traditionalism’ (Mannheim, 1927). Traditionalism is not necessarily bound to political, cultural, or religious conservatism. Mannheim (1927) clarifies it with the following example of “progressive” people:

“Progressive” people for instance, regardless of their political convictions, may often act “traditionalistically” to a very large extent in many other spheres of their lives. Thus, we do not intend the term “conservatism” to be understood in a general psychological sense. The progressive who acts “traditionalistically” in private or business life, or the conservative who acts “progressively” outside politics, should make the point clear. (p. 437)

Regardless of the degree of use, while the word “traditionalist” describes what is a formal psychological characteristic of every individual’s mind, “conservative” action is always dependent on a concrete set of circumstances.

To simplify the complexity and diversity of socially pervasive discourse entailed in the language games of standardizing speculative knowledge and emancipating knowledge, the modern world needs legitimacy for a wide variety of cultural norms, procedures, and beliefs, which Karl Mannheim (1936) referred to as “ideology” in the book *Ideology and Utopia: An introduction to the sociology of knowledge*. With regard to his words of the sociology of knowledge, the concept of ideology mobilizes ideas and beliefs associated with scholarship on social movements and related phenomena. However, such scholarship has neither been of one mind nor progressed in a continuous, accretive fashion; rather, it has been characterized historically by debate and division regarding the relevance and sources of mobilizing ideas beliefs in relation to social movements (Snow, 2004). This concept stimulates a debate as to whether ideology is best conceived in terms of its “masking” or “remedial” functions, a debate that manifested itself in Mannheim’s (1936) demarcation of “ideologies” that are those complexes of ideas that direct activity toward the maintenance of the existing order, and “utopia” that are those complexes of ideas that tend to generate activities toward changes of the prevailing order. The relationship between the “reality” of what we see and hear and the “knowledge” with which one knows and perceive the “reality” is actually the force designated as one’s interest. As a researcher’s purposeful interest in the researcher’s work emerges from the imbued reality and forceful perception of social conditions with which we are not merely conditioned by the events that go on in our world but are simultaneously an instrument for shaping them, so it follows that reasons, consciousness, and conscience characteristically occur in situations marked by internal and external conflicts (Mannheim, 1936). Therefore, the observer is part of the observed and thus has a personal stake in the subject of his/her work, which is one of the pivotal factors on the acuteness of the problem of objectivity. By contextualizing a researcher’s identity in a methodological framework in an attempt to move beyond the meaning of the written word, researchers have engaged in an extensive debate regarding the merits of researchers being “outsiders” or “insiders” in the realms they study.

## Conclusion

My intercultural conflicts and struggles reflect what Henry Giroux argued, “It is within the tension between what might be called the trauma of identity formation and the demand of public life that cultural work is both theorized and made performative” (as cited in Garoian, 1999, pp. 40-41). The threshold, border, and neutral zone between ideas, cultures, or territories is a limen (Garoian, 1999) that responsible intellectuals must cross to get from one side to the other. Researchers anxiously want to negotiate the limen quickly, to take a side because its condition is unstable, indeterminate, and prone to complexity and contradiction during the processes of analyzing, theorizing, and eventually generalizing. Therefore, those anxious researchers ought to acknowledge that the limen serves no purpose other than demarcating absolute value between conflicting opinions. This acknowledgement allows researchers to pay critical attention to the potential falseness or deceptive nature of vision for self and others.

Vision is limited, and our own lens is always refractive and distorting. Therefore, we should not be haunted by the places where reality can be seen.

Because the 21st century's new level of attention focusing on inequality, difference, and struggles puts researchers at center stage for a multitude of ways of speaking, writing, valuing and believing, autoethnographical studies have opened doors for scholars to recognize different kinds of people who possess different assumptions about the world. However, as discussed, autoethnographical research risks the reduction of plurality because a researcher's personal position centered on conceptualizing identity forces a singularity of story with the feeling of insiderness as well as a one-dimensional way of identification of others. Autoethnographical research provides an opportunity to experience others' experiences with an in-depth understanding. It does not mean the "story" is real because of the characteristics of memory that reflects an event, and the language of a researcher cannot exactly represent how the event was or has been lived. Social reality is contextually constructed. Therefore, I hope this article will be a contribution to autoethnographers' recognition that our memory is fallible, a same event tells different stories, and validity and generalizability in a research has risk to be altered depending on the context. Autoethnographers should understand the weaknesses of autoethnographical approach, and learn the limits by dealing with identity issues and positionality in global context to take a better path with the visionary lens of cultural differences. In so doing they can explore broader world while reducing the need to guard against people exploiting loopholes in autoethnographical researches.

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### Author Note

Ji Young Shim has strong and multiple perspectives and experiences to communicate in multicultural environment. Her career has been extensive: with respect to current status as Senior Curator of the OpenGallery; with Ph.D. in Art Education program (with minor in Social Thought) at the Pennsylvania State University; with M.A. degree in Arts Administration program at Teachers College, Columbia University in NYC; with M.F.A. and B.F.A. degrees in Western Painting and Print-Making department; with B.A. degree in Art History at Ewha Womans University in South Korea; her professional experience as an international artist as well as art educator, and her working experiences at art organizations as a project manager, chief curator, and administrative manager in New York City and South Korea, she has offered art world broader perspectives and knowledge. Correspondence regarding this article can be addressed directly to: [shim8383@gmail.com](mailto:shim8383@gmail.com).

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