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Abstract

In this paper, we examine experience, identity, and their intersections. Working from an autoethnographic positionality, we investigate the insufficiencies of language and the limitations of any given researcher with an intent to address multiple realities and their respective interpretations of meaning. Autoethnographic narratives with the use of visual, written, and multimedia representations further acknowledge the dilemmas of qualitative researchers when they cannot fully describe subjectivities in research. What is deemed to be valid research is often indicative of a theoretical framework that aggressively seeks to invalidate other perspectives and ways of knowing. Thus, we create research spaces by employing counter-narratives as well as different representations that seek to challenge grand narratives in educational research—namely, a high reliance on numbers or written representations. Such challenges are critical to understanding the advancement of research, and enhancing the public discourse regarding educational research.

(Im)possible Identity: Autoethnographic (re)Presentations

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In this paper, we examine experience, identity, and their intersections. Working from an autoethnographic positionality, we investigate the insufficiencies of language and the limitations of any given researcher with an intent to address multiple realities and their respective interpretations of meaning. Autoethnographic narratives with the use of visual, written, and multimedia representations further acknowledge the dilemmas of qualitative researchers when they cannot fully describe subjectivities in research. What is deemed to be valid research is often indicative of a theoretical framework that aggressively seeks to invalidate other perspectives and ways of knowing. Thus, we create research spaces by employing counter-narratives as well as different representations that seek to challenge grand narratives in educational research— namely, a high reliance on numbers or written representations. Such challenges are critical to understanding the advancement of research, and enhancing the public discourse regarding educational research. Keywords: Autoethnography Experience, Identity, Crisis of Representation

Understanding how to represent experience has been an ongoing, salient topic in qualitative research, particularly in autoethnography (Adams & Holman Jones, 2011; Ellis & Bochner, 2006; Harris, 2014). In her handbook chapter, "Autoethnography: Making the Personal Political," Holman Jones (2005) defined an autoethnography as an "ongoing dialogue between self and world about the questions of ontology, epistemology, method, and praxis: What is the nature of knowing, what is the relationship between knower and known, how do we share what we know and with what effect?" (p. 766). We use an autoethnography in order to rethink our normalized understanding of "experience" by reinterpreting experience using a particular socioeconomic, political, and cultural context.

Typically, experience is considered the origin of knowledge and an individual self— a self created by the accumulation of past experiences in multiple times and spaces. In contrast, drawing from poststructuralist theories, Scott (1992) investigates the ways in which experience can be redefined beyond the impulse to chronicle exactly what happened in the past. Scott explicates the "the constructed nature of experience" (p. 25) that constitutes the subject as the way in which one sees and acts in the world. Inquiry into experience is reconceptualized as to historicize identities—identities that are discursively produced rather than simply expressed with the use of collective labels and descriptors of race/ethnicity, gender, class, and more. Influenced by Scott's (1992) theorization of experience, we highlight the "discursive nature of experience" as well as the sociocultural aspects of its construction (p. 37).

Experience is neither simply objective nor self-evident: rather, experience is always constructed through the lens of "experience as interpretation" and "experience as discursive"

(Scott, 1992; Smith & Watson, 2001). Autoethnographic narratives in this paper are our experiences situated within Scott's vision of experience—that is always an "interpretation *and …* in need of interpretation" (Scott, 1992, p. 37, emphasis in original). We illustrate the ways in which our experience and identities are constructed through the interpretation of language, meaning, and culture.

In addition to our *interpretation* of experience, we examine the possible *(re)presentation* of our experience with the use of multiple media, including visual representation, YouTube presentation, bilingual presentation, and text. Cutcher (2013) asserts the importance of utilizing multiple media when text-based publication normalizes knowledge production and reproduction. She calls for continuing efforts to bring performance and exhibition in visual, time-based representation that serves the current digital environment. We recognize the need for multiple representations in qualitative research in the crisis of representation—the crisis that written/spoken and visual image texts always fail to represent the subjectivity. In their fourth edition of the *Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Denzin and Lincoln (2011) categorize the eight key moments in qualitative research and articulate a crisis of representation as the fourth moment which has emerged since the 1980s. The influx of postmodernism and blurred disciplinary genres in qualitative research influenced the concerns related to research representation.

We are engaged in this ongoing issue of representation because the uncertainty regarding "proper" methods of depicting social reality is still questioned in major epistemological and methodological debates in qualitative research. Representation of the social world falls into nothing but a simulacrum, which is only a copy of an imaginary entity, yet becomes *hyperreal* without original or reality (Baudrillard, 1994; Lather, 2007). Grounded in the complexities inherent in the representation of knowledge and experience as data, we challenge what has been taken for granted as facts or certainties by examining "theoretical discourses about the interpretation of reality" (Marcus & Fisher, 1986, p. 13). Most notably, we introduce diverse forms of representation when qualitative research methods encounter this crisis of representation. We acknowledge that each of us cannot fully describe, explicate, or depict our identity in research, but are nevertheless compelled to earnestly examine our experiences related to the issue of identity and knowledge.

Thus, we attempt to invite the audience to consider what experience, identity, and representation mean when full representation of reality is never possible. Whereas a quantitative methodology would often seek to essentialize human experience in formula and statistics, we seek to both enhance and complicate the representation of such experience. By implementing multiple yet (im)possible representations encompassing images, multimedia, and bilingual representation, we imagine and invent a different qualitative research methodology.

We explore the possibilities of creating multiple spaces to represent research beyond one-dimensional to become "multilayered and unflattened" (Sullivan & Miller, 2013, p. 3). This paper consists of two sets of autoethnographic narratives. In the narrative, *M/Other Tongue & Who "are" I?,* Moon examines the issue of representing linguistic, cultural identity and knowledge as a "multilingual" researcher. He interprets and analyzes his experience of losing "mother" tongue within English-centered academic discourses. By adopting the question of "Who are I?" (Cixous, 1994), he elaborates the multiplicity of identities and the ways in which linguistic identity is discursively constructed by interacting with other people. Moon recorded bilingual representation of his poetry in this paper in order to present the complexity of linguistic identity (https://youtu.be/zd7pE0jC0x8). Strople's narrative, *Examination*, is an effort that seeks

to provide an epistemological dissection of self through an ontological excavation of identity. This narrative consists of a multimedia approach incorporating elements of orthodox academic expression within a postmodern articulation. Another video streaming is made for this section in experimenting with the (im)possibility of representing experience and identity (https://youtu.be/4Gi0pn1iZdo).

M/Other Tongue & Who "are" I? [1]

"English is my father tongue
A father tongue is
a foreign language.
therefore English is
a foreign language
nor a mother tongue" (Philip, 1995, p. 12)

I am passionate about representing linguistic, cultural identity and knowledge. As an "international" faculty teaching in the U.S., I deal with "doubled crises"—crises of not being able to know and fully represent "who I am" in the midst of crossing cultural boundaries between the US and South Korea constantly. Another crisis, more explicitly, is related to the epistemological colonization of my linguistic identity by losing my "mother tongue" within English-centered academia. My mother tongue, obviously Korean, is reiteratively treated as the Other while mastering and practicing a "father" tongue—that is the language of the colonizers not only in the US but also across the international intellectual organization.

Being exposed to these doubled crises, I am interested in representing my linguistic, cultural identity through self-reflexive autoethnography. In defining self-reflexive, Adams and Holman Jones (2011) articulate the importance of "listening to and for silences and stories we can't tell—not fully, not clearly, not yet" (p. 111). I use self-reflexive autoethnographic writing as a methodological tool to interrogate the unknown and never yet to fully grasp self (Adams & Holman Jones, 2011). While losing a "mother tongue" and mastering a "father tongue," as Philip's (1995) poetry above implies, I am inspired to represent the ways in which my linguistic identity has been constructed. Not even knowing if I *think* in English or Korean, I examine the complexity of my linguistic, cultural identity by linking autobiographical narrative writing, visual representation, and bilingual poetry representations. I interrogate the genealogy of my epistemological shifts on identity from excavating who I am, to exploring the construction of who I "are."

To English: Frenemies of My Life

It is not usual to speak to you in this format. I have been using/speaking/engaging with you for more than 3 decades since we first met, when I was 11 years old in Korea. I did not have an opportunity to share my thoughts about you, literally or officially, although I take much joy and consolation in you (as well as experience desperation and frustration at your hand). You know the portmanteau word, "frenemy," right? Both as friend and as enemy, I want to recall my

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[1] This section appears in Moon's (2011) unpublished dissertation study with a major revision. The next section, *Examination*, appears in Strople's (2013) unpublished dissertation study.

memories regarding our relationship and to explore how my linguistic identity has been constructed. I believe that our relationship is grounded in strong karma; your influence is extremely strong in the contemporary global economy and has operated as a colonial language to master.

As a "non-native" English speaker, I have studied you from an early age for success in schools and now as a tool to communicate with other international scholars. I could not, as a teenager or as an adult, as a learner and as a teacher, and even now as faculty in the U.S., voluntarily choose to meet you, study you, and live with you. My relationship with you could have been set up even before I was born, as a result of karma, within this socio-political, economic, and cultural context. There is no doubt that the close political, economic, and social relationships between the U.S. and South Korea influenced my perception of you.

I realize that I am losing my "mother tongue" while mastering a colonial language— namely English in the U.S. A "father tongue" already controls the ways in which I should think, organize my ideas, and represent them for other people. My mother tongue has become the other within this English-centered academic community structure. I attempted to represent my initial encounter with you as seen in Figure 1. *The left image of black/white shows my initial concept of you, English, as the master language. I should master you although I cannot fully achieve the goal as a "non-native" English speaker: Unfortunately, I do not "have" you as a mother tongue.*

Figure 1. *The world of black/white*

Norton (2008), a sociocultural linguist, mentioned that studying you is an investment which would increase the "value of cultural capital" (p. 10) in our contemporary time. Consenting to Norton's point, I thought that if I invested my time and energy in you, I would acquire a wider range of cultural resources about the society of the United States, and in turn, increase my cultural capital. I imagined that I could become a more culturally and linguistically affluent person only if I knew you better. As Figure 2 *shows, I used to live in the paradigm of being assimilated to Standard English by removing my Korean accent and mastering the phonics, idioms, and syntax of English. The dots in* Figure 2 *represent my vision of mastering a "father tongue:" I was naïve to believe that the more I worked at removing my Korean accent, the more I could be part of the mainstream U.S. culture. I minimized usage of this "mother tongue" by alienating is and seeing its usage as a hindrance to being assimilated. I began "othering" my mother tongue for possible social promotion.*

Figure 2. *The world toward the "certainty"*

I thought that my efforts, as a form of agency, would make the future brighter, as exemplified in Figure 2 with the dots becoming darker and clearer as time passes by. My investment in you, English, was also an investment in my own cultural identity. While learning English actively with the help of speech pathologists and regularly consulting with editors regarding my academic writing, I began to imagine my new identity as a more "Americanized" Korean. I felt that I was just stepping closer into the spirit of freedom, opportunity, and wealth as my Korean textbooks illustrated about the U.S. For me, you seemed to be the tool, the pathway, the expressway to experience the "dream" of the "chosen" country. My fantasy of a new identity, as an "Americanized" Korean, began being constructed while I was dreaming of the "American dream" from my teenage years.

Our relationship continued yet shifted when I moved to the U.S. I began to consider a labeling of native/non-native English speaking problematic. I felt really lost. I was exposed to various forms of English existing among "native" English speakers. I learned that many subgroups exist within the populations of "native" English speakers, and their linguistic practices differ depending on, among others issues, nation, race, gender, class, and region. The assumption that only native English speakers know "real" English becomes problematic because multiple versions of English are normalized in daily practices. The notion of Standard English perpetuates racialized, classed, and regionalized linguistic practices.

*While studying several linguistic theories, I experienced that native speakers are not necessarily aware of their linguistic knowledge in a formal sense, let alone a meaning is not necessarily pre-given or intuitive to them. For example, "English speakers" have different understanding of vocabulary depending on their region, class, ethnicity/race, and gender. Instead, meanings are acquired through the language learners' attentiveness and such meanings are always in flux depending on the sociopolitical context (Widdowson, 1994). I began losing my "certainty" of a definitive definition of mother tongue or native English speakers with the use of binary articulation of reality [*see Figure 1*] or linear development towards Standard English [*see Figure 2*]. In Figure 3, inspired by Jackson Pollock's (1950)* Autumn Rhythm (Number 30)*, I have attempted to express my growing sense that ambiguity, rather than certainty, circulates without any predictable direction. I used a straw, rather than a brush, to illustrate the complexity of lines and textures. I picked one color at time and imagined multiple realities, identities and their subsequent representations. This non-linear articulation of understanding linguistic identity represents my work to revisit any taken-for-grantedness about self and identity.*

Figure 3. *Complexities of identities*

Among the many possible issues that I could delve into within our "frenemy" relationship, I pose an important question of who "owns" you. Are you a property of native English speakers? Do you belong to speakers who know and practice standard forms? Or do you think that everyone who speaks you, English, can have you? Is it even possible to own you? Keeping these questions in mind, I ponder about my interaction with you at this point. Highly influenced by Butler's (1999) performativity theory, I see my interactions with you are "performative acts"—that I compulsorily reiterate a set of linguistic and "social norms that precede and exceed the subject" (Butler, 2005, p. 17). I cannot voluntarily negotiate my "deed" when I interact with you. The "deed" which is a set of social norms constructs my identities in an academic community. I should learn and practice the "Standard" English that a specific academic community has set up. Otherwise, my English writing and speaking are considered problematic, and I am ostracized from the English-dominant academic community. Whenever my writing is judged by not following conventions, I am reminded of the complexity of linguistic identity as I represent such complexity in Figure 4. I printed original images on transparent films and combined Figures 1, 2, and 3 in one slide. While overlapping all three artifacts, I attempted to demonstrate the multiplicity of linguistic, cultural identities.

Figure 4. *Multilayers of identities in three-dimensions*

My linguistic identity, specifically through the interaction with you, is constituted by "cultural [and linguistic] norms that precede and exceed" me (Butler, 2006, p. 45). The given,

preceding, and exceeding sets of linguistic, social, and discursive norms of "real" and "Standard" English, fundamentally, condition who I am (Butler, 1999). My performative acts are ongoing and never-ending processes grounded in "the compulsion to repeat" (p. 185) a set of linguistic social norms of you, including grammar, lexis, and accents, in order to be recognized as an intelligible "English" speaker. It is this compulsion to reiterate linguistic conventions in which "agency" resides, and agency occurs as resistance not repeating a set of linguistic, social norms (Butler, 2004). I end my narrative for you by revisiting the notion of agency. I used to believe that I would gradually own you, English, with my efforts and thus intuitively interact with you. At this point, I argue that agency is the possibility of a failure or variation on continually repeating a set of social norms that "precede, constrain, and exceed the performer" (Butler, 1993, p. 234). I have no doubt that I will continue to interact with you as long as your imperative role in a global community is not diminished soon. I am curious about how our relation will shift as time goes by. Until then, so long!

M/Othering and Monolingualism of the Other.

Above I juxtaposed the four images that I illustrated in the previous section. Influenced by Butler (1999, 2005), I argue that my linguistic, cultural identity is the effect of discourses—discourses generated by actual interactions with the other, rather than assuming a pre-determined self-other relationship. In my letter to English, I problematized and complicated the label of either "mother tongue" or native English speaker. I challenged the certainty of stable linguistic identity and expressed the complexity of identity construction by overlapping the three existing images. Drawing from feminist, poststructuralist theories, Lather (1991) raises questions about certainty in research and the importance of exploring what a researcher has not thought before. Inquiry questions in this vein encompass asking "what we have not thought to think, about what is most densely invested in our discourses/practices, about what has been muted, repressed,

unheard in our liberatory efforts" (p. 156). My ontological and epistemological curiosity about "who I am" instigates me to explore further both the possibility and impossibility of representing my linguistic identity with a bilingual text in English and Korean. In his book, *Monolingualism of the Other OR The Prosthesis of Origin*, Derrida (1998) contemplates on the loss of one's mother tongue in Algeria due to the consequences of colonialism. Derrida's (1998) theoretical investigation, "I only have one language; it is not mine" (p. 1), influenced me to write a bilingual version of poetry in an attempt to depict my complex linguistic and cultural identity. The poetry below implicitly depicts the uncertainty and open-ness in examining my linguistic identities. I illustrated the complexity of linguistic identities by writing the two poems differently. I wrote the first poem *Mother Tongue & Who am I?: 모국어 & 나는 누구일까?*in Korean first then translated it in English. I reversed my process for the second *M/Other Tongue & Who "are" I?: 모(타)국어 & 나(들)은 누구일까?* After illustrating my complex thoughts on English and linguistic identity, I literally translated it in Korean. I am "lost in translation" like a movie title dealing with a sense of "loss" in another country (Coppola, 2003). I am "lost in translation" in that the task of translation is always temporal, provisional; linguistic "other-ness" remains foreign due to my incapacity to comprehend the very meaning of language in either Korean or English (Benjamin, 1923/2000). Most notably, I found it impossible to translate Korean adjectives that are full of subtle, aesthetic expressions into those in English. I imprecisely translated several adjectives with the use of "barely, vague, blah-blah, and delicious." For a different reason, I noticed an incompatible, awkward crossing-over between English and Korean, translating the major concept of m/other tongue. I decided to use an unfamiliar format of 모(타)국어in Korean—which would never be included in Korean vocabulary. My failure of translation, according to Benjamin, originates in differences in the contextual meanings of specific words between Korean and English as well as differences in grammar, lexis, and syntax. On top of this task involving the impossible task of translation, I theorized the complexity of representing linguistic identities in the next section. I argue that linguistic identities can never be universalized with the use of a mother-father tongue analogy, yet "m/othering" (Springgay & Freedman, 2009) is a different approach to imagining linguistic identities. I hope to open up the possibility to revisit any existing knowledge about self and other that researchers have not examined before as Lather (1991) articulated previously.

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Who "are" I: 나(들)은 누구일까?

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모국어 & 나는 누구일까? *Mother Tongue & Who am I?*	
꿈 꾼다 그 언어가 영어였는지 한국말이었는지 어슴푸레하고 헛갈린다 모국어 말 소리 하나 하나에 담긴 아련한 기억이 떠오른다. 엄마. 엄마. 엄마.	I dream I'm confused if I dreamed in English or Korean; so vague I remember my memoires saved in my mother tongue. Mom, mom, mom

마치 꿈에서 갑자기 깨어난 듯 엄마는 타인이 된 채 멀리 서 있고, 엄마를 상실한 난 애써 배워 온 타인의 언어를 재잘 재잘 되풀이한다 맘 (mom). 맘. 맘. 내 무의식의 감정도 감칠 맛 나는 언어의 추억도 어디론가 사라졌다 부국어 (父國語)의 틀 속에서 엄마 말과 아빠 말의 사이에 남이 되어버린 엄마와 멀어져 버린 아빠 사이에서 또 다시 끊임 없이 물어본다 나는 누구일까? 나(들)은 누구일까?	As if I woke up suddenly from the dream Mother is standing outside as the other I, after losing mother, repeat the other's language Meaninglessly chattering on blah, blah, blah Mom, mom, mom My unconscious emotions My memories with delicious language Are lost somewhere In the frame of a father tongue In-between a mother-father tongue M/other has become the Other Father has become so distant from me I keep asking myself constantly Who am I? Who (are) I?

"I have only one language, yet it is not mine"; Derrida (1998, p. 1) states this paradoxical maxim in order to debunk the myth about the ownership of language. As shown in my *Letter to English*, I used to take it for granted that Korean was my mother tongue and that I owned the language. According to Derrida (1998), however, "regardless of the language I speak or the extent to which I master multiple languages, either in Korean or English, never do I own the language. Language itself is a "foreign" body provisionally residing within myself. Derrida articulates this other-ness of language stating, "We only ever speak one language—and since it returns to the other, it exists asymmetrically, always for the other, from the other, kept by the other. Coming from the other, remaining with the other, and returning to the other" (Derrida, 1998, p. 40). Language itself lives in a foreign body. The foreign-ness of language challenges presupposed notions that native English speakers "own" their English. Influenced by Derrida, I postulate that a mother-father tongue analogy is problematic. A linguistic identity should move beyond the dichotomous articulation with a mother-father tongue or labels such as Native/non-Native English speaker in order to leave an opening for linguistic, cultural identities that are not yet known.

        In my poem above, I apply new vocabulary of "m/other tongue" in order to underscore the incomplete, foreign element of language. Springgay and Freedman (2009) challenge Western epistemology to divide women's identity into mother and other (a child). This divided perception about mother and her child perpetuates a social norm that motherhood should be selfless and determinable in regards to the other (her child). By combining mother and other as "m/other," Springgay and Freedman highlight m/othering as performativity generated by active interaction between mother and other. This term of "m/other" aims to leave open the possibility of multiple interactions and interpretations between self and other, thus creating a new ethical relationship.

Based on this argument on m/othering, I adopt this word of "m/other tongue" in order to suggest the possibility of imagining a new linguistic identity. As Derrida paradoxically points out, I only have one language which is not mine. Fully relying on a "mother tongue" for supposed fluent, intuitive communication is dismantled due to the foreign-ness of language itself. Despite my familiarity or unfamiliarity with Korean and English language, a language itself remains with the other, and I cannot claim ownership of the language. "One day, you will see what you are calling your mother tongue will no longer even respond to you" (Derrida, 1998, p. 34). Borrowing the term "m/othering" from Springgay and Freedman (2009), the notion of m/other tongue introduces the possibility of embracing multiple meanings of linguistic identity. Indeed, my mother tongue has turned into a m/other tongue in that that I never possibly own language due to its foreign element. I represent my feeling of this m/othering process in the poetry below. I examine multiple interpretations about identity by exploring who I "are" (Cixous, 1994).

M/Other Tongue & Who "are" I? 모(타)국어 & 나(들)은 누구일까?	
Now, I have lost my assumption that English is only owned by "native English speakers" or I can own English while mastering it. Now, I am open to a new understanding about my linguistic identity that moves beyond linguistic purity as Korean, "Americanized" Korean, or Korean American to examining closely the context of existence within this problematic mother-father tongue relationship And imagining "m/other tongue" as a different understanding of my linguistic self and other.	이제 "영어 원어민"만이 영어를 소유한다는 혹은 영어를 완전히 습득하여 영어를 소유한다는 가정을 상실(喪失)해 버렸다. 이제 새로운 이해의 지평으로 접어든 나는 언어적 정체성(正體性)이 한국인, "미국화 된" 한국인, 혹 미국계 한국인이라는 언어적 순수성을 넘어 모국어-부국어 관계가 지닌 문제성을 맥락 속에서 면밀히 살펴보게 된다 그리고 모(타)국어를 언어로서의 나와 남에 대한 새로운 이해의 발판으로 상상(想像)한다.

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I have started this self-reflexive writing to examine my linguistic, cultural identity—namely, the interrogation of who I am, particularly inquiring into the meaning of Korean/English in my linguistic identity construction. After genealogically examining my epistemological shifts in relation to English, I attempted to represent my multiple identities as shown in Figure 4 by overlapping previous paradigms. Yet, I felt that Figure 4 was a problematic representation of my linguistic and cultural identities by neglecting my sociopolitical, economic, and political interactions with the other which moves and shifts endlessly. I hoped to emphasize and represent the previous discussion on linguistic identity related to performative acts—namely, my identity is the reiteration of a set of social norms that controls what I speak, how I speak, and how to interact with other people.

While reviewing my autoethnographic narratives concerning m/other-father tongue interactions, I endeavored to address complex situations in identity constructions in which different perspectives are always conflicting, shifting, and co-existing. At the same time, I wished to address the multiple and multilayered identities that exist as the "effects" of discourses (Butler, 1999). Cixous's (1994) perpetual questioning of "Who are I?" was a way to represent "myselves" who "are" living in this complicated, multi-layered, and ambiguous world.
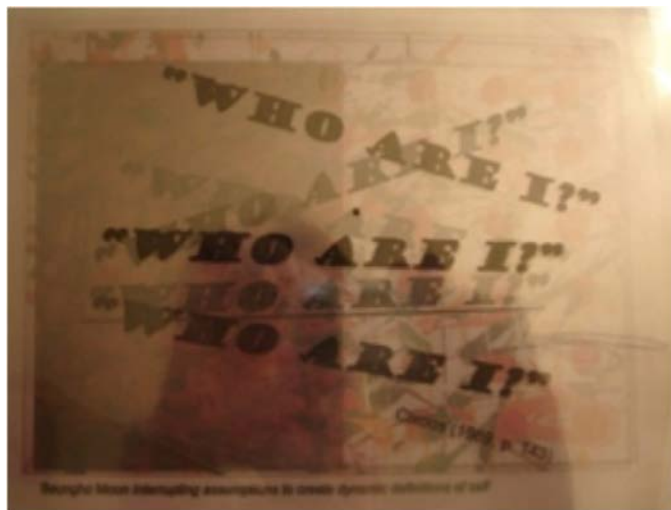

Figure 5. *Who "are" I?*

Cixous (1994), a French philosopher, constantly asks the questions of "qui sont-je/who are I?" rather than discovering "who am I?" She states, "I never ask myself 'who am I' (*qui suis-je?*) I ask myself 'who are I?' (*qui sont-je?*)—an untranslatable phrase. Who can say who I are, how many I are, which I is the most I of my I's…Without counting all the combinations with others, our exchanges between languages, between sexes—our exchanges which change us, tint us with others" (pp. xvii-xviii). Similar to Cixous's assertion, I represent "myselves" who "are" living in this multi-layered world. In Figure 5, I addressed my linguistic identities that are in the moment and then erased—namely, only to be reiterated in the next moment. As the miniscule dot in the middle of Figure 5 exemplifies, I represented my linguistic, cultural identities that are constantly shifting in the moment while asking the unanswerable question, who "are" I? Thus, I continuously ask the question of who I "are" within a sociopolitical and historical moment.

I reside moment-by-moment to answer the unanswerable question: "who are I" (Cixous, 1994)? My linguistic, cultural identity is moving among various paradigms, spaces, and locations. I live and struggle in the moment to "challenge the 'sweaty fight' to develop highly situated responses" towards uncertainty in knowing and open-endedness in identity constructions (Miller, 2005, p. 242). Living in these struggling moments ironically creates a new space to revisit my existing assumptions about identities and interactions with others in a specific sociopolitical context.

"Who am I?" "Who are I?" These contradictory questions of identity raise a new horizon to rethink any given, binary notions of native/non-native English speakers, mother/father tongues, and us/them. Rather this new lexicon, or grammar, of "Who are I?" leads me to think about what it means to live in the world that is filled with incomplete, unknown narratives about self and other as a researcher and educator.

Examination

Currently, I am interested in studying identity and knowledge. Questions that arise from that interest include queries about the origins and formation of both identity and knowledge, where identity and knowledge might intersect and where they might diverge, and whether identity and knowledge are mutually exclusive, mutually inclusive, or a combination thereof. This section will attempt to provide more clarification with regards to these questions.

> The imaginary was the alibi of the real, in a world dominated by the reality principle. Today, it is the real that has become the alibi of the model, in a world controlled by the principle of simulation. And, paradoxically, it is the real that has become our true utopia- but a utopia that is no longer in the realm of the possible, that can only be dreamt of as one would dream of a lost object. (Baudrillard, 1994, pp. 122-123)

We need to strive to accurately define our personal knowledge and experience, our identity, if we are going to propose an avenue to it. Or, at the very least, we need to earnestly engage in a substantial effort to define what our experience has meant to us even if our memory is subject to gaps, even when our interpretation of what has happened bleeds into a social framework that suggestively determines the time and space that allows us the opportunity to interpret.

To act in the world we are somewhat required to have an understanding that our relationship with the world will remain to a large extent consistent and predictable. There are, however, some periods of time and circumstances when this is not so, when our predictable and known ways of being in the world are brought under challenge and we are changed forever (Somerville, 2007, p. 234).

To begin as all things begin, and here is exactly an announcement of origin that signifies a departure from its moment of inception. Meaning ascribed to a distance between what was and what has become and maybe, just maybe, what will be. The peril here (if there is a more apt term to describe this circumstance then let it be) is to overlook this process, to withdraw from its recognition, to abandon its archeology. This study seeks to address this process, to engage its recognition, to retain its archeology.

The methods employed during the course of this inquiry facilitated an emergence of knowledge and experience but not necessarily a definition of them. The problem is that there are many problems and attempting to address one problem in isolation is liable to become an exercise in reinscribing dominant ideology more than an effort to posit an actual intellectual concern. My understanding and awareness of these problems originates in my experiences of the world, what I have come to comprehend from being in the world, and how the active reflection of both past and present events provides for the possibility of a differentiated future.

What I know of myself and how I came to that knowledge is often not reflected in text, especially challenging when during the course of my institutional education one text is prized over another, and in that institutional valuation rests the very real risk of losing the knowledge I have of my "self" to an identity that is thrust upon me. "There are problems, too, when we do see ourselves but can barely recognize ourselves through the representation. One problem of being trained to read this way, or, more correctly, of learning to read this way over many years of academic study, is that we can adopt uncritically similar patterns of writing" (Smith, 1999, p. 36).

This research seeks to provide an epistemological dissection of self through an ontological excavation of identity and acknowledges the hardship encountered by an accurate representation of such data. Epistemological dissection is a process by which knowledge attributed either to the self or identity is analyzed and deconstructed, often simultaneously, in an effort to interpret and then (re)present the origin of such knowledge. Ontological excavation is a process by which experience attributed either to the self or identity is analyzed and deconstructed, often simultaneously, in an effort to interpret and then (re)present the origin of such experience.

The Story of Experience and Knowledge

The data presented in the following pages is organized and demonstrates an effort to (re)present the ontological excavation of identity in a single slide (the larger, solitary image) while an epistemological dissection of self is demonstrated in the transition of a single slide to the next (the smaller, paired images).

I am as prone to looking at the underbelly of things as I am to looking at the façade. This gaze is often emotional. The appeal of the underbelly (or lack thereof) is only compared with the façade when there is no mention of the circumstances that contribute to the recognition of both. It is easier to digress to a dichotomy because there is less instability in the description of such a comparison. In my experience, this nonchalance is disingenuous and pregnant with imprecision. There is an efficiency to being mechanical; mechanical efficiency is mostly foreign to me.

The transition here is controlled by the redness and brown from the rust in the pole and those same tones on the stanchions of the bridge. The center of image with the pole is controlled by the blackness found in its hole, and this gape is a chasm that stretches across the suspension of the bridge. The pole is more in the forefront of the image than the bridge and the contrast of fore/back ground lends movement from left to right.

There is a part of me that is inescapably "American" but that part is fluid and suppresses other parts that are seeking some sort of separation from that identity. It has been like a tug-of-war; like hunger: torment perforated by moments of cosmopolitan serenity. Hardly amiable. Maybe even occurring with a begrudging-like finality, this understanding has conceded that battles were neither won nor lost. Instead, they were simply occasions of conflict and vanity.

Red controls both of the images here but is neither dominant in the second image nor in the first as other colors prevail to enhance its effect. The brownish tint of the bridge spanning across in the first image is an almost identical match to the brown railing and arches of the ceiling in the second image. A type of fluidity to an otherwise inanimate setting. The green/bluish tones in the first image are picked up in the ovals of the second.
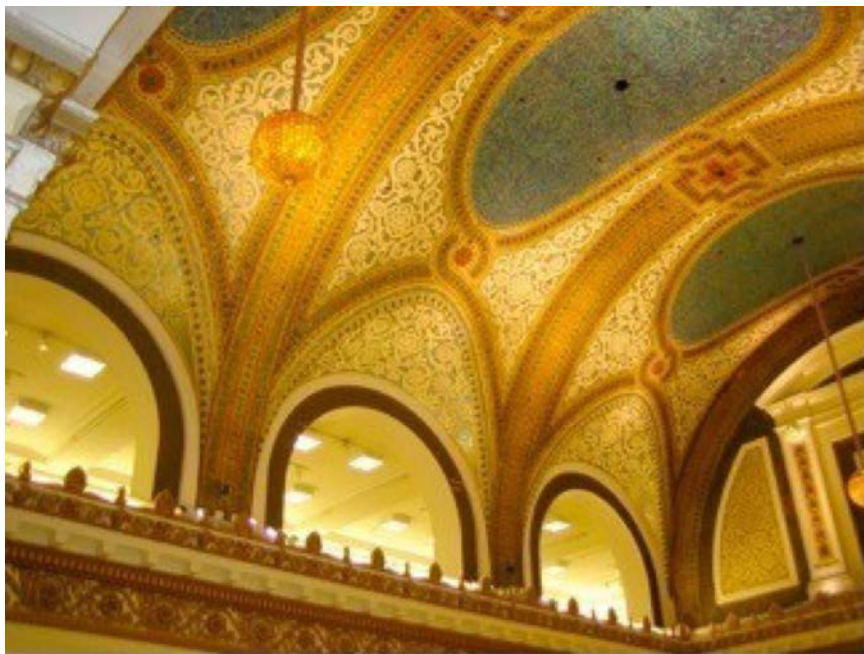
The glamour that is the glitz and a naive enchantment with nostalgia, a past that perhaps never existed except as a collected figment; a group imagination I was not a member of.

Nevertheless, there are artifacts, evidence of a time when proportion was perceived differently than I would know of it today. And the scale of objects within that proportion is quite often discussed with earnestness by myself and others. It is almost magical to think of a time when these events were constructed.

The vibrant yellow in the first image is offset by the pale blue in the second. There is a play on form between the two; the structure in the first image suggests an openness that is contrasted by the closed nature of the structure in the second image. The railing of the second image is stark compared to the ornateness of the ceiling leaving an effect that is slightly upsetting the symbolism of both.

I am often immersed in complications that are outside my understanding. Simple affairs become transformed into complex undertakings that are illusory and incoherent. Conversely, the complex mutates to basic expressions that are concrete and exact. All of this materializes often without invitation and is just as often unwelcome.

The hood of the first image provides a subtle palette that bleeds color into the second image. Traces of pale blue darken the pattern of the second image, yet hues of red and brown enhance the blue in a way not found in the first. The overall effect contradicted by the entertainment of line as both a radiating pronouncement and buffering defense.

Both geometry and absolution, like when an ordinary object is transformed to something more extraordinary. Surely the momentous can suggest a multitude of little moments adding themselves until the sheer weight of all that littleness becomes larger than the sum of its parts. Geometric formula often dissuaded me from wanting to accept its proof, I kept seeing all of those small things and kept insisting that the formula to solve it was only testimony that a generalization could erase the contributions of so many.

The second image introduces green at the expense of the first image's design. The two images are not mutually distinct, however, as the first image allows for the possibility of centrality. The color of the spaces found in between the pattern of the first image promote the ascension of the figure in the second image as it rests on similar stone.

The dragon is myth! A valiant statement derived from fantasy and then placed within these borders. Not a threat, more an assurance and for me a representation of what may be possible. This is not about the fanciful. It is about what *could* be. To restore symbolism would be to also emphasize that we are all not so dissimilar. The recognition that our interpretation of a symbol is largely based in our subjectivity would be to embrace a laurel branch that risks being ignored.

Position controls the appearance of both images here and the focal point of both is slightly off-center. The rusty red from the first image is picked up in the roof of the second and somehow this lends to a transference of green from image to image. Both images are framed; the first with bristles and the second with isolation.

To me lighthouses symbolically represent an example of purposeful benevolence. There is a practicality to such acts of creation. If people were disposed to always be cruel then the lighthouse likely could not exist. There is something to be said for the construction of a structure that serves no other purpose than to guide.

A different method to confer isolation, with both images sharing white at the center. The green from the second image is accessible due to the green in first image. The hue of each green are distinct in their application.


The residue of my existence is identical to the existential residue found elsewhere; we all end up the same. The assigning of what will be valued can be arbitrary and unforgiving.

I abhor that some deeds are recognized over other deeds, and I abhor that some persons are glorified at the expense of others. I've come to a tacit understanding of the relative nature of being. It is through this consent that I find myself to be most human.

There is a trace of leftover sand in the tone of the marble at the bottom part of the image, and it is this trace that assists in the transition from the first to the second. The white and green of the empty pack of cigarettes flows into the painted tiles of the fountain in the second, and the balance is maintained by the centrality of the figures in both images.
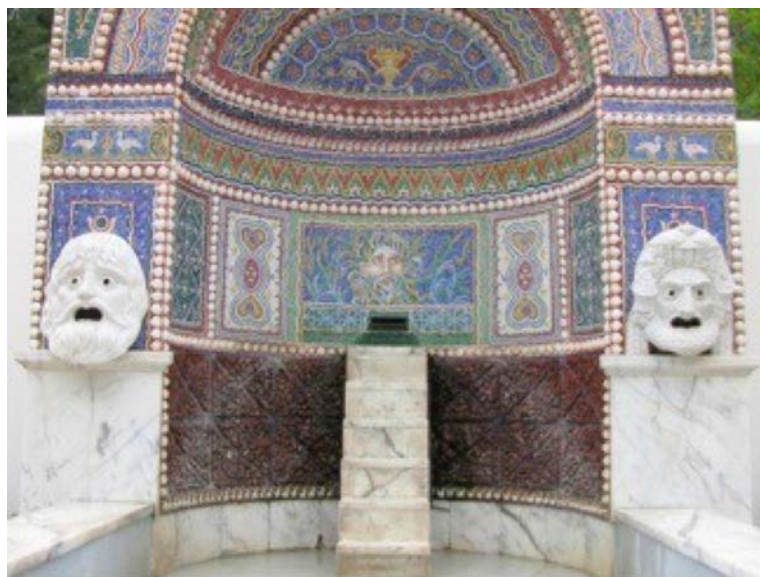
The glory of color and I am captive within it, I'd gladly have them all. The articulation of color subdues my anguished shout. I recall a great fondness for coloring books and I was shaped by that sincerity as much as I've been shaped by anything else. I've found salvation in color. My perception of the world would be hollow without color. I would be less without color. I am less without color.

Blue controls the transition of these images and there is much here that suggests activity. The tiles in the first image are text-like balancing the letters in the second image so that they in turn are tile-like. The first image is framed and pushed to the background while the second image is framed by its lack of depth.

The warning has always been two-thirds the size of the dream and I have heeded far too many of those warnings. The only thing that might prevent another inglorious repetition would be some sort of salvation but I'm not patient enough. I would rather be a part of imperfect expressions. I can only approach perfection through these exercises of imperfection. I really don't know if this is learning but I feel as if I'm learning. I'm not saying that I am a dreamer. I am just saying that I dream.

Shades of white are explored in the transition from one image to the other. The contrast provided by the message of the first image is essential to the transition of the second. There is an active tranquility present in the second image and this transitory effect is possible because of the vacancy communicated in the first image.

I believe in nymphs. I believe in the cold but recognize that there are moments when things become frigid. I believe in seduction because I have been seduced. I believe that the sun will come out tomorrow but not because science has proved it; because I've heard it in a song. I believe that it is very important to believe. I believe that the world is supernatural and horrible.

Space here is inverted with the snow of the first image transposed in the sky of the second image. The color of the brick in the first image can be found in the second image where the earth meets the sky.

The horizon is beautiful. I can find myself in that almost imperceptible space where one part meets the other part, typically between the earth and the sky. I've never been fond of that space being referred to as a line though. In my mind that line seems to dictate a sharp edge and I've found that there are very few horizons where I've seen such an edge fit that description. There are jagged edges, smooth edges, arced edges; all of them have nooks and crannies that are anything but straight.

The soft orange from the first image commands the second image and is balanced by the composition offered from a horizontal direction to a vertical one. Green transitions from a darkened foreground in the first image to an illuminated background in the second image, purposefully accenting several orange tones that might otherwise overwhelm the eye of the beholder.

I recall going to the zoo as a child and really having a grand time. I was not, in any way, cognizant that animals in the zoo were detained from their more appropriate environment. The strange thing for me is the memory of a toy, a wax animal (it was a lion) that I took, a souvenir and a symbol of the experience. Was I being acculturated? I'm not sure and at this point it begs a much larger question: how have I become those experiences without knowing I was?

The pattern found in the figure of the first image is transplanted to the second image via an alternating contrast. Circular spots found in the first figure are concealed within the text of the second image. The second image is devoid of color, providing a sense of continuity and confinement in both images.


Text as image and for me this appears more comfortable, more familiar. Could very well be an advertisement for the notion that the medium is the message and I would be ok with that type of characterization. I cannot imagine the assertion by others that there is some sort of "true path" to an understanding of text. Text is what it is. My relationship with text is what matters most to me. Text is interpretation.

> This, then, the center of a multi-colored rectangle
> pushing against soft spoken boundaries,
> strokes that hoist a proverbial smallish white plastic tassel.
> Enough to pull back that lint curtain:
> Enough to withstand a metallic reptile dialect:
> Enough to assume sanity and its antithesis
> (insanity):
> Enough to fortify the substance of rational thought.
> Enough to sleep, to dream, to rest.
> Enough, enough.
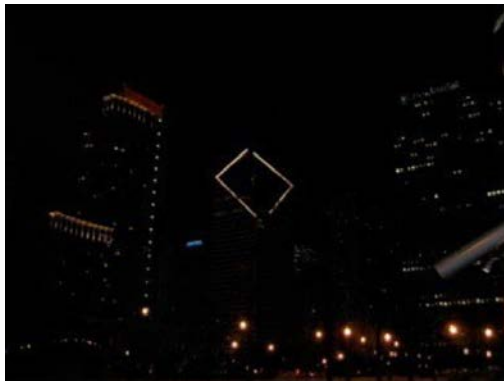
The transition here would not be complete without black lines, a "frame" around the image of text. That frame advances to the second image in the diamond of the building. This text also contrasts with those electric lights in the second image. Equilibrium is established according to this interplay.
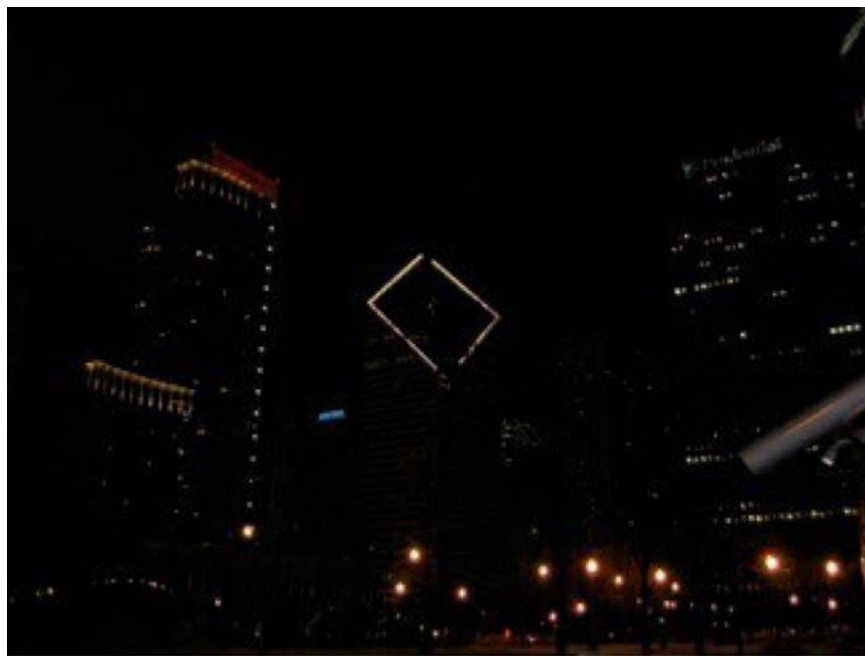
So often the evening. Initially I pushed back against the electric light because it illuminated a modernity that I could not reconcile. The reconciliation came through and I found myself externally positioned, navigating modernized constellations with the same kind of wonder I felt internally for lights deprived of that particular current. I find most of it to be very similar now. I have grown accustomed to an understanding that electric light is light manufactured.

A transition facilitated by the inverse of the previous transition. The faint red at the top of the building in the first image helps to guide the red of the second image. The black of the first image assists in balancing the general effect from the symbol of the second.

Proceed with caution. Sage advice surely, especially if one has the time. Most of the people that I know don't, and neither do I. My understanding is that you are lucky to have a single opportunity and it is impossible to make the most of that without taking risks. There is something to be said for minimizing risk but that is often said from the comfort of hindsight, after the bigger picture has been revealed. I don't know of the bigger picture as some form of ultimate revelation, I only know of it in fragments. That is how I have experienced.

Discussion and Implication

> Instead of emulating the natural or "exact" sciences, the goal is getting people to no longer know what to do so that things might be done differently…This is the yes of the setting-to-work mode of postfoundational theory that faces unanswerable questions, the necessary experience of the impossible, in an effort to foster understanding, reflection, and action instead of a narrow translation of scientificity. (Lather, 2007, pp. 152-153)

As Lather (2007) elaborates on above, the crisis of representation in qualitative research opens up questions about the scientificity of educational inquiry. Qualitative researchers rethink the methodological issues from replicating scientificity and objectivity (e.g., validity, reliability, or triangulation) to facing and exploring unanswerable questions about truth and reality that are not predetermined but always discursively constructed. Drawing from the two autoethnographic narratives, we challenged the normative meaning of objectivity in research and examined these (im)possibilities, using multiple media to explore the intersections of identity and experience. In his book, *Monolingualism of the Other, or, The Prosthesis of Origin,* Derrida (1998) delves into the problems of language. He states that all language is inheritably oppressive because the subject must confine his/her thoughts and feelings within grammatical, semantic, and syntactical rules. In another book, Derrida (1997) similarly elaborates the limited capacity of language to represent realities and the reproduction of meaning. He mentions, "In this play of representation, the point of origin becomes ungraspable. There are things like reflecting pools, and images, an infinite reference from one to the other, but no longer a source, a spring. There is no longer a simple origin" (Derrida, 1997, p. 36). Influenced by Derrida, we posit that a language can never truly be ours due to its intangible nature and its political influence in constructing realities. Furthermore, the insistence to replicate discourse and reality promotes simulation, not the existing truth, in a way that is not intended. This aggressive selecting of one form over another, of one content over another, is ready for the suggestion of an alternative (Reader, 2008). As qualitative researchers, we explore multiple approaches as they are generated from outside of the existing frameworks, sanctioned by the dominant episteme.

We have attempted to create possibilities that interrupt this dominant episteme by employing counter-narratives as well as art-based inquires that challenge grand narratives in qualitative research. Our attempts to work on diverse representations aim to challenge, dismantle, and interrupt the myth of scientific knowledge, the humanistic assumption of truth, research, and representation. Such challenges are critical to understanding the promotion of research, and enhancing the public discourse regarding the value of qualitative research. We offer that in a crisis of representation, what is deemed to be valid research is often indicative of a theoretical framework that aggressively seeks to invalidate other perspectives and ways of knowing. This research centered on the insufficiencies of language, the limited capacity of a researcher to address multiple realities, and the limits within the production of meaning. We, overall, contribute to an exploration of the possibilities of using art-based representations as data in qualitative research in the crisis of representation. In the midst of this crisis, we attempt to imperfectly and partially represent our autobiographical experiences and reflexive thoughts using multiple media. The threads among narrative writing, visual representation, and bilingual representation perhaps open up possibilities to examine unanswerable questions and explore other dimensions of the crisis of representation in research writing.

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