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Understanding Myself in New Ways: An Auto-Biographical Study in Times of Cultural Change

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In this self-reflective auto-ethnographic study, the author shares her experiences of introspection, change and professional growth as an art educator in various cultural contexts. Auto-ethnography is an approach to qualitative inquiry in which the researcher employs self-reflection to explore personal experiences and to connect these auto-biographical experiences to wider socio-cultural and political issues in culturally changing societies.

This study recollects personal narratives of the author's path as an Austrian art educator in the United States, in the context of a public Brooklyn high school, a world-renowned art museum and finally as a doctoral student at a large Midwestern university from a critical pedagogy perspective. Thereby, these stories present narratives of vulnerability, support and the challenges of transforming traditional understandings of art, teaching and research into critical and participatory art pedagogies and practices.

The self-reflective approach provides the author an opportunity to speak from the inside out as a researcher and educator having experienced a deeper understanding of "self" and to explore the changes that have taken place in her activities in the broader context of identity formation, constructivist teaching and learning, and participatory art and activism.

As the author engages in auto-ethnographic inquiry and explores insights from her past and present, she reflects how they lead her to where she is today and considers how these insights could be meaningful to other art educators' and researchers' understanding of themselves.