Disciplinary Images of “Korean-Ness”: Autobiographical Interrogations on the Panopticon

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Abstract
The purpose of this study is to generate complicated conversations about identity and culture with an examination of various panoptic technologies, including separation, invisibility, control, and productivity. Drawn from Foucault’s panopticism, the author examines how discipline operates as a controlling power in several Korean institutions of schools, the seminary, and the military. This autobiographical self-reflexive research explores disciplinary images of “Korean-ness,” which has been discursively and materialistically constructed and embodied via panoptic technologies. These counter-narratives do not support for the advancement of the universalized version of the “Korean” identity. Rather, the author theorizes Korean identity as discursive practices in modern power structures, while dealing with the “political ‘double bind’” of (a) individualization through instruments of discipline and (b) the reinforcement of Confucian ideal of proper human relationships. This article provides educators with a lens to examine the ways in which disciplinary power/knowledge operates to control students’ ways of thinking, behaving, and living, in relation to “self,” “others,” and institutions. By opening possibilities to examine cultural identity beyond discovering “true” self, the author emphasizes the analyses of power in its examination of cultural sameness/difference in multicultural curriculum studies.

Keywords
panopticism, Confucianism, diversity in curriculum, autobiographical inquiry

Prologue
A total of 57 seventh graders were reciting five words in a classroom. One period per week, Mr. Yi, our Sino-Korean teacher, taught us not only Classic Chinese characters but also the values embedded in each one.

Mr. Yi: In-Ui-Ye-Ji-Sin (仁義禮智信)!
Students: In-Ui-Ye-Ji-Sin (仁義禮智信)!
Mr. Yi: Benevolence In, righteousness Ui, propriety Ye, wisdom Ji, sincerity Sin!
Students: Benevolence In, righteousness Ui, propriety Ye, wisdom Ji, sincerity Sin!

I recall his passion for explaining the meaning of each word, as well as his basic knowledge about Confucian teaching.

Mr. Yi: OK, class. Benevolence In. This character is the combination of “human” (人) and “two” (二). When two people live together, they have to be benevolent, generous, and kind to each other. This is the most important lesson that Confucius taught.

Repeat after me, Benevolence In!
Students: Benevolence In!

Mr. Yi explicated the meaning and etymology of the word while writing the character on the blackboard. Then he asked us to repeat, while memorizing the meaning and pronunciation at the same time.

Mr. Yi: Righteousness Ui!
Students: Righteousness Ui!
Mr. Yi: Sometimes, you guys say to each other, “We should keep our Ui-ri (loyalty, 義理)” or “You are such a disloyal guy.” When do you say this?
Student A: When my friend is loyal to me, he has Ui-ri. If my friend betrays me for his selfishness, he becomes a disloyal friend.
Mr. Yi: That’s correct. Righteousness Ui is similar in meaning to Ui-ri. Ui means righteousness, faithfulness, loyalty, and justice. Confucius taught people to move beyond their own personal interests, and immediate benefit to a community’s interest and the long-term benefit of a society.

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When Mr. Yi explained the meaning of *Ui*, he provided familiar examples for us. Keeping *Ui-ri* among students was important because disloyalty to a peer group or other kinds of groups is a way to be ostracized in the community. From this familiar concept, Mr. Yi introduced what Confucius emphasized in his teaching.

Mr. Yi: Propriety *Ye*!
Students: Propriety *Ye*!
Mr. Yi: As you should know, *Ye* is habits of mind to consider other people’s situations and reserve yourself. From ancient times, Koreans are called *courteous people in the East*. We should keep this wonderful tradition. Guided by the Confucian teaching of *Ye*, we should respect elders, be humble, and be considerate to others. Please remember to be a courteous and humble person. This is a way of success. Imagine rice farming. The more rice ripens, the more rice stalks are bent with grain. Like these ripening rice stalks, a really knowledgeable person does not show off his or her knowledge. They are always courteous, humble, and polite.

Mr. Yi emphasized *Ye* in his teaching because it governs all relations in Confucianism. Without *Ye*, a person is scarcely civilized (Park, 2006). Mr. Yi’s metaphor of ripened rice stalks was the most widely circulated metaphor among my teachers, who emphasized the importance of becoming courteous and humble. For the rest of the class, he addressed two other basic principles of Confucianism, *Ji* and *Sin*. He underscored the value of *Ji*, which emphasizes learning and sharing knowledge with other colleagues, and *Sin*, which values trust and sincerity among people, especially friends.

## Introduction

Confucian teaching predominantly takes a major role in introducing Korean culture or the “Korean-ness,” including Confucius’s emphasis on strong interpersonal relationship and harmony, hierarchical social interactions, and high value on education (De Bary, 1998; Yum, 2000). For example, *Education Fever* is a term to introduce Korea’s educational phenomenon that highly values education (e.g., entering a prestigious university) for keeping and/or promoting social status grounded in Confucianism (C. J. Lee, 2005; J. Lee, 2006). Daily practices of Confucianism become a tool to explicate cultural difference between Korean and other cultures (Kim, 2009; I. Lee & Koro-Ljungberg, 2007; Shin, 2012).

My inquiry in this article begins from the question, “When teachers’ understandings about cultural sameness/difference are normalized with the use of predetermined identity (e.g., Confucianism-based culture), what different approaches might be possible for the research in cultural identity?” In other words, “What discourses do I create in the field of multicultural curriculum studies when Korean-ness is essentialized with the use of Confucian teaching, without explications of discursive practices in education?” While responding to these questions, this article purports to generate “complicated conversations” (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1995) to imagine diverse approaches to identity, culture, and education. When research on/about/of cultural sameness/difference is essentialized in understanding culture, educators might lose great opportunities to examine the complexity and ambiguity regarding identity.

I explore possibilities to extend identity research while challenging the “discovery” of preexisting self, as is the dominant current educational discourse and its practice. Drawing from the frame of power/knowledge (Foucault, 1980), I attempt to extend the notions of discursive constructions of the subject and culture into the field of multicultural curriculum studies. As I mentioned earlier, I problematize predominant cultural determinations in terms of normalizing cultural sameness/difference. Such elaboration with the frame of panoptic technologies is a necessary effort to examine complicatedness of subjectivity and discursive aspects of cultural identity. Thus, cultural sameness/difference can be applied in the inquiry into “what possibilities of mobilization are produced” from the current, existing discursive configurations (Butler, 1992, p. 13).

Among many approaches to identity research, I mainly interrogate disciplinary strategies that have circulated and been employed during my upbringing. Most notably, I examine how my “Korean-ness” has been discursively constructed and embodied in modern power structures, while dealing with the “political ‘double bind’” of (a) instruments of the panoptic technologies (i.e., individualization techniques) and (b) the reinforcement of Confucian ideal of proper human relationships (Foucault, 1983, p. 216). This inquiry is an attempt to examine the complexity of identity and culture that cannot be explained by the “Korean” culture without the analyses of power operations (Foucault, 1977, 1983).

When I examine discipline in this study, I predominantly borrow Foucault’s (1977) concept of biopower that makes “possible the meticulous control of the operations of the body” (p. 137). In this inquiry on disciplinary images of Korean-ness—which is fluid and not essentialized—power/knowledge becomes a theoretical lens to examine disciplinary power. According to Foucault, power/knowledge is an “inseparable configuration of ideas and practices that constitute a discourse” (Ball, 1990, p. 5), and no power relation exists without the correlative constitution of knowledge and discourse. Multiple power relations exist that constitute the social body, and the nexus of power cannot be implemented without the operation of discourse (Foucault, 1977; Moon, 2011b).

Foucault (1972) conceptualizes discourses not merely as groups of signs but as “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (p. 49). Power resides in the discursive formation, and it is through discourses that power is exercised everywhere and always circulating in daily educational practices (Moon, 2011b). Discourses construct social meanings of self/other, cultural sameness/difference,
and diversity via power/knowledge in terms of (a) who can say, (b) what can be thought/spoken, and (c) when, in what circumstances, and with what authority they are spoken and circulated (Jabal & Riviere, 2007). Drawing from the power/knowledge nexus (Foucault, 1980), I mainly examine the ways in which knowledge is produced and produces subjectivity with the control of body and mind to optimize docility and productivity, that is, panoptic technologies.

In Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison, Foucault (1977) conceptualizes disciplinary power through panoptic technologies with the emphasis on invisibility of surveillance and self-control. The panopticon is a modern architectural network—not a fixed structure—in which invisible power operates in a multifaceted, fluid, and porous collection of networks. The panoptic technology, which is “an exemplary technology for disciplinary power” (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983, p. 192), controls a productive and docile individual. In this article, I examine the instrument of discipline and panoptic technologies. This interrogation explicates the ways in which “discipline” functions as the controlling power therein and thus constructed my identities. Overall, panoptic technologies guide me to examine how the subject is discursively, socially, and physically constructed as the effect of power/knowledge.

With the use of self-reflexive autobiographical inquiry—as a mode of genre and inquiry—I narrate my interpretations of experiences in Korean school, the seminary, and the military. I examine how disciplinary power actually operates by the panoptic technology, and theorize these narratives guided by the instruments of discipline. I do not introduce my narratives with the purpose of generating a monolithic version of Korean identity. My interpretations of my experiences in Korea—that is, knowledge gets produced and produces the subjectivity. And embodied within power/knowledge (Foucault, 1980), I mainly examine the ways in which “power relations are rooted in the system of social network” (p. 224). The purpose of this study is not merely examining power relations within several Korean institutions, including the seminary, military, and schools. Rather, I examine possibilities to review identity and culture beyond discovering preexisting self/other by examining social networks and disciplinary technologies. Ultimately, this study interrogates the (im)possibilities of conducting identity research “differently” as a political engagement, that is, to recognize students who are not following the normalized understandings of cultural sameness/difference.

**A Self-Reflexive Autobiographical Inquiry**

With a use of self-reflexive autobiographical inquiry, I intend to interrupt methodologies that I draw from constructivist and phenomenological narrative research. These interruptions of conventional narrative research tradition (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004)—mostly grounded in ethnographic studies—aim (a) to generate alternative research methods in self-reflexive autobiographical inquiry as well as (b) to pry open a space to continue conversations about what it means to collect data and analyze it poststructurally in research practices.

My definition of self-reflexive autobiographical inquiry is influenced by Pillow’s (2003) reflexivity of discomfort, which challenges the humanistic usage of self-reflection grounded in the recognition of “authentic” self, others, and the truth, and strives toward a discomforting and interruptive methodology. So, when I refer to self-reflexive autobiographical inquiry, I mean the constant troubling, examination, and dismantling of the autobiographical subject’s comfort by the use of reflexivity to investigate discursively, sociopolitically, culturally, and historically constructed identities, truths, and realities. In other words, I do not posit that I can and will discover my Korean identity that is applicable to other Koreans. I do not intend to analyze a normalized version of Confucianism to introduce the Korean identity or Korean-ness. Rather, I investigate sociopolitical, cultural, and historical contexts wherein the subject is discursively constructed and embodied within power/knowledge (Foucault, 1980), that is, knowledge gets produced and produces the subjectivity.

Pillow (2003) begins her theorization of reflexivity of discomfort from challenging the conventional qualitative self-reflective research. Namely, postpositivist qualitative research seeks to (a) understand self, (b) understand the other, (c) discover the “existing” truth, and (d) transcend these understandings of self, the other, and truth as well as “one’s web of situated positionality” (Ilter, 1994, p. 63, as cited in Pillow, 2003). Pillow interrupts this humanistic model of reflection by positing a reflexivity of discomfort. She mentions possibilities of critique beyond a certain kind of universalized reflexivity, concluding that uncomfortable reflexivity is about engaging researchers in people’s struggles—struggles that are often caused by monolithic representations of self/other, truth, and reality. Pillow asserts that the use of “uncomfortable reflexive practices” (p. 175) possibly addresses “messy,” complicated, discursively constructed realities, identities, and memories.

As such, Pillow (2003) coins self-reflexivity of discomfort for ethnographic studies. By employing this methodology, she attempts to dismantle humanistic understandings of self, others, truth, and reality that are waiting out there to be discovered. She also troubles any concept of the “knowing” researcher with the use of reflexivity of discomfort. This research is, quite obviously, not an ethnographic study that typically works with research participant(s). In this self-reflexivity autobiographical inquiry, I, however, strategically use self-reflexivity as a means of moving beyond the “comfort” of discovering my predetermined Korean experience, reality, memory, and identity. I concentrate on the “discomfort” of investigating complexities of them. With the use of some important methodological implications from self-reflexivity, I was able, with limits, of
course, to make myself unfamiliar to challenge my assumptions and taken-for-grantedness about Korean culture. When grand narratives explicate Confucianism as sociocultural, philosophical, and ideological foundations in Korea, I intend to generate counter-narratives to challenge a normalized version of Korean culture or Korean-ness.

Both as the researcher and the researched in this study, I narrated my interpretation of experiences—which have been discursively constructed—by applying reflexivity of discomfort as a means of an exploration of my subjectivity in the making (Miller, 2005). My interest was neither recollecting the authentic account of what “really happened” in my life nor in chronologically listing my life history as an object that was transparent, linear, and waiting “out there” to be “discovered” and represented. In this autobiographical work, I investigated how my national, ethnic, and cultural identities have been discursively and socially constructed as a means to constantly trouble, challenge, and dismantle my comfort of reflexivity. Self-reflexivity of discomfort became a tool to investigate the autobiographical self, other, truth, and reality beyond fixed, monolithic, and predetermined representations.

I use and question three data sources for this study: (a) memory writing, (b) artifacts, and (c) my self-reflexive research journals. Data collection and data analysis are not mutually exclusive but intricately connected during my research (Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Riessman, 2008). Narrative analysis (Riessman, 2008) comprises a major mode of data analysis. Challenging yet also partly applying Riessman’s (2008) methods, I categorize narrative analysis using two different genres: written texts and visual texts. I partially use this data analysis method because it expands the boundaries of narrative data (otherwise limited to written texts) to include visual documents. Riessman’s analytic tools allow me to analyze multiple data from memory writing, visual and written artifacts, and self-reflexive journal entries. I also connect data culled from my self-reflexive autobiographical inquiry with narrative data from ethnographic research traditions, because both share similarities in terms of written and visual narrative format of the data. I still challenge Riessman’s narrative analysis because of its constructivist approach to data, which seeks to find, construct, and reorganize meanings that exist within or could be retrieved from the narrative data. Persuaded by Smith and Watson’s (2000) theorization of memory, experience, identity, embodiment, and agency—all of which are the constitutive processes of autobiographical subjectivity—I partially implement Riessman’s analytic tool to interrogate discursively, culturally, and sociopolitically constructed meanings in my data.

The Panopticon and Discipline

In this section, I examine the efficient nature of disciplinary power that is operating via panoptic technology. Panopticism is an architectural network of a modern prison to make visibility as invisible to maximize controlling people (Foucault, 1977). I use this multifaceted, in flux, and porous network of panopticism to investigate principles that disciplinary power operates in the institutions of monastery, barracks, and schools that have directly influenced my identity constructions.

I investigate my firsthand “experiences” at schools, the seminary, and the military, exploring how relationships among people are constructed in Korea. When I mention experience in this article, I mainly rely on Scott’s (1992) theory of experience. Scott theorizes the “discursive nature of experience” (p. 37) as well as the political aspects of its construction. Influenced by Scott, I define experience as interpretation that is contested and political within specific historical, cultural, and social contexts, rather than simply “waiting to be expressed” (p. 33) or self-evident.

I was inspired to develop this article by a famous sentence in Discipline and Punish: The Birth of Prison: “Is it surprising that prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prisons?” (Foucault, 1977, p. 228). As a person who experienced at least three of these institutions in Korea, including schools, the military, and the seminary, I wanted to use the panoptic as an analytic tool to illustrate the efficient nature of disciplinary power. Most notably, “How do Confucian ideals of harmonious society actually operate within disciplinary powers?” In the analysis and interpretation of my experiences in Korea, I begin my narratives with some drawings of the insides of several institutions. Then, I explain Foucault’s definitions of the panopticon and of discipline. This leads to further interrogation of my narratives in these institutions. Framed by the notion of the panopticon, I examine the instruments of institutional discipline.

The Panopticon: Networks of Power and Operations

Foucault (1977) develops the panoptic technology based on Bentham’s architectural model of a modern prison. The concept of the design is for all (pan-) to be seen (-optic, to see). All prisoners can be seen without being able to tell whether they are being watched. In this section, I juxtapose general structures and functions of the panopticon with the aforementioned institutions in Korea. I acknowledge that Foucault’s panoptic technology is not a fixed structure but an architectural network grounded in mobility. Disciplinary power, which is discursive, operates in a flexible collection of social networks. This article begins from the elaboration of panoptic structures of schools, seminary, and the military in that structural understanding of the panopticon is a foundation of panoptic technology.

General architectural network. According to Foucault (1977), the panopticon is the architectural network where visibility becomes “invisible,” that is, a supervisor can see the inmates, but the inmates cannot see the supervisor. At the
periphery is a ring-shaped building. A tower stands at the center pierced with wide windows that open onto the inner side of the circle. The peripheral building is divided into cells. Each of cells has two windows: one inside, corresponding to the windows of the tower, and one outside, which allows the light to cross the cell from one end to the other.

In the panopticon, a supervisor in a central tower observes an inmate, a patient, a condemned man, a worker, or a student in each cell, thanks to the backlighting effect. These people do not know when they are being observed by the supervisor. They are alone, perfectly individualized, and constantly visible. In short, (in)visibility is a “trap” of discipline and surveillance. In disciplinary regimes in the panopticon, external observers are not needed. Ultimately, knowing that they are “watched,” the inmates watch, judge, and shame themselves (Piro, 2008). According to Foucault (1977), this panopticon is a discipline mechanism that advances the exercise of power by making the space more effective in terms of controlling inmates, workers, students, seminarians, soldiers, and patients in the institutions.

Panopticons in Korea. While reading Foucault’s (1977) *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, I interpreted my memories and my experiences as a student/teacher, seminarian, and soldier. My illustrations in Figure 1 have depicted the insides of those buildings, drawn from my memories.

Drawing these buildings on a copy of the “Plan of the Panopticon,” I realized it was not easy to tell which drawing matched which institution. The drawings in Figure 1 have similarities in architectural design: a hallway in the middle, a wide-open space, and imperative visibility. In the middle of

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**Figure 1. Inside of the Korean panopticons**

*Note: Added to Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison (Foucault, 1977) by Seungho Moon.*
Figure 1 is the inside of Nae-mu-bahn (a military barrack) where more than 50 privates slept together with no separate living space. Every activity happened here except our regular duties during working hours (8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.), when we were in different offices. In Nae-mu-bahn, we slept, watched TV, cleaned rifles, ironed our uniforms, and sometimes read books together. There was no privacy; everyone could see what his or her comrades were doing almost at all times.

The school building where I studied and taught has been represented in the bottom part of Figure 1. I have shown how five to six classrooms were connected on the right side of the hallway. The upper parts of the wall were windows. Anyone from outside the classroom could see inside, but students in the classroom could not see whether someone was watching them or not. I recollect that the principal walked the hallways quite often. We did not know whether he passed by, but we knew that he could always see what we were doing in class.

At the top of Figure 1, there are several rooms in my seminary. The space was organized to facilitate community life. From freshman year to junior year, I had approximately 12 roommates; we slept communally, shared bathrooms, and studied together. I had one roommate during senior year. If I had wanted a single room, I would have had to wait until I was ordained as a deacon. There were very few moments when I could be physically by myself; someone was always with me. Priests lived at the room at the end of the hall. The priest in my hallway did not officially supervise seminarians, but we encountered each other often and casually chatted about what was happening in our spiritual, personal, and academic lives.

Narratives: Living in the Panopticon

I have drawn the inside of three institutions using one point perspective sketch—a drawing technique in which multiple lines converge on one vanishing point (Figure 1). Drawn from the structure, I chronologically narrate some of my experiences inside the school, the seminary, and the military panopticon. Brief explanation of Korean context helps understand my narratives below. My school district was a choice and merit-based system for high school. Every student in my school district can choose any school he or she wants to attend. A major risk of this “choice” is that an applicant should prove his or her academic capacity with test scores. I was lucky enough to enter the best high school in my district. After high school, I decided to pursue Catholic priesthood and went to a diocesan seminary in my province. I studied theology and philosophy for 4 years. As part of admission process, I went through in-depth psychological and physical health tests, let alone passing College Scholastic Aptitude Test (CSAT). Unlike these choices to enter high school and a seminary, South Korea has a compulsory military service system for healthy males. I was expected to serve 26 months to fulfill this obligation as a healthy Korean male citizen. The following describes my experiences in these institutions.

The schooling panopticon. Today I am so nervous again, even though this “ritual” happens at least once or twice a month. My homeroom teacher, Mr. Hwang, brings all students’ report cards from last month’s mock CSAT. As a 12th grader, I should be accustomed to receiving test results, to say nothing of taking tests—I have taken countless tests since elementary school. Finally, Mr. Hwang walks into class with a handful of documents. He calls our names, and we each take our report card like a pseudo-death sentence. Why a pseudo-death sentence? This document indicates where the future of my life will be. This report card determines which college I can apply to with my current test score. It also tells my rank among approximately 600,000 test takers in Korea. As the final ritual, Mr. Hwang posts a paper on the bulletin board. I know what it is a list of the top 20 students in school. Usually, a test prep company provides a big chart so that each student can pinpoint where his or her score is located. For example, some CSAT preparation institutions make a chart indicating which college each student can apply to after taking CSAT. In this chart, the far left column is divided into subgroups based on the test scores. Each major in every college is listed within this big chart. The higher scores I have, the more choices I acquire in choosing both universities and majors. Not only school-teachers but also parents refer to this chart to measure which college and major would be the “best” choice, considering a student’s current test score. This is the way in which friends, teachers, parents, and I read this chart. Usually, the left two columns in the chart indicate the minimum test scores that are supposedly required to apply to a certain major in a university. The first row contains the names of all 4-year colleges and universities in Korea. From the second row, a test taker should find a major that matches his or her test scores.

As such, I situate myself within this ready-made, scientific, measurable guideline. My total test score positions my ideal college, even my major. There is only one right answer in my multiple-choice tests, and hence only one right option for college, based on my CSAT scores. Listing students’ scores is not limited to the classroom bulletin board. I know that teachers can see all 12th graders’ monthly or semimonthly mock CSAT scores in the teachers’ lounge. The identities and names of all 820 seniors in my school are listed as a chart. Total test scores are divided by each subject matter, and every teacher can compare students’ scores by subject matter as well as by the total scores (i.e., 320 points). Furthermore, a student’s ranking in the school as well as his or her percentiles among all the test takers in the nation indicate where each student is located within the normalized scales. Every test is documented in this manner, and teachers can observe each student’s progress or regress. I do not know which teachers care about my test scores, but it is possible that somebody is watching me all the time, without my noticing.
At the end of the day, Mr. Lee, the vice principal, is not happy with our school’s test scores. He announces that our school ranks second among all the high schools in the nation. He really seemed to want us to be the top and the best high school in Korea. He encourages us to study harder and to help each other more. He reminds me of Ms. Kang, one of my homeroom teachers from middle school, who pushed our class to study harder while collaborating with peers to become the top class out of 10 in monthly tests.

However, I do not know how to negotiate between helping my friends and raising my test scores. My friends' higher test scores mean that mine will get a lower Nae-shin score—which is a normalized grade point average (GPA) used to assess academic achievements. Nae-shin score is a college entrance examination category recalculated by percentage. If I am located within the top 3%, I get a perfect score. If I am located within the top 5% or 10%, two or four points are deducted, respectively. Because of this system, I should beat my friends. All the students in school are anxious because a lower GPA fails to guarantee entrance to a desirable college. All my classmates become potential enemies as well as friends. Conflicted, I do not know how much to collaborate with my friends for better test scores.

I do not like this day—not only because of the test scores but also because of physical fights among classmates. The ones with short fuses cannot keep their tempers down on this pseudo-death sentence day. I know they pick fights for minor offenses such as accidentally bumping into one another. I am glad that another long day is finally over. Spending 7:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. in the same building is not easy, but I must continue studying to get high test scores.

The seminary panopticon. “Benedicamus Domino!” “Deo Gratias!” This is the first phrase I am to shout at 6:00 a.m. every day. It is the moment when I am supposed to answer the invitation to “Let us Bless the Lord” with a response, “Grace to you, God.” I should hurry, since I must be at the chapel no later than 6:25 a.m. After my morning routines, I usually go to the chapel, library, study room. The Great Silence begins now and lasts until breakfast. The Great Silence is the moment to keep absolute silence with other seminarians to continue conversation with God. Chatting with other seminarians hinders this sacred moment.

6:30 a.m.: With a little bell sound, we begin praying the Officium Divinum, Liturgia Horarum (the Liturgy of the Hours)—which is the official set of daily prayers. It takes almost 20 min to recite the prayers together.

6:50 a.m.: This is a time for self-meditation. We do the same routine in the evening, but morning hours are a little tough. I have to concentrate not to fall asleep. I remember what my spiritual director advised before: Think about Peter and other disciples when Jesus was praying at Gethsemane right before he was arrested and crucified. Jesus asked Peter and other disciples not to fall asleep but to be awake and pray with him. However, they fell asleep although Jesus asked the same thing twice. My priest’s voice is reminding me of the importance of being awake all the time. I should be awake to continue meditating and praying. My self-discipline is more important than being controlled by other people’s reminders. However, I cannot ignore the fact that a liturgy director and other seminarians might be watching me. I also know the director regularly checks to see whether seminarians are concentrating on meditation or falling asleep. As the panopticon structure of this chapel is an open space, everyone can watch what other people are doing.

7:10 a.m.: Another bell tolls. It is a sign that personal meditation is over, and we need to be ready for daily mass.

7:45 a.m.: “Ite Missa Est.” “Deo Gratias!” Another phrase to say, “Thanks be to God,” at the end of mass. Before eating breakfast, we need to jog for 10 minutes. I do not enjoy this exercise much, but a senior priest has set the rule for seminarians’ health.

8:00 a.m.: Breakfast.

8:30 a.m.: Cleaning of rooms and other facilities.

9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.: First session of class.

10:50 a.m. to 12:20 p.m.: Second session of class.

12:30 p.m.: Lunch. The tables in the dining hall are visible from both inside and outside. As my table is assigned, everyone can see whether or not I am missing.

After optional lunch prayers, mediation, and a break, the afternoon schedule begins.

2:30 p.m. to 4:20 p.m.: Third session for another class, then almost an hour to be by myself without supervision. I am not allowed to spend this hour in the sleeping room. I usually go to the chapel, library, classrooms, or walk around the campus.

5:00 p.m.: Regathering for dinner prayer.

5:25 p.m.: Heading toward dinner.

7:10 p.m.: The rosary, either by group or personally (group rosary is strongly recommended).

7:30 p.m.: Night prayer at the chapel.

7:50 p.m.: Night meditation. Prayers and meditation are much easier at night than in the morning.

8:20 p.m.: End of meditation and going to our group study room. The Great Silence begins now and lasts until breakfast. The Great Silence is the moment to keep absolute silence with other seminarians to continue conversation with God. Chatting with other seminarians hinders this sacred moment.

10:30 p.m.: End of evening study.

11:00 p.m.: “Deo Gratias!” Another prayer before bed, falling asleep. Another long day within the Great Silence.
The military panopticon. It is an extremely hot day in the middle of May 1996. We are in the training field. The head trainer is a lieutenant claiming that our cohort is not “cohesive” enough. Arm in arm forming a human chain, we do more than 100 sit-ups, all the while shouting “One—Comrades, Two—I love you.” We are all tired of these sit-ups, but I have to remind myself to keep my posture like a brave soldier. Otherwise, the level of training gets harder. As a member of the Republic of Korean Army, I should not forget that I am one of 1,000 comrades being trained together in the field.

Today is the 1st day to practice using an M-16 rifle. As a private, I am expected to meet the standard by firing at least 3 bullets out of 10 into the center of the target. This is a practice to establish mechanical zero on the rifle, which synchronizes the M-16 with the user’s body and posture. Before receiving the real bullets, we practice the best posture for shooting, so far for more than 2 hr. Actually, it takes less than 2 min to shoot all the bullets. If I can meet the standard on my first try, I will not be under pressure to practice the right posture over and over. Otherwise, I will have to repeat these tedious and difficult processes until I get it right. Fortunately, I meet the standard after the second try. During the process, my comrades shout I love you but do not mean anything. I hope this day will be over soon.

By the end of May 2006, a total of 6 weeks of basic military training have passed. Now we are ready to move to another military camp, where we will work for more than 2 years. At night, the half-moon smiles at me because I safely finished the entire basic military training, including chemical, biological, and radiological defense, 25-mile walks with 90-pound bags, and mock-guerilla wars. We are waiting for trains to transport us to our final destination. I depart from the colleagues with whom I shared struggles, tears, and laughs for 6 weeks.

Finally, a train arrives and we enter the cabin. I am so thirsty. Drinking water is always an issue in this military. It is 2 a.m. Soldiers are usually shipped after midnight so they do not meet citizens. In the middle of the night, I become thirstier. I do not know who might have something to drink. Fortunately, the guard is selling Hershey Chocolate drinks. I have cash with me, what I have earned over 6 weeks of obligations, about US$20—nothing compared with what I did for the last 6 weeks. The Korean draft system minimizes payment because military service is our obligation as healthy Korean male citizens.

I am assigned to the end of the train. I really need a drink. Soon I am frustrated to see people ahead of me buying more than three or four drinks each. Yes, this is the reality. I do not have a chance to drink anything, although I have pocket money. What is the meaning of shouting I love you so much if we do not share basic food and drink? I feel the deep reality of how selfish each individual becomes in the midst of hardship.

On the train, I do not yet realize the coming disaster brought on by my entry date into service. I am called to service on April Fools’ Day in 1996, although in my unit there are more than 20 privates who entered at the end of March in 1996. I have to respect them as “senior” colleagues simply because they entered the military one day ahead of me. I use formal language to address them, although most of them are 2 or 3 years younger. In the hierarchical order system, they are just above my rank: I am a “junior” colleague to them. The system suffocates me. I need to seek places where I can breathe.

The Instruments of Discipline

Looking back on my interpretations of experiences, I wonder what discipline or set of discursively constructed social norms functions in each. I am interested in what major elements exist to manage and control my behavior. What social norms were internalized in my schooling, in the seminary, and in the military? To answer these questions, I attempt to theorize my narratives using Foucault’s notion of disciplinary power in the panopticon. In Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison, Foucault (1977) identifies specific instruments of discipline used to maximize productivity by controlling individuals via separation: examination, timetable, hierarchical observations, and normalizing judgment.

Examination. Foucault (1977) posits that examination is “a normalizing gaze, a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify, and to punish” (p. 184). In the school narrative, I addressed how teachers use examination as a means of controlling students without being visible themselves. The participants (students) become visible by taking monthly or biweekly tests, followed by documentation about each. As Foucault mentions, examination is the technique by which power holds students in the mechanism of objectification. Teachers and administrators neither have to show the signs of its potency nor need to impose their attention on students. In other words, teachers and administrators do not need to demonstrate their constant existence to students to control students’ behaviors. The supervisors’ invisibility through examination itself makes students docile, submissive, and controllable. As such, students (the participants) are presented as “objects” to the observation of power, manifested by the invisible gaze via examination.

In addition, the examination introduces individuality into documentation, while collecting all students’ information in whole piles of documents captures, fixes, and controls their behaviors. Listing the top 20 students on the bulletin board or posting students’ test scores in the teachers’ lounge demonstrates the power of documentation. Through it, each student is measured and compared. We judge ourselves and each other based on scores and ranks. At the same time, every student is normalized and classified in deciding which college to enter based on examination. The “College and Major Assignment Chart” classifies students based on a normalized scale of CSAT scores. As such, the big focus in the school panopticon lies in “the individualized” control via examination.
Overall, through examination and documentation, students become objects to be classified, judged, and supervised. Teachers do not necessarily need to show their presence, because students are self-disciplined to increase their productivity—in this case, to enter college.

*The timetable.* Foucault (1977) traces the origin of timetables to monastic communities. In the seminary, regular schedules set up rhythms, assigned particular obligations (e.g., prayer, study, and sleep), and regulated cycles of repetition. Based on the division of time, particular occupations and observations were controlled in detail by orders I had to obey promptly. In the seminary, I was to get up at 6:00 every morning and go to bed at 11:00 p.m. Thanks to the timetable, every moment of time is effectively organized; wasting it is forbidden. Assigning the *Officium Divinum, Liturgia Horarum* regulates when and how to pray in a day: morning prayers at 6:30 a.m., afternoon prayers at noon, evening prayers at 5:00 p.m., rosary at 7:10 p.m., and night prayers at 7:30 p.m.

The rhythm imposed by the timetable is internalized and programmed within my body. The timetable becomes a norm that accelerates the process of prayer, meditation, and liturgy. Internalizing the timetable enables each seminarian to become “not only analytical and ‘cellular,’ but also natural and ‘organic’” (Foucault, 1977, p. 156). In other words, I embrace the timetable into my body and thus become careful to acknowledge my specific daily routines. The timetable is embodied not only as psychic but also as muscle knowledge, that is, every routine is memorized with/in my body. This “docile” body perceives and internalizes discipline, a set of social norms, and the experiences of daily lives with Jesus as a “good” Roman Catholic seminarian. In this process, the embodied materiality of memories, both psychologically and physically, functions as a natural and organic process in my spiritual practices in the seminary.

*Hierarchical observations.* Observation or gaze is the major mechanism of the panopticon. The military camp structure demonstrates a power that acts by means of general visibility. The structure of this camp, specifically inside, illustrates how a machinery of control is expressed and used as a specific observation of each private’s conduct. For example, *Nae-mu-ban* (a military barrack) is a place in the camp where more than 50 soldiers live together. Location of a cabinet and a bed is based on rank, decided by which month you entered the military.

As I explained, since I entered the military on April 1, 1996, I am one rank lower than colleagues who entered in March 1996 and two ranks below those who entered in February 1996. I must use formal language and show constant respect to senior colleagues, regardless of age: In Korean military, rank beats age.

This month-based ranking system increases its productive function and reinforces surveillance. Technically, as I was required to serve in the military for 26 months, there would be at least 25 ranks above me. Each private supervises other comrades a month below. Surveillance becomes an effective and economical operator to reduce accidents (e.g., suicide or decampment) and increase the productivity of effective soldiers who work systematically during a war. The power functions as a piece of machinery in this hierarchical surveillance of each private (Foucault, 1977). It enables the operation of relational power among soldiers, while sustaining the institution by its own mechanisms of surveillance and control.

*Normalizing judgment.* The purpose of surveillance is to ensure that individuals at each level of the panopticon are functioning well enough to meet the standard set up by each institution. Each individual is measured for all the values and expectations promoted by the institution. Foucault (1977) calls the very idea of this condition a “norm.” Normalizing judgment is used to assess behavior, value, and thought, grounded in a “natural” or shared value in the institution. For example, judgment about behavior and performance happens on the basis of the two opposite values: good/evil, appropriate/inappropriate, and true/false. By assessing acts with a binary of normal and abnormal and of right and wrong, discipline judges an individual by whether or not he or she is “in truth.”

The major goal of discipline in the panopticon is to increase the utility of each individual with respect to efficiency of time and cost. Each participant is invested in accepting and internalizing the system’s expectations and values. In my military narrative, shooting at least 3 bullets out of 10 at the right target is a norm, which is a standard for a “true” soldier. Unless a soldier meets this standard, he becomes a “false” soldier and has to practice until he reaches it.

Similarly, in my school narrative, acquiring high test scores to enter (prestigious) colleges becomes a norm to be considered a good student for teachers. Only if a student enters the top 30% among the total population of seniors in the nations can he or she be regarded as a “successful” student in high school. Students who fall below the top 30% are considered “failed” students who are not “smart” enough to continue to 4-year colleges in Korea in the early 1990s.

Distribution by rank or grade punishes or rewards: The institution sets up the norm of who will be considered a true soldier depending on rifle skills in the military panopticon; when a soldier meets the norm, he is not punished by being ordered to practice all day long. At the end of the day, all soldiers are reborn as true soldiers who can use a rifle effectively. Similarly, in the school panopticon, high school senior students study the standardized tests all day to be included in the top 30%—which guarantees entrance to 4-year colleges. All soldiers and all students become alike: competent soldiers and competent students who have met the standards.

The instruments of discipline circulate to maximize the productivity of institutions. At schools, teachers hope to generate students who will get high Korean CSAT scores and enter colleges. Documenting grades and making them public
generate another form of government that controls students without external physical force. At the seminary, priests can generate seminarians and future priests who are punctual, disciplined, and well educated based on the embodied materiality of a tight schedule and routines. Seminarians perceive, internalize, memorize, and embody this discipline as future church leaders. At military training camp, training soldiers to meet the minimal requirements (e.g., using a rifle, knife, and hand grenade) becomes a disciplinary power to control privates in the institution.

Discussion and Implication

People know what they do; they frequently know why they do what they do; but what they don’t know is what they do does. (Foucault, personal communication, as cited in Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983, p. 187)

Drawing from Foucault’s panopticism and panoptic technology, I have explored possibilities to use a different approach to examine identity construction. I have illustrated the complicatedness of cultural identity of Korean-ness, which is discursively and politically constructed and embodied by the panoptic technologies. The dominant discourse in identity research in multiculturalism focuses on the discovery of “who they are” and “what they do” grounded in their predetermined identity (e.g., people of color, women, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender, or disability). My self-reflexive autobiographical inquiry does not support this humanistic approach, which generalizes the Korean identity by discovering “who I am” and “what I do.” By creating counter-narratives, which cannot be applied to other Koreans, I intended to create multiple and complicated conversations in the field of multicultural curriculum studies. Most notably, I have illustrated the ways in which disciplinary power circulates in specific institutions in Korea. When people are not much interested in the examination of “what they do does” (Foucault, personal communication, as cited in Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983, p. 187), this article has explored the disciplinary power/knowledge, that is, the undividable configuration of ways of thinking and actual practices that constitute discourses (Foucault, 1980). This interrogation of nexus of power/knowledge is a means to explore the subjectivity, or my Korean-ness, which is always in the making (Miller, 2005) in a specific sociocultural, political, and economic context.

For example, I described tensions in modern Korean society where each institution emphasizes productivity through surveillance and discipline of each individual. The ideal image of Confucianism—as it includes appropriate interpersonal interaction and social harmony with collaboration—generates and becomes the ideal goal that Korean society unanimously agrees on as a set of social norms. However, these remain imaginary goals because the panoptic technologies—including separation, invisibility, and domination—are important strategies to produce maximum productivity. In modern power structures in Korea, these individualization techniques cause tensions with Confucian ideology of a harmonious community through benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and sincerity.

While introducing the five basic principles of Confucianism, Mr. Yi, for example, emphasized reciprocity among people as the virtue of benevolence in interpersonal relationships. Loyalty and righteousness became important for maintaining good relationships, and being polite and humble were the key principles that managed all human relationships. These principles were embodied as a set of social norms for me as an educated and civilized person. The lessons from my Korean teachers, priests, and lieutenants guided me to value constructing strong interpersonal connections among students, seminarians, and comrades.

In contrast, as evaluation relied on individual achievement, my lieutenant’s emphasis on collaboration was not meaningful in meeting the standards for a rifle use. Although Mr. Lee hoped that students would collaborate to become the best high school in Korea, tensions remained between collaboration and each student’s competitive personal motivation to get the best score. In the seminary, not many opportunities were available to share time and ideas. Everyone was on a rigorous, individualized daily schedule. Despite these institutions’ emphasis on collaboration and appropriate interaction, the panoptic technique circulates for the greatest extent possible for maximum productivity. Korean subjectivity has been discursively and materially constructed in the midst of these tensions, depending on these specific sociocultural, political, economic, and political contexts.

By opening to possibilities beyond the use of predetermined identity, I suggest educators dismantle comfortable and stereotyped ways of understanding cultural difference/sameness. Teachers might initiate their understandings of cultural sameness/difference from the analysis of power/knowledge. Conventionally, teachers ask, “What cultural difference does a student with diverse background bring into classroom?” Drawing from Foucault’s panopticism, teachers might shift their questions: “How does panoptic technology operate students’ daily practices in schools, and thus, discursively construct their identities?” The question with a “how” rejects power as a thing or a commodity but attempts a critical interrogation into the operation of power/knowledge (Foucault, 1983). As such, an emphasis on discursively constructed “subject,” with the analysis of power/knowledge, could possibly become a launch pad for teachers/students to inquire, “What what I do does?” (Foucault, personal communication, as cited in Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983, p. 187). Furthermore, this inquiry possibly explores diverse strategies that students or teachers use to resist various forms of disciplinary power.
Although Foucault introduced the concepts to us several decades ago, panopticism is timely today to examine the ways in which power/knowledge is circulating in schools and other institutions. Due to the scope of this article, I do not address strategies that I used to resist various forms of disciplinary power. An in-depth inquiry in the notion of agency will be another important issue for the interrogations of disciplinary power. Overall, an analysis of disciplinary power is crucial to examine discursive constructions as well as material and embodied enactments of the subject. This project is “not to discover what we are, but to refuse what we are” (Foucault, 1983, p. 216) by examining power/knowledge that controls students’ ways of thinking, behaving, and living. Such a “different” approach to identity, culture, and diversity, drawing from the analysis of power regime, is an attempt to dismantle the autobiographical subject’s comfort—which categorizes identity within fixed, predetermined, and seamless boxes (e.g., Asian, Korean, male, middle class). Ultimately, conducting identity research differently—which is another political engagement—aims to recognize all students who are not following the normalized understandings of cultural sameness/difference.

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