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# A Phenomenological Analysis of Tourist Identity: Three Theses and Propositions

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## ABSTRACT

There is a dearth of narrative research related to “tourist identity” in leisure and tourism studies. In this review paper, we identify this research gap upon performing a systematic review of articles in leisure and tourism studies published on the SCOPUS database in the last four decades (1979–2021). We furnish three theses based on the prevalent research gap and offer three propositions that foreground the questions of identity. We argue that leisure and tourism studies focus more on the collective and the ethnic – to pit the collective Self against the collective Other, while discounting the personal and the phenomenological. We insist that leisure and tourism studies must engage with a wide range of traveling practices outside of the tourist experiences, and integrate more non-conventional sources (e.g. photography and narrative autoethnography) and non-Western approaches. Among other things, this will help dismantle the *White logic* prevalent in, and thus decolonize the field.

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Decolonize; identity; leisure and tourism studies as a field; reflexivity; self; white logic

## Introduction

“[T]he meaning of Being must already be available to us in some way. We do not *know* what ‘Being’ means. But even if we ask, ‘What is Being?’ we keep within an understanding of the ‘is’ though we are unable to fix conceptually what that ‘is’ signifies. We do not even know the horizon in terms of which that meaning is to be grasped and fixed. *But this vague average understanding of Being is still a Fact*”  
(Heidegger, 1962, p. 25).

“What the idea of identity does not signal is a stable core of the self, unfolding from the beginning to end through all the vicissitudes of history without change”  
(Hall, 1996, p. 1).

“Identity is not a distinctive trait or even a collection of traits, possessed by the individual. It is the self as reflexively understood by the person in terms of her or his biography”  
(Giddens, 1991, p. 53).

Sociologist Urry (1990) in his seminal work argued that the tourist gaze of the Other is central to touristic experiences. Since then, scholarly work in leisure and tourism studies has been flooded with this idea of tourist gaze—how destinations in the global South are stereotypically represented as primitive, sensuous, untouched, unspoiled, paradisaical, and stagnant (Adams, 1984; Britton, 1979; Cohen, 1993; Dann, 1996a, 1996b;

Hutt, 1996; Silver, 1993). Even more problematically, these representations emphasize that the people at these destinations in the global South “will never change” (Bruner, 1991)<sup>1</sup>. Enticed by these representations and provoked by “imperialist nostalgia” (Rosaldo, 1989), “the tourists, powerful and civilized, come to view Them, powerless and primitive” (Bruner, 1991, p. 240), thus turning these destinations into their pleasure periphery and acting as neocolonialists. However, Wang (1999) indicated that tourists are not only searching for the Other but are also on a quest for self-realization, thus making tourism a vessel for self-discovery. Since then, several scholars of leisure and tourism studies (Baerenholdt et al., 2004; Edensor, 2000, 2001; Franklin, 2003; Franklin & Crang, 2001) have enriched the discussion on the corporeality of tourism practices.

In the face of the European travelers “constantly positioning themselves in relation to their point of origin in a culture and the context they are describing” (Bassnett, 1993, p. 99), the postcolonial scholars, in particular, have championed the idea of reversal of the tourist gaze, thereby seeking to debunk the primacy of European imperialism and the structures of knowledge production as reference points from which the tourist gaze purportedly emanates. Instead, they focus on the phenomenology of the tourist gaze as originating from the (erstwhile) colonies, or for that matter, the provincial peripheries outside of metropolitan Europe. Indeed, this practice of “provincializing Europe” (Chakrabarty, 2000) has endowed scholars to reverse the hegemony and origin of the tourist gaze. Even while considering it as a necessary corrective from the postcolonial vantage point of “writing back to the empire with vengeance” (Rushdie, 1982), scholars continue to deploy the analytical framework as a proxy for reinforcing the cultural polarity between the West and the non-West, Europe and its peripheries, and by extension, the Self and the Other. However, today, these categories—imaginary and historically contingent—are increasingly being rendered fluid in a globalized and de-territorialized world order. Beyond the derivative typology of such polarities—still a staple of leisure and tourism studies, the notion of the Self, specifically in instances where travel experiences do not necessarily originate from a bipolar worldview, therefore warrants fresh inquiry.

In this review paper, we identified this research gap upon performing a systematic review of relevant articles published in the last four decades (1979-2021). We retrieved these articles from the SCOPUS database. A search for the keywords “phenomenology of tourist identity” returned 327 papers. Then we used two shortlisting criteria. First, we limited our search from among the top twenty (according to impact factor) leisure and tourism journals—majority of our samples are thus sourced from *Annals of Tourism Research*, *Tourist Studies*, *Leisure Sciences*, *Leisure Studies*, *Journal of Leisure Research*, *Annals of Leisure Research*. Second, we read the abstracts of these papers carefully and identified 74 papers that specifically dealt with issues of tourist identity. These 74 papers constitute our sample.

The method used in this study was content analysis toward “making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying special characteristics of messages” (Holsti,

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<sup>1</sup>This phenomenon, however, is not specific to tourism, but linked to the broader rubric of travel, mobility, displacement and exile. Diasporic or exilic populations often invoke an “authentic” and “idyllic” location of origin, static and *atemporal* – Nandy (2007) calls this “homo psycho geographicus” – when articulating their experience of displacement, homelessness, homesickness etc.

1969, p. 608). Pritchard and Morgan (2001) recommended that content analysis should involve more than one researcher in coding data independently and then comparing classifications for assuring the verifiability and reliability of the findings. Accordingly, for this study, three independent authors engaged in coding as well as the data analysis. The primary author took the lead role in the data analysis but the other authors were closely involved through a process of interactive consensus (i.e., compare and contrast themes until consensus is reached; Creswell, 2003). It is perhaps germane here to mention about the identity of the authors. The first and the second author, both native Indians who grew up in the country and ever since studied, lived and worked across various countries (USA, Canada, UK, Europe, Thailand and Vietnam). The third author is a white American who have traveled half of the world. Their diverse backgrounds and perspectives helped in detecting the cultural nuances in the data and brought cross-cultural perspectives to the analysis.

In what follows, we demonstrate how the notion of identity/Self within the remit of leisure and tourism studies has largely been pitted against the Other. In this scheme, the Self and the Other typically serve as referents for collective ethnic identities—so pervasive, for example, in the discourse of the traveling gaze. Here, we hint at how leisure and tourism studies focus more on the collective and the ethnic, while discounting the personal and the phenomenological. This is however not to posit the Self as an Heideggerean essence of an “inner core” of *being*, but to indicate what can be learned from outside the field, particularly examining personal texts like photographs, blogs, social media etc. that are understudied in leisure and tourism studies. This is what we veritably call *phenomenology of tourism identity*. Indeed, tourism is a vessel for shaping the existential question, “Who am I?” Although leisure and tourism research has been showered with an abundant of sociological studies over the years covering the topic of identity (Cohen, 2010; Noy, 2004), we contend that a vast majority of research on the subject has focused on areas that have paid scant attention to questions of identity that is derived from the discursive and narratorial articulation of cultural identity (Light, 2007; Wood, 1984; Breathnach, 2006), national identity (Cohen, 1995; Palmer, 1999, 2003; Pretes, 2003; Rea, 2000), gender identity (Aitchison, 2003, 2001; Henderson & Shaw, 2006; Parry & Fullagar, 2013; Pruitt & LaFont, 1995), LGBTIQ identity (Ong et al., 2022), local identity (Rekom & Go, 2006), diasporic identity (Bruner, 1996; Wagner, 2014), postcolonial identity (Amoamo, 2011; Bandyopadhyay, 2022a; De Martini Ugolotti, 2015; Hall & Tucker, 2004; Hollinshead, 1998) and youth identity (Codina et al., 2017). It is important here to note that although identity formation is purportedly the most dynamic in youth and leisure activities take the center stage in this process; however, certain scholars (see Hansen et al., 2003; Kleiber, 1999; Kleiber et al., 2011; Larson, 2000; Layland et al., 2018; Shaw et al., 1995; Stebbins, 1997, 2001, 2005, 2015) argued that relatively little attention has been paid to validate this relationship.

Regarding leisure and touristic experiences, both remembering and forgetting also underlie a subjective sense of identity that is only inadequately reproduced in language. In the case of “*the tourist moment*, memory and forgetting are filtered through narrative and together, they may tend toward a simplification and schematization of the discourse that interpellates the tourist” (Hom Cary, 2004, p. 68). Recently, several scholars have engaged in addressing the research gap on tourism *experiences* - that is, the

phenomenological aspect, narratives and identity. They have explored extensively travelers' identity related quests or pursuits of self-discovery through their narratives, presenting an important avenue for understanding "Who am I?" (see Apostolakis, 2003; Cohen, 2010; Falk, 2009; Galani-Moutafi, 2000, 2001; Laing & Crouch, 2011; Laing & Frost, 2017; Lean, 2009, 2012, 2016; Lean et al., 2014; Maoz, 2007; Morgan & Pritchard, 2005; McWha et al., 2018, Tucker, 2005; Waite & Macquarie, 2014). However, the ways in which tourists experience identity through their social interactions while traveling has yet to be explored extensively in leisure and tourism studies. As Palmer (2005, p. 24) opined, "what will really move tourism studies forward is its ability to contribute to the understanding of one of the most important concerns of contemporary society: identity as a social construct."

To attend to these considerable lacunas discussed above in leisure and tourism studies, this paper highlights the importance of exploring deeper into the individual essence of the "Who am I?" question. More specifically, this paper calls for more research related to the phenomenological aspect of identity as represented in travel narratives. Contrary to the "narrowly prescribed, generally positivistic and descriptive phenomenological works in leisure and tourism studies" (Pernecky & Jamal, 2010, p. 1056), we emphasize the use of phenomenological approaches in leisure and tourism. It is expected that the discussions in this paper will open up a fertile ground for furthering theoretical reflection involving, for example, the study of photography and narrative autoethnography<sup>2</sup> as important aspects of leisure and tourism research. In this review paper, we provide a theoretical discussion that attempts to explain ontological, epistemological and methodological norms for applying phenomenological narrative to leisure and tourism research. As such, we offer three theses on leisure and tourism studies based on the research gap that we identified for furthering research on the reflexivity of identity derived from travel narratives.

### ***Thesis one: Leisure and tourism studies need more narrative research***

One of the effects of tourism is retreat from the routine of life, allowing for the unexpected, taking pleasure in refreshment and play, and to escape from work and responsibility which allows the individual to let go, thus exposing a more authentic self (Edensor, 2000, 2001). Desforges (2000) explained how individual identities are shaped through traveling by focusing on two pivotal moments in which travel is used for identity- the decision to travel and the homecoming. Heidegger's (1962) concept of "Dasein" (in German meaning "being there," "being in the world" or "presence") gestures toward a vital question - what does it really mean *to exist*? In a similar vein, Rousseau (1986 [1749/1754], p. 148) claimed that the nature had gifted the human race with the only no-choice characteristic of *perfectibility* and also observed that the only trait common to all humans is the capacity of self-transformation. As Bauman (2001,

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<sup>2</sup>By "autoethnography," we refer to the narrative technique of using the "personal" register in writing about one's travel. Here, the "personal" journey becomes a starting point for one's exploration: the self-reflection, the anecdotal and personal experiences, the autobiographical elements all become window to wider cultural and social meanings. In brief, "autoethnography forces the tourists – ourselves – to inquire into and to challenge our experiences" (Noy, 2008, p. 143). The analytical use of the autoethnographic elements in narratives is common in certain disciplines – anthropology, historiography, or memory studies, for example – while scholars of leisure and tourism studies, we contend, largely remain impervious to this.

p. 3) asserted, “Humans are free to self-create.” Bauman’s notion of “liquid modernity” hints at how identities in the modern era have become transient and deeply elusive—identities are in a state of continuous fluidity. In Bauman’s (2001, p. 1) words, “the spectacular rise of the ‘identity discourse’ can tell us more about the present-day state of human society than its conceptual and analytical results have told us thus far.” Hall (1997, 1992) wrote extensively on cultural identity in late modernity explaining post-modern reconstruction and redefinition of identity. There is a need for a sustained critical interdisciplinary inquiry, from within the remit of leisure and tourism studies, that draws on the philosophical insights of Heidegger, Rousseau, Bauman and Hall that inform the discourse of “identity studies.”

Tourism has been generally seen as an object for consumption (Hom Cary, 2004; Palmer, 1999; Pritchard, 2001) rather than a subject capable of providing rich data filled with representative experience (Bruner, 2005; MacCannell, 2001). “In journal entries, postcards, photographs, storytelling, etc., the moment is clearly (re)presented, (re)produced, and (re)created through narrative” (Hom Cary, 2004, p. 64). Narrative allows for the object to be transformed into a linguistic construct packed with representation, subjectivity, and ideology where the label of tourist vanquishes and the subject materializes along with the individual within it (Hom Cary, 2004). Hom Cary (2004, p. 62) lamented, “Representation in *narrative* is a crucial and heretofore unexplored approach to the poe-sies of both tourism and ... the ‘tourist.’” As Noy (2004) emphasized that narrative is crucial for the formation of one’s identity. Similarly, Cone (1995) drew upon the narrative of two Mayan craftswomen and found that they had reshaped their relations, their crafts, and their perceptions of themselves and how others perceive them through their interactions with ethnic travelers indicating that the Self become a reflexive project. Giddens (1991, p. 52) clarified, “Identity, in other words, is not something that is just given, as a result of the continuities of the individual action-system, but something that has to be routinely created and sustained in the reflexive activities of the individual.” It is through narratives that tourists reflect on their travels and form identity.

Holloway and Freshwater (2007, p. 9) movingly described, “Human lives are lived through narrative, and the history of humankind is littered with stories.” Indeed, narrative is “a basic and universal mode of human expression” (Smith, 2000, p. 327). As such, it is a holistic way of looking at everyday life. Regrettably, leisure and tourism scholars have paid little attention to narrative research. However, there is a caveat here. Even for most scholars who use narrative research, there is a historicist-textualist bias that often governs their analysis. They presume narrative texts to be *indexical* to historical evidence. The problem with this approach is that it takes the narrative charge off the narratives; narratives are then read as history rather than representation. Scholars of leisure and tourism studies, we argue, need to cover grounds by integrating narrative research vis-à-vis its nuances to make sense of the phenomenological aspects and dynamics involved with travel narratives (rather than seek any immediate historical truth).

### ***Thesis two: Leisure and tourism studies need to engage beyond the ‘tourist’***

In his pioneering study in tourism, Noy (2004) examined how self-change is communicated through travel narratives of Israeli backpackers, looking at how self-change are

culturally and historically rooted in the Romanticist and semi-religious genres. Noy (2007) asserted that touristic stories or personal biographies are dramatic episodes that are used in identity formation. Recently, there have been some outstanding studies that enriched Noy's work. Bond and Falk (2013), Cohen (2010), Laing and Crouch (2011), Laing and Frost (2017), Lean (2009, 2012, 2016), Lean et al. (2014), Waitt and Macquarie (2014) furthered Noy's thesis by arguing that narrations of the Self, give rise to the discovery, and eventually, transformation of Self. McWha et al. (2018) went even further to present new perspectives on the importance of narratives by exploring how travel blogs help contemporary travelers to construct their identities. Travel allows for highly reflexive thoughts in which the individual views himself/herself from the outside looking within as it involves exposure to alternative realities (Cohen, 2010; Galani-Moutafi, 2000). Identity is a reflexively structured undertaking whereby, as Giddens (1991, p. 5) explained,

“The reflexive project of the self which consists in the sustaining of coherent, yet continuously revised, biographical narratives, takes place in the context of multiple choice as filtered through abstract systems.”

Despite few remarkable works in recent times, the research on tourist experiences is surprisingly inadequate. Indeed, tourism is researched as a product; tourism operators and host populations thus become important objects of study; yet the perceptions and feelings of tourists are largely overlooked. Tourists, we conversely argue, need to be perceived as more than a contrivance for product development.

It is pertinent, in this context, to remember that the imagination of tourists as utility-maximized, revenue-contributing and self-gratifying travelers is staple of advanced industrial capitalism, which is evocative of a certain Western, utilitarian value system that may not be universalized across cultures (Ray, 2021). By this we mean that figures of tourists is a social and historical construct, rather than any universal state of being. We want to highlight this because a wide range of, at times rather non-instrumental, traveling practices—in other words, non-touristy travel—uneasily coexist with tourism, which does not, however, seem to be of interest to scholars of leisure and tourism studies. Nash (1989) suggested that overall tourist experiences are disengaged in that the troubles of the world only confirm the comfort of home. However, this perspective is amateurish and constricted, since the tourist experience is unrepresentatively vague, as described earlier. Experience is thoroughly associated with the individual quest for identity and self-realization. Through tourism a person is momentarily detached from everyday living and placed in extraordinary surroundings, soon to return to everyday life. Experiences are highly individual, subjectively interpreted, intangible, ephemeral, and inestimable. An experience is by its very nature something individual or as Ryan (2002) declared, “a subjective process.” Therefore, “tourism practices and the ways in which they are imagined and enacted,” Desforges (2000, p. 930) argued, “become central to the construction of the self.”

### ***Thesis three: Leisure and tourism studies need to integrate “other” formats of travel***

Identity of the Self assumes reflexive awareness (Giddens, 1991, 1990; Taylor, 1989). Desforges (2000) articulates that reflexivity is the capacity to generate an understanding

of events that have happened in the past in order to normalize future action. And in Elsrud's (2001) opinion, identity is a process of reflexive communications among the subject, the world, and the people around him or her. The reflective communication stimulates a transformative process (Laing & Crouch, 2011). Further, Desforges (2000) indicates that reflexive biography assists in the preference of lifestyle by envisioning a gratifying sense of self for the future. Additionally, the process of self-actualization propels life-fulfillment through life-planning (Giddens, 1991).

Individuals use their current reflection of past experiences to guide them on their life plan. As we plan our life, we envision a brighter future for ourselves which concludes in personal fulfillment. The reflexivity to modify this path is inherently mandated as we are encountered with choices, experiences, and life-phases. These future lifestyle alterations, through personal reflection and choices, entail renegotiations with new/formative identities. Thus, transitions in life allow for new autobiographies that are fashioned toward a new path of identity. Autobiography in the broad sense of self-history produced by the individual, written or not, is at the core of identity (Giddens, 1991)<sup>3</sup>.

The question, "Who am I?" has become an essential question in one's life, and represents an enduring philosophical concern (Randall & McKim, 2008). It is imperative "to investigate the narrative construction of self and identity without losing sight of the entity who is doing the constructing" (Holloway & Freshwater, 2007, p. 11). Moreover, how traveling is experienced and how it shapes individual identity are stubbornly interdisciplinary in nature. As Freshwater (2002, p. 1) aptly noted, "the concept of the 'Self' has been variously described in psychological terms, modernist terms, spiritual terms, biological terms, sociological terms, and latterly postmodernist terms." Elsrud (2001) uses travel narratives to look at the risk-taking mentality among long-term backpackers. Here, risk serves as an apparatus for story-making rather than being eschewed. Backpacking is generally seen as an adventurous travel experience. It confers an "alternative" identity—alternative to the mainstream touristic identity, and therefore, a "social capital" (Bourdieu, 1989), no less-to the backpacker. Elsrud (2001) showed how gender, mythology, and social construction play out in the context of the backpackers' narrativization of travels. Thus, the narrator becomes a vessel of "capital" which is disseminated through stories to form identity. Moreover, the rhetoric of such narratives is meshed into a "life-story" where the teller is the protagonist overcoming obstacles (Laing & Crouch, 2011). As Riessman (1993, p. 11) explained, "In telling about an experience, I am also creating a self—how I want to be known by them." Desforges (2000), drawing from the work of Giddens (1991), indicates that biographies, narratives, and story sharing are important for the tourist in creating a sense of self. Tucker's Tucker (2005) study is relevant here which explored tourists' narratives of place and self as they are constructed in the context of package tours - self-performances of tourists while participating in sightseeing tours in New Zealand. All these studies emphasize how narrative analysis of non-touristy travel practices, very rarely examined, opens up new frontier of foraying into the questions of identity and reflexivity in the context of leisure and tourism studies.

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<sup>3</sup>It is germane here to consider how "the development of vernacular prose and the four basic genres that help express the modern self: novel, biography, autobiography, and diary" (Mukhopadhyay, 2002, p. 298) served as precursor to the "modern" travelogue.

### ***Propositions in connection to the three theses***

The concepts explored in this paper are by no means meant to be restricted in the understanding of identity in leisure and tourism studies. Quite the contrary, the hope is that this paper inspires for more exploration and discovery of future research on the Self as it relates to leisure and tourism studies. In summary, not one research alone will ever be able to capture the full essence of identity in understanding, “Who am I?”, but research can be used as a resource in exploring this vast and enthralling topic. Toward this, we proposed three theses.

Relatedly, we want to highlight the importance of photography in leisure and tourism research. Tribe (2008) proposed a unique method called “virtual curating” to advance the field of leisure and tourism theoretically and methodologically. Regrettably however, leisure and tourism scholars have understudied the relationship between visuality and tourism, especially photography. In the last three decades, scholars have increasingly conducted research on aspects of visual culture in anthropology, sociology, geography, and cultural studies. However, the scenario is very different in leisure and tourism studies. Photography has mostly remained an under-utilized methodological tool despite the fact that, “the visual plays such a crucial role in the production, practice and performance of tourism” (Pritchard & Morgan, 2003, p. 119), and by extension, tourist identity formation. As Larsen (2005, p. 417) eloquently pointed out, “performances of tourist photography are a fusion of presence and absence, actuality and imaginations, the dreamed-of and lived-in orders of reality.” Consequently, tourists’ identity formation is continued upon their arrival home through the use of photographs (Elsrud, 2001). Baerenholdt et al. (2004, p. 118) opined movingly, “personal photography works via sentimentality, through love and death: it is an order of loving.” Notwithstanding the works of Burns (2004), Cohen (1993), Crang (1997), Crouch and Lubben (2003), Dann (1996a, 1996b), Feighey (2003), Larsen (2005), Palmer and Lester (2007), Pritchard and Morgan (2003), Rakić and Chambers (2011), Raento (2009), Scarles (2010), Schellhorn and Perkins (2004), we feel a need for investigating the role of photography on the reflexivity of identity as represented in travel narratives<sup>4</sup>.

We want to emphasize that qualitative research, especially narrative autoethnography, should be valued more in leisure and tourism studies, without which it would be almost impossible to delve deeper into unraveling the essence of “Who am I?” or similar intense research topics. As Porter Abbott (2002, p. 123) eloquently articulated, “We can only know ourselves in so far as we are narrativized, it is through narrative that we know ourselves as active entities that operate through time.” Astonishingly, in recent times, the focus of the majority of tourism journals demonstrates a heavy Management

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<sup>4</sup>Having said that, we do not intend to discount the pioneering works by scholars like John Urry and Chris Rojek, among others, on the intersection of photography and tourism. However, the field of photography is dynamic, and has evolved so much since Urry and Rojek made initial forays in this direction. Consider how affordances of the mobile, networked camera and photo-editing and sharing applications, for example, render tourist photography seamless and photo-sharing instantaneous and at the same time ubiquitous. This has implications for the mnemonic functions of traveling, for the “networked image” forges what Rojek (2015) calls “presumed intimacy”: an apparent feeling of intimacy with the Other, achieved through mediated practices. Scholars of leisure and tourism studies need to consider how the changing landscape of advanced photographic techniques bears upon tourism practices.

and Social Sciences bias<sup>5</sup>. Barnett (1990) long ago opined on a polarity manifest in academia with engineering and management schools (which produce highly employable but largely uncritical acquiescent work force) on one side and departments of anthropology, sociology, philosophy, political science and cultural studies (which produce highly critical work force with limited employability skills) on the other side. This fact is quite evident, even today, in leisure and tourism studies and hence is imperative to pursue a blend with both sides of this opposition. Heeding to Jamal and Hollinshead (2001) and Tribe's (2008) lament, we support that leisure and tourism research should be treated more critically, especially due importance should be given to "critical theory" - a research paradigm developed by the Frankfurt School (Marx, Hegel, Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse and Habermas). And, to conduct research on critical issues in leisure and tourism studies, qualitative research is indispensable. For example, more encouragement should be given to studies that utilize narrative autoethnography which is not only "unique as its power lies within its discursive, written mode" but also "an autoethnographic work aspires to tell of those constitutive dimensions that in conventional sociological research are erased or play a backstage role" (Denzin, 1999; Ellis, 2007; Ellis & Bochner, 2000). As Noy (2008, p. 143) powerfully explained, "through a poeticized and personalized case-study, autoethnography forces the tourists—ourselves—to inquire into and to challenge our experiences, which would otherwise be dismissed as superficial, fun and so on, in a reflexive and informed manner." Hence, narrative autoethnography can be very effective in exploring the tourist Self due to tourism's various form(s), including poetry, fiction, novels, personal essays, and more importantly, "the investigator is always the research instrument 'par excellence' in autoethnography" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 17).

Fourth, we contend that academic discussions on leisure and tourism studies warrant decolonization by dismantling *White logic*. Scholars like Dann (2011) and Tribe (2010, 2018) point to the strong Anglo-Saxon moorings of the field, wherein knowledge is produced in the Global North based on empirical data sourced from the Global South (Alatas, 2003)<sup>6</sup>. Zuberi and Bonilla-Silva (2008, p. 18) eloquently clarified, "*White methods* are tools used to manufacture empirical data and analysis to support the racial stratification in society to produce 'racial knowledge'—these practices remain connected to *White logic*." They further explicated that *White logic* signifies to an agenda in which White supremacy has defined the methods and procedures of reasoning about social facts, which adopts a historical attitude that contributes everlasting objectivity to the opinions of elite Whites and judges the opinions of non-Whites to everlasting

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<sup>5</sup>A simple search with the keyword "leisure and tourism" on the Scimago website, for example, yields some 130+ journals. Almost all of these journals are classified under the "Business, Management and Accounting" index, and within it, sub-indexed under the "Tourism, Leisure and Hospitality Management" head. A small sub-set of these journals is cross-indexed under the "Social Sciences" category, and further sub-indexed under the "Geography, Planning and Development" head. Yet, a smaller sub-set from within the "Social Sciences" journals - barely a few - is cross-indexed under "Sociology," "Cultural Studies" and suchlike. This taxonomy of indexing is illustrative of the bias. In this context, one perhaps needs to pay heed to Tribe's (2008, p. 1) observation: "Although positivist research informed by technical rationality is crucial to the better operational management of tourism, critical research is essential for setting an agenda for ethical management, governance and co-existence with the wider world."

<sup>6</sup>For discussions that problematize this framework, and instead call for a paradigm shift, see Ateljevic et al. (2007), Chambers and Buzinde (2015), Hollinshead (2016), and Pritchard et al. (2011). Most of these scholars draw on the critical race theorists, best illustrated by Barnes (1990), Bell (1995), Crenshaw et al. (1995), who critique the supremacist *White logic* in academic discourses.

subjectivity. Unfortunately, this issue has yet to generate any sustained interdisciplinary critical inquiry in leisure and tourism studies apart from some commendable endeavors (see Anderson et al., 2021; Bandyopadhyay, 2022b, 2019; Bandyopadhyay & Patil, 2017; Brown & Hall, 2008; Chambers, 2018; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2009; Mowatt, 2020, 2019, 2009; Mowatt et al., 2018; Nash, 1977; Palmer, 1994; Spracklen, 2013; Sturma, 1999; Torabian & Miller, 2017). Moreover, it is with some tepidity we observe that, in the course of this, certain Western scholars completely discount or miserably fail to understand the nuances of the non-Western contexts, when they build “grand” and “general” theories of leisure and tourism (Ray, 2020). Departing from here, we propose that the non-Western contexts—the case of Asian leisure and tourism research, for example—may serve as a critical framework “to challenge the dominant Western-centered discourses and contribute to the future paradigm shift through qualitative methods and non-positivist paradigms” (Zhang, 2018, p. 121). This study is thus an attempt to spark conversations on the “questions of identity” in the context of leisure and tourism studies.

What else might be in store for the future of identity research in leisure and tourism studies? As advancement in technology ensues, more resources are already in use and many more will be available for the construction of Self: Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, e-mail, YouTube videos, Skype, web 3.0 applications, social networking sites, blogs, etc. Indeed, travel through virtual and augmented environments presents another interesting and important platform through which the exploration of Self and identity can be evaluated. While travel journals, diaries and scrapbooks are still neglected as they pertain to the Self, leisure and tourism research would have a bounty of material to explore in the future. The concept of identity in a globalized world, as Hall (1996) observed, continues to create explosions triggering avalanches in academic disciplines. Likewise, for Bauman (2001, p. 1):

“‘Identity’ – a never-ending, always incomplete, unfinished and open-ended activity in which we all, by necessity or by choice, are engaged... It is not just that ‘identity studies’ are fast becoming a thriving industry in their own right; more than that... ‘identity’ has now become a prism through which other topical aspects of contemporary life are spotted, grasped and examined.”

Practically, Bauman’s thesis has profound implications for leisure and tourism studies as scholars increasingly make forays into various aspects of social inequality and social justice, hybridity and “life politics” (i.e., identity construction, negotiation and proclamation) in the context of leisure and tourism.

## Conclusion

Recently, a search for the keywords “phenomenology of tourist identity” in Google Scholar in 27 August 2022, returned 45,800 references, indicating that tourist identity has occupied an important space in the study of leisure and tourism. To explore this phenomenon, this review paper, emphasized the need for research related to the phenomenological aspect of identity as represented in travel narratives.

Heidegger (1987) reminds us that identity, the interrogation of existence, continues to evade us. However, it is through leisure and tourism that we seek the very essence of

identity. Tourism “takes place in spatiotemporally distinct places and times, involving processes” (Noy, 2008, p. 153), sometimes becoming a probing odyssey, indexical to what Goffman (1981) calls “symbolic access.” Indeed, the desperate search for identity did not subside; rather, on the contrary, “what is my ‘identity?’” has become more relevant in contemporary times. In this context, positivistic approaches, informed by Cartesian dualism—that is, instituting separation between mind/consciousness and body)—may not yield a holistic understanding of identity. In contrast, phenomenological narrative provides for situated and embodied accounts of the tourist identity—in Heidegger’s (1962) words, the tourists’ “being in the world.”

This paper has so far pointed to several gaps when it comes to considering identities in the context of leisure and tourism studies. Although narrative research has become increasingly popular in several disciplines such as literary theory, linguistics, historiography, psychology, psychotherapy, ethnology, sociology and philosophy, few scholars of leisure and tourism have used the method. There is no doubt that narratives will evolve in different facets, trips will become longer, experiences will be added on to, and the sense of adventure will be conveyed more thrillingly or perhaps less. Narrators will continue to reflect upon their experiences in their stories and as the stories evolve, so will the “Self.” As Elsrud (2001, p. 600) stated, “Individuals are left alone to create their own identity stories through the means they are offered by society.”

This paper proposes for more research utilizing the qualitative method of narrative autoethnography and also emphasized for the inclusion of non-Western and non-conventional sources in the study of leisure and tourism. This will, among other things, counterpoise the *White logic* so pervasive in the field. If, as Giddens (1991, p. 54) observes, “[t]he existential question of identity is bound up with the fragile nature of the biography which the individual supplies about herself,” then leisure and tourism studies must accordingly engage with questions of identity and its different manifestations. While scholars across disciplines have attempted to decolonize academia, the term “decolonization” continues to remain fraught with meanings and generate a lot of potential to engage with “identity studies” when it comes to leisure and tourism research. Despite the oft-boasted grand theories in leisure and tourism studies, it is unfortunate that we still have to rue about not being theoretically sophisticated enough even 30 years after Jafari’s Jafari (1990) celebrated article on tourism platforms, “Advancement of tourism knowledge and scholarship,” 20 years since Franklin and Crang (2001) distinguished article, “The trouble with tourism and travel theory?,” 16 years since Aitchison’s Aitchison (2006) thought provoking piece, “The critical and the cultural turn in leisure and tourism studies” and 10 years since Henderson’s (2011) insightful article, “Post-Positivism and the Pragmatics of Leisure Research.” For example, it is a widely known fact in leisure and tourism studies that, phenomenological research, which includes the narratives of critical race theory that pursues to give meaning to people’s experiences, do not have the status of positivist research paradigm as positivism is considered to be way superior to phenomenology. Most Western scholars are obsessed with quantitative perspectives and denies qualitative perspectives as being rational, the latter often utilized by scholars from the Global South. Zuberi (2003) explained how the founder of statistical analysis developed a theory of White supremacy to prove the racial inferiority of colonial peoples and lamented on the scholars’ silence

across academic disciplines on this issue. The saga continues to be omnipresent in leisure and tourism studies. Not all hope is lost though. With the phenomenal and radical transformation of leisure and tourism theories in the last few decades have challenged the interpretation of “identity studies” as people have been able to experiment with new aspects of identities in an increasingly globalized and de-territorialized world order. Ren (2021, p. 138) eloquently articulated this dilemma and provided some hope:

“The hope is that such ways of knowing tourism in modest, tinkering and collaborative ways can carve out new trajectories for tourism scholars to study and engage with tourism with a new criticality of care. It is in this way that we can imagine and craft possible, yet frictionous ways of cohabitation and hold ourselves response-able to, as opposed to overcoming, the current and future trouble(s) with tourism.”

It is imperative to return to this scrutiny of leisure and tourism research and reconnoiter what might be the worries/disagreements/susceptibilities/power struggles with knowing and thinking about “identity studies” today. Although it would be a colossal task to resolve the tension between old and new paradigms, we hope this study will encourage scholars to proceed further (while remaining far from “worn-out seams”—borrowing Stuart Hall’s words) with this issue and invent liberal paraphernalia that procedurally critique and counter *White logic*. Thus, as we strive toward new epistemologies in “identity studies” in leisure and tourism studies, we need to devise beautiful and novel theories that will keep us fascinated while reading—anxious, betrothed, altered.

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