

Isolation in globalizing academic fields a collaborative autoethnography of early career researchers

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Abstract

This study examines academic isolation—an involuntary perceived separation from the academic field to which one aspires to belong, associated with a perceived lack of agency in terms of one's engagement with the field—as a key challenge for researchers in increasingly globalized academic careers. While prior research describes early career researchers' isolation in their institutions, we theorize early career researchers' isolation in their academic fields and reveal how they attempt to mitigate isolation to improve their career prospects. Using a collaborative autoethnographic approach, we generate and analyze a dataset focused on the experiences of 10 early career researchers in a globalizing business academic field known as consumer culture theory. We identify bricolage practices, polycentric governance practices, and integration mechanisms that work to enhance early career researchers' perceptions of agency, and consequently, mitigate their academic isolation. Our findings extend discussions on isolation and its role in new academic careers. Early career researchers, in particular, can benefit from a deeper understanding of practices that can enable them to mitigate isolation and reclaim agency as they engage with global academic fields.