

# The Transition of a Gay Informal Caregiver to a Researcher: Engaging in Reflexivity Through Autoethnography

Yosuke Suzuki, MSc, OTR <sup>1)</sup>

Dr Hiromi Imuta, PhD <sup>1)</sup>

Professor Peter Bontje, PhD, OTR <sup>1), 2)</sup>

<sup>1)</sup> Department of Occupational Therapy,  
Graduate School of Human Health Sciences,  
Tokyo Metropolitan University, Japan

<sup>2)</sup> Hiroshima Cosmopolitan University



# Introduction

## **Positionality:**

Refers to the position a researcher has chosen to adopt within a given study. It requires the researcher to consciously examine their own identity, so that readers can assess how personal characteristics and perspectives may shape the research (Wilson et al., 2022).

## **Reflexivity:**

A form of critical thinking that addresses issues of identity and positionality by making the researcher's assumptions explicit and developing strategies to question them (Wilson et al., 2022).

# Objective

- To explore how reflexivity, emerging from my transition from a gay informal caregiver to a still gay researcher, informs my doctoral research on LGBTQ+ informal caregivers.

# Methods / Approach

## **Autoethnography:**

A qualitative approach that systematically analyses personal experience to understand cultural and social contexts.

It emerged in response to concerns about traditional research practices that often overlooked relationships, emotions, and lived experience (Ellis et al., 2011).

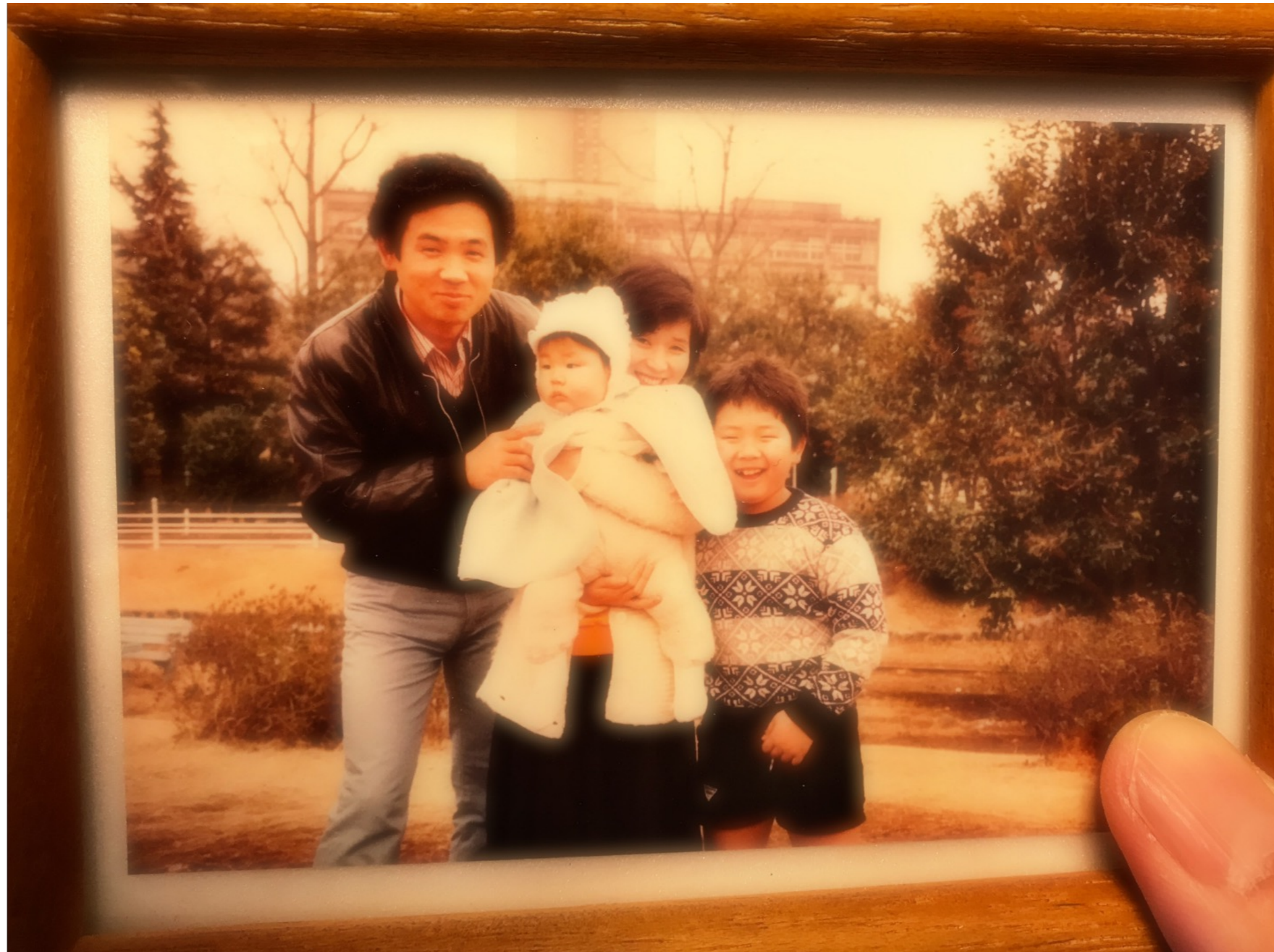
### Data sources:

- Diaries, photographs, and social media posts documenting my caregiving journey for my father following my mother's death.

### Analysis:

- Informed by transition theory and supported by reflexive dialogue with my supervisors.

# My story



# My story



# My story



# My story



# My story



# My story



# My story



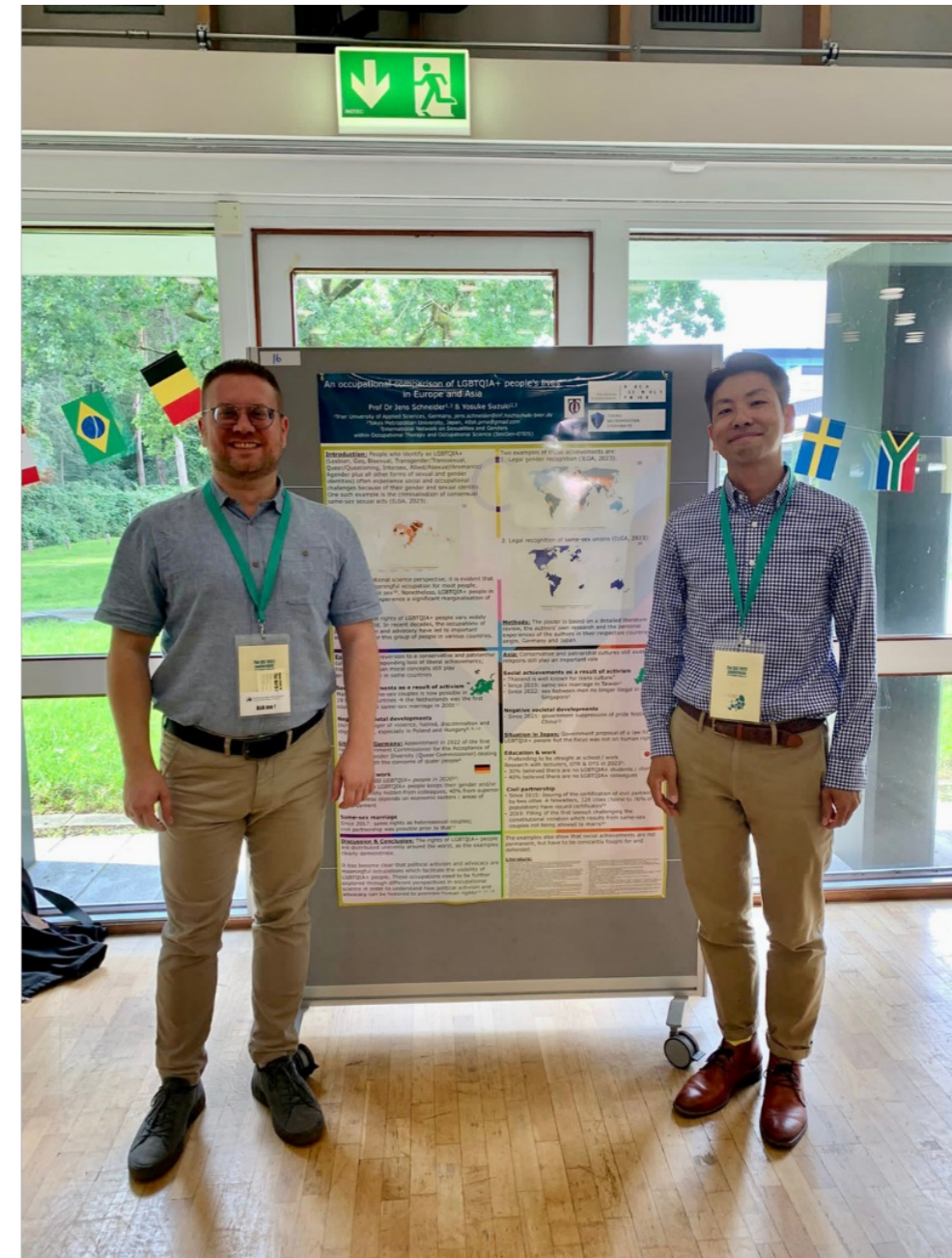
# My story



# My story



# My story



# My story



# My story



# My story



# Disucssion

- Through reflexivity, my transition from a gay informal caregiver to a gay researcher began with my mother's cancer diagnosis.
- Becoming a caregiver required renegotiating a long-avoided relationship with my father.
- Within the Japanese context, heteronormative marriage norms and expectations of male breadwinning intensified self-loathing and functioned as inhibiting factors.

# Disucssion

- Fleeting yet meaningful relationships with other gay men offered relief and moments of authenticity.
- Memories of my parents and socially just values encountered in Denmark strengthened my sense of agency as a gay person and an occupational therapist.
- Qualitative research and supportive academic peers enabled me to transform lived experience into research, strengthening my identity as a researcher.

# Conclusion

- Reflexivity deepens engagement with the lived experiences of individuals holding marginalised identities.
- Even within shared identities, diversity and nuance exist, fostering cultural humility in qualitative research.
- For occupational therapy, reflexivity and positionality promote ethical practice, power sensitivity, and inclusivity in research with LGBTQ+ informal caregivers.