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**Auto-ethnography as a Research Method: Lessons From Field Research In South Africa's Informal Economy**

**Abstract**

This article is an auto-ethnographic style piece where personal experiences are interjected into ethnographic field research that the author undertook in South Africa. The field researches took place in two rounds in 2014 and 2018 among Ethiopian irregular migrants in the informal economy of South Africa. Based on informants' narratives and his own experience, the author focuses on two aspects in the migration and settlement process of Ethiopian irregular migrants in South Africa's informal economy.

The first part touches upon how borders are created, defined and regulated as well as how irregular migrants encounter, challenge and violate borders. The second part deals with the experiences of irregular migrants in the informal economy of South Africa and how they face and challenge interventions from host country's labor and immigration policies.

The author places himself within the socioeconomic, cultural and political contexts under which these immigrants operate to highlight some of the ethical dilemmas in research, which he encountered while tried to bring together theory and practice. In so doing, the article touches upon risk immigrants counter in their daily routines while simultaneously highlighting on some of the innovative ways of socializing and building trust with informants as well as some mechanisms to deal with risks and dangers in conducting field research in dangerous places like the city of Johannesburg.