

# A Moment of Self-Reflection: From Trauma to Self-Healing

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## Abstract

This article aimed to investigate how “selves” were created from the process of creating subjectivity. The research methodology is a qualitative research using autoethnography and life story telling. The self-reflection could bring back to the specific moments in the past, and analyze actions and thoughts. From the self-reflection, there are two conflicted selves; ‘liberated or independent’ self (from gender norms), and ‘self-in-cage’ or ‘self-in-society’ (which suppressed under “unseen cages” or social norms and religious belief unconsciously). This subjectivity can be considered as “an unfinished project” because the processes of creating liberated self and a self-in-cage are happening all the time. They were pushed and pulled again and again by society and even by own self. It cannot be seen as totally liberated or trapped in the unseen cages. They win and lose at the same time.

**Keywords:** self-reflection, life story, subjectivity

## 1. Introduction

I am just an ordinary woman who have been through a lot of wonderful and terrible moments in my life. Being born as a woman has never been easy especially when you break social norms. I had an unplanned pregnancy that totally changed my life. I let my family down because they raised me strictly with high expectation to be a modest and respectful woman in Thai middle-class society. I could not adjust myself to be a mother and a good life partner. I had an affair which brought me to the most violent domestic abuses in my life. Worse, I haven't seen my son since then. I left him when he was only eight months old. I am now seen as a sexual predator because I told the public that I loved dating with younger men. I am stigmatized with several terms by a lot of people around me. Of course, these give me a lot of wounds. Sometimes, I hurt so badly like I was going to die. My wounds were much severe that once I nearly took my own live. I become a mental illness patient with depression. People with mental illnesses know that they are believed to be unpredictable and dangerous (Link & Phelan, 2000). There is a “suicidal” sticker on the cover of my patient file. If I were a cat with nine lives, I already used all of them.

Therefore, I'd like to share my lived experience to the public as I believe that I am not only a woman with these kinds of experiences. I would like to know what will happen if I reveal my personal matters to the public. Will it help me to be stronger? Can it help me overcome my guilts? I wonder if there are any other women who have been through difficult times like me or struggling to find the way out to overcome the wounds? This writing will be like a bridge to connect private sphere to public sphere (Plummer, 1995). I hope that my stories about the way I have been dealing and coping with my stigmas will be able to help other women one way or another.

### “I almost killed myself when I was drunk.”

Normally, I wear long-sleeve blouse to work. My arms are quite big. In fact, that's not really true. There's something beneath the sleeves.

I can feel that a lot of people notice my scar on my left arm. I can see their eyes with a lot of questions. “What happened to her arm? How did she get that 2-inch straight scar?” But not everyone had courage to ask me. I don't want to hide it. It's a scar that reminds me once I harmed myself and I wanted to end my life. It was just a moment that I did something stupid. That moment I was not like myself. I am a person who really loves my life and do everything to stay alive. When I get sick, I take pills immediately or see a doctor right away. I am also an animal lover. I have saved hundreds of lives of stray cats and dogs. I took them to the vets or found a new permanent home for them. What really happened to me? Why did I make this kind of decision?

I personally believed that I was stigmatized with the ideas of being “a good daughter, mother, and life partner because I failed to perform every role. When I interacted with the society, I was slowly convinced to believe that my actions and thoughts were not normal. I started to blame myself for being looked down because of my actions in the past and my current sexuality for a while. This was how I created my self-stigma (Corrigan & Rao, 2012). One of the outcomes is being a mental illness patient. I had to seek some help from specialists because I couldn't deal with things as well as I did when I was younger. This was the result of traumatic self after I broke up with my ex-boyfriend.

I hope that this self-reflection could slowly heal my wounds from the past. As a student who is studying about gender, I need my voice to be heard. I hope that my experience could be “knowledge” for other people in one way or another. As an ordinary woman, I needed a way to cope with my trauma. I need some closure in my life. This self-reflection is an important tool to heal myself. What I also need is a space for me to express myself and create understanding with others at the same time. I don't expect that all my mistakes and failure will be gone with the wind like nothing happened. I just hope that my strengths will reduce the level and the impact of stigmatization and turn into empowerment step by step.

## 2. Method

This article is a qualitative research using autoethnography and life story telling. So, it allows “I” as a researcher to examine my own life story. Life story is good at enabling people to recollect the past and document change, especially where some events could have been missed out through other methods requiring simple recall of facts. People may not remember the actual details but remember the significant events (Ssali, Theobald, & Hawkins, 2015). This helps me explore and identify the dominant narratives of my life within particular events and situations. (Ellis et al., 2010).

## 3. Results

### 3.1 A *Likfe* Under Thai Social and Gender Norms

I was raised in a Thai middle-class Buddhist family in northern part of Thailand. My parents and most of my close relatives work in teaching profession as public-school teachers. They have a certain set of ideology and expect me to follow it strictly. My family always support me about my education. They are willing to pay for anything I need for my degree to fulfill middle class ideology. Most of parents who work for the government especially public-school teachers like my parents, usually compare their children with their friends' or co-worker's children about education and job. I live with the comparison all my life to make my family proud. I was a bright student. I always had good grades. I received a lot of certificates and participated in a lot of academic contests. My family, teachers, and friends were always proud of me. I went to one of the most famous university in Thailand.

I was like “another version” of every one in my family. What they had done wrong in the past, they corrected their mistakes on my life. For example, my mom's parents were separated. She had to live with her relatives and changed a lot of places to live. My mom kept telling me about the idea of a happy family that there must have been a dad, a mom, and kids. Once, she was yelling at me; “You don't know how I feel when I know my mom and dad was separated.” My dad wanted me to be a bright student because he wasn't one. He didn't have good grades and was punished in front of the class because of his bad behavior. My dad was a school director and my mom was a teacher. They didn't want their children to be stubborn or losers like some of their students. They received some pressure for the society. If they couldn't control or teach their children to behave nicely, how would they be successful teachers?

When I asked my parents for permission to go out with friends. They told me They would go with me. They never let me out of their sight. I live on a big family so I was monitored 24/7. I didn't ask for more than what a girl in my age want. I just wanted to stay a little late after school to spend time with my friends. I just needed normal teenage life. I hated weekends or summer time. My parents stayed home. They had more time to check on me. I didn't like when they picked me up at school. When I was 10-15 minutes late, they just walked to my class and pressured me. All eyes were staring at me. I was not a little girl anymore. I was 15. I live in an extended family. My aunt drove me to school and picked me up. She always talked with my teachers. She knew everything about me. When I did something wrong. There were no secrets. One of my family members told the others in my family. There was no privacy.

I tried to solve this problem on my own. I couldn't live like this. I had my own life. It was impossible for me to run away or asked an alien to capture my parents. There was only one way for me to breathe the air of “teenage freedom”. So, I lied. “Lies” could buy me some free time to spend my own life. I didn't care five precepts or

something. It was fine for me to go to hell after life. But I didn't want to live my present life in a hell. I told my parents that I wanted to go to a tutoring school. They agreed with me. I chose to study in a tutoring school that my friends didn't go to. I didn't want people to know about my dark side. I registered a lot of subjects from 12.00-8.00 pm. I skipped all classes. I went out with friends and my boyfriend instead. This was the only way I could live a normal life. My parents didn't give me any space. I tried to talk them out many times but they didn't listen to me. Never! Every time I tried, it ended with tears.

As a researcher, I can see my young self is a sprout or seedling of thinking and acting outside Thai norms. What my family had done to me, something is good, but something is abuses. They pushed me very hard to study hard and get good grades. I found it good to myself when I grew up. At the same time, they kept me in the frame of being a good daughter. I was born and lived for them like a doll. They used me as a representative to correct their past mistakes or fulfill their dreams. They didn't let me have the life of my own. I had been suppressed since I was born. Lying to them was the only way at that time to express my agency. When I lied, I could be myself and did what I wanted to do.

### 3.2 *Unplanned Pregnancy That Changed Everthing in My Life*

I had known my ex-boyfriend for almost 2 years but I had never introduced him directly to my family. He is a small guy. His father was Chinese and his mother was Thai. He used brand name products or tailor-made clothes. He ate at the restaurants and order expensive menu. We hung out more often. He took me outside the town. I was very impressed. He paid for meals. I knew a lot of nice restaurants from him. I decided to take him to my grandma's. They met a few times. My parents hadn't seen him. My mother said he had a chance to be her future son-in-law because I had never brought anyone to introduce to any of my family member. I didn't want to have any problem with them. They never liked anyone who I dated with. It would be better if I kept my romantic relationship in secrets.

However, we had problem with his ex-girlfriends. He still got in touch with them. It was OK if they were real friends. They were friends with benefits. This was the beginning of my hatred towards women who dated much younger men. One of his exes was 5 years older than him. So, she was 9 years older than me. At that time, I thought that this group of women was girlish. Why didn't they date the guys in the same age? I asked him to stop seeing his ex. He promised me, but he couldn't do it. His problem was not only his ex. He saw other women, a high school girl and his-another ex-girlfriend. I was not OK with that. He didn't let me go, but he treated me very poorly. So, I treated him poorly as well. I started a fight immediately if I just sensed something wrong with him. I went out with other guys from my workplace. I intended to break up with him and hurt him to teach him some lessons.

Unfortunately, I was pregnant when I was 24 years old and it was unplanned. I thought it was too fast for me because I just started work and didn't finish my MA. At that time, I worked as a full-time English teacher at a vocational college. My family wanted me to married a 'perfect' man at a 'perfect' time because they believe in 'appropriateness' which is very important in marriage (Feangfu, 2011). The moment my dad saw my ex-boyfriend, he said "He looks like *Dek Van* (a motorcycle punk)." It got worse when he acted aggressive with my parents. My family expected a polite, humble, and submissive man. Everything went upside down. When it came to the family meet, my boyfriend denied to arrange the wedding. His mother said he was a student and they didn't have much money. I knew why they said like that. They thought my family would ask for a big amount of money and a big wedding as I was raised like a little bird in a golden cage. Then everything became real disaster. No wedding. I had move out to stay with my ex-boyfriend because I couldn't resist the pressure from my family.

### 3.3 *My Way Out: I Need a Space to Express My Agency*

Becoming a mother is widely believed as "an honored and grateful" duty in women's life. Women are meant to be mothers. Personally, I didn't plan for this. I thought about other choices like the abortion. I didn't believe I could be a mother. However, the idea of "Karma" stopped me from doing this because I was like some other Thai Buddhist, who believed in the concept of heaven and hell. I felt so good when my baby moved inside my belly. I cried when I heard my son cry the moment right after the doctor pulled him off my belly. These feelings couldn't replace another feeling that "I needed my life back so bad." I realized that I loved spending my life alone. I loved when I could do anything I wanted to do. I just needed a boyfriend who could be with me sometimes, not a child who would live with me for the rest of my life. It was too much. I couldn't do this. I started to ask myself "Am I a 'bad' person?" "Even a dog loves its puppies." I heard about this all the time when people talked about the news that a mother had left her new born baby. I thought about this thousands of times. It was like my head would explode because my angel told me to do one thing and my devil told me to do another thing. Later, I found out I couldn't really be a mother and finally ran away from this duty by having an affair.

Therefore, I rented a room near my workplace. I had a routine of staying 1 night at my house and staying 1 night at my boyfriend's house. I lied to everyone. I didn't go home and I didn't go to my boyfriend's house. I created my new world. It was a place I could be myself. I didn't have to be a daughter, a niece, someone's girlfriend or even a mother. I loved going out and staying with this young guy. I took some pills to control my appetite to stay in shape faster. I didn't want to be myself anymore. I wanted to be a "new" me.

I didn't think that having an affair was so easy and sweet like this. My morality wall in my heart was broken. I was fully blind, not only my sight but also my heart. I was yearning for freedom; a life of a single woman. The devil in me told me that I was not the one who wanted to keep the baby. It was him, my boyfriend. He ruined my life. He deserved what I was doing to him. He would learn some lessons. If he wanted the child, then I just gave him the full custody. He acted like I was nobody to him. If I didn't tell anyone, who would know?

At one moment, I was trapped between my need and "morality". I enjoyed the time I was having an affair. I didn't pay attention to Buddhist teaching at all. I didn't think it was a big deal in my life. My boyfriend treated me poorly. I had the right to choose my new life and my happiness. I wanted to be a "new" me. One part of me was laughing at him. I didn't see what I had done was wrong. He totally deserved it. He ruined my life. One part of me was laughing at him. I didn't see what I had done was wrong. He totally deserved it. He ruined my life. He didn't let me do the abortion at first. He kept me with him because he needed the baby, not me. When I asked for his sympathy or attention, he never really listened to me. My life had been in hell for years. I wished you had been dead. "It serves you right!" He rejected to marry me. He never mentally supported me during my pregnancy and baby delivery. He didn't allow my family to visit me or see my son. He forced me to do housework and breastfeeding. I didn't need a perfect man what I needed was some support as a human being. He never asked if I was really OK about these things.

What my ex-boyfriend did to me is something beyond killing me directly. My state of being a human was destroyed physically and mentally. It left a big scar deep down in my soul. He went to my workplace. He went to my younger brother and cousin school. He called my parents. He bothered my friends. He used a knife to force me to post on the Facebook that I had an affair. Metaphorically, I was burnt alive in front of the public. He didn't leave me any space to live my life. He threatened me with everything he could think of. I was forced drink a lot of whisky and have sex with him in front of my baby in the living room while I was crying and drunk. I felt like I was 'raped'. He told me he would send me to some of his friends "to rape me". He said he would kill and bury me in his ancestors' graveyard far away from the city and no one could find me. He burnt me with a cigarette. This happened sometimes earlier when he was really mad at me.

When his mother came home, she saw me crying. She asked him to stop, but he didn't listen and shouted back to his mother. She always listened to her son and chose to be quiet when she couldn't control him. His mother was very nice to me, though. She took a very good care of me during the time I stayed at her house. She is a fourth wife of an old Chinese business man. She is a strong woman who raises her only child on her own without support from her husband for years. She doesn't have much voice in the big family. Unintentionally, she reproduces a patriarchy cycle in a form of her son or my ex-boyfriend. "Tyrant" is the best word describing my ex-boyfriend. The oppressive institutional power never ends.

However, "Karma is a boomerang!" I haven't seen my son since then. This was the biggest mistake I had ever made in my life according to Thai gender norms. It was not normal in Thai society that a mother left a child to stay with a father. A child must stay with a mother. Raising a child is a mother's duty. This is society's expectation. A lot of people were surprised when I told them my son lived with my ex-boyfriend. I was blamed because I ran away from my women's duty as a mother and a spouse.

During the baby delivering process, my ex-boyfriend didn't let me see my family and he didn't give me any physically or mentally support. I was in my weakest condition that I lost control of my mind and body. It was the utmost helplessness, loneliness and alienation. After delivering my baby, I was desperate to raise a son on my own. I couldn't do breast feeding. I couldn't do housework or childcare as my ex-boyfriend expected. I couldn't be a good daughter. I couldn't arrange a wedding as my family expected. I was pressured by my family, my ex-boyfriend, and even myself. Worse, I couldn't realize how good of being a mother was. I felt powerless and lost myself. I felt like myself was going to explode. At that moment, I kept everything to myself too much. I as a woman was suppressed and assigned to have a certain set of duties by society. I was tired of being a part of gender norm cycle. I buried my past. I pretended like anything never happened. I chose to forgot who I was in the past. If I couldn't be a good mother, daughter or a spouse, then I didn't have be one. I could be another person. I used what my ex-boyfriend suppressed me to fight him back. I denied everything he expect me to do. I accepted what he wanted me to be, for example, a whore. So, having an affair was like I slapped on his face. It

was the way I told him that “I am not going to listen to you anymore.” So, I needed a thing or a space to express my agency. Having an affair could bring back my agency in this kind of mentally breakdown situation.

### *3.4 Mental Illness as a Result of Traumatic Events*

After breaking up with my ex-boyfriend and leaving my son to stay with him, I decided to study finish my Master’s degree. Then, I decided to continue my education in Ph.D. to increase my confident and hide a big scar in my life. I want to show the world that I had abilities to do things. I am the first person in my family that study Ph.D. I believe that Ph.D. is big enough to reduce my mistakes in the past. It somehow saves my image and some people will pay more respect, and accept me. I know that my mistakes can’t disappear easily but earning a Ph.D. will reduce the impact of gossip or the way people look down upon me. I also continue working in teaching profession. I have been in this profession for 11 years. Personally, I can’t deny that I am flattered and proud of myself when people call me, “teacher” or “lecturer”. This is very similar to my education. I can create my good image, and increase my credibility in the society. These two factors can save my face and my family’s face. I feel less guilty because I can be a good daughter again.

In addition, I decided to stay in a relationship with a younger man. Dating an older man or a man in my age didn’t signify the success in my love life. Personally, ‘maturity’ and ‘understanding of each other’ are important factors to maintain the relationship. Once, I was suppressed by an older man. I know how terrible my life was. I don’t want to live like that anymore. Having a younger boyfriend is also a space for me to use my power indirectly. I feel more freedom because my younger boyfriend doesn’t ‘dictate’ me ‘much’ to be a woman in a man’s ideology. He gives me more space to be myself. He respects my decisions and ideas. It’s like ‘no one’s above my head’. I can express my agency more freely.

However, these things couldn’t really help me cope with problems from the past. As Goffmann said, “The stigmatized person may be able to hide the discrediting attribute from others but cannot do so from him or herself (Goffman, 1967). Even if I broke up with my ex-boyfriend for years, I couldn’t move on and enjoy my life. I felt better about other things in my life excepted for my ex-boyfriend. Finally, I decided to see a psychiatrist at a psychiatric hospital in 2016. At first, it’s quite hard for me to make a decision. No one wants to be called, “insane”, “maniac”, “crazy” or whatever I’ve heard in my life. Seeing a psychiatrist in Thai society is not acceptable much yet. If you are normal, it’s no need to see a psychiatrist or even talk with a psychologist.

I needed some help to sleep well and didn’t have much headache. I was diagnosed with anxiety, insomnia, and later depression. I have been taking pills for years. I could me to calm down and had deep sleep, but I couldn’t help me from nightmares. I still had a nightmare about him. I couldn’t get rid of him out of my head. Moreover, I had paranoia every time I saw someone looked like him or even a car like his. I lived like this for years. Later, I was diagnosed with having stress and anxiety leading to chronic insomnia. I was on medication and made appointment to see the psychiatrists sometimes. It was something very hard to delete from my brain. He haunted me like the scariest ghost in this world. He destroyed “myself” into broken pieces and created the extreme stigma to my life. He was my life destroyer. Once, he left no place for me to stay in the society.

According to Lester (2013), trauma is an experience from personal matters to wars or genocide. It pushes a person to the state called, ‘at the edge of existence’. It doesn’t matter how long the incident lasts, but it creates a wound in a very deep subconsciousness. From what I have been experienced since the unplanned pregnancy, trauma was a form of a total failure in my life. In my case, the way people around me and I dealt with it is to avoid talking about it. I believe that past is past. It can’t be changed. The more I suppressed it, the more it stayed with me. Forgetting is a powerful process of not letting something go. So, the coming back of haunting trauma expressed itself in the form of nightmare.

### *3.5 Self-Healing: Facing My Biggest Fear*

In the early morning of my day off, I heard my sms notification. It was not common to receive the real sms at this time, not instant messages from social media applications. I grabbed my phone and unlocked it. I was totally shock. It was my ex-boyfriend. I didn’t hear from him for almost 5 years. What was happening now? I couldn’t imagine why he contact me. Was there anything happen to my son? I opened the message immediately.

“Stay away from us. Mind your own business. Don’t even talk to her again.”

I was not the person who started the conversation. It was his current girlfriend who kept contacting me. She said she needed my help and begged me to answer her phone. I decided to call him. I had to talk with him. I did nothing wrong. I didn’t want any more troubles. I called him right away.

“Hello. What happened?” I tried to be as much calm as I could. I wanted a real “adult” talk.

“Stop contacting her. She is mad at me.”

“I did nothing. She was the one who has been trying to contact me for a year.”

He was quiet.

“She told me herself about her life. I didn’t even ask her a question. About you and her is nothing to me right now. Please! I didn’t want any more problems. Ask her again about that conversation and you’ll know.”

“OK. I know what kind of a person she is like.” He sounded calmer.

“If there’s nothing else. I have to end the call. Sorry for misunderstanding.”

I couldn’t believe myself I could be that calm. I had been thinking for years about what if he contacted me again. I didn’t even prepare for this kind of conversation. When I believed that I became a new person. I feel stronger automatically. A year ago, I ran for my life when I saw him at the restaurant. At this moment, I became a new me for over 5 years, I became more confident and mature. My wounds had been healed quite a big while. I had more courage to face difficult situations. Surprisingly, there was one big change happened to me. I stopped dreaming about my ex-boyfriend. I never saw him again in my dreams, not in good or bad dreams. I finally overcome one of my biggest fear in my life. It was like I received another trophy from making a new step in my life. All worries or undone thing in my life really went away. I realized that the best healing method for me is to accept the past, face the truth, and forgive him.

Later, he contacted me again. My feeling was different from the time I got the sms. I was still scared of him but I felt I could handle things with maturity. He allowed me to see my son. My son could read and noticed my name from some document. My ex-boyfriend and his mother didn’t want to hide the secret anymore. They didn’t want my son to find out later that they lied to him. This was one of the greatest news in my life. However, I was confused, excited and guilty at the same time.

On the day we met, we had lunch together in a restaurant. I sat across the table with my ex-boyfriend. I didn’t talk with my ex-boyfriend much. I didn’t know what to say to him. We talked like we were just acquaintance. I told him about being a mental illness patient. He laughed at me. Then he looked at me quite seriously and said “I think I should go there some time.”

Seeing my son made me face the truth and guilt directly. I realized that what I had been afraid the most was not my ex-boyfriend, but it was the moment I had to confront my son. I was afraid of being hated by my son. I didn’t know how to explain things to him and asked for his forgiveness. I didn’t have enough courage to say sorry to him or asked about his life when I left him to live with his dad. I knew this feeling very well. Once, my mom had a fight with my dad. She called me and said she would go away and didn’t see me for a while. My 22-year-old-self cried immediately like a little girl. I couldn’t live without mom even I always thought I hated her of being very strict.

At this very moment, one part of my mind thinks that I should have done the abortion. I shouldn’t have let my ex-boyfriend knew that I was pregnant. It was a big mistake to let him know. If I had done the abortion, my life would not be like this. I didn’t have to feel guilty from letting a boy grew up with no mother. My son spent years in his life believing his mother had already been dead from him. It’s better not to let this person born in this world. In another part of my mind, I think that I couldn’t do that. A child was not a child. He was not just a person who I gave birth, raised and asked him to look after me when I got old. He grew up inside me. We shared things and every moment together for 9 months. He was “me”.

Once, I hated being a mother. I ran away from the life I didn’t want. I looked for different ways to cope with this feeling. When I saw my son, I felt very much sorry for him. I could see how my thoughts swing left and right like a momentum. I still argued with myself about the idea of abortion and I couldn’t find a clear-cut solution for myself. It was a big question in my life. What I was very surprised was that my son never asked a single question where I had been all years long. I left him before he could talk. He talked to me like nothing happened. He called me, ‘Mae’ or mommy. This was the first time I was called a mother. It was an incredibly wonderful moment. I felt forgiveness and a new chance to live my life to correct all my past mistakes.

#### **4. Discussion**

From the self-reflection, there are two main selves from the process of creating my subjectivity. The first one is ‘liberated or independent’ self which I believe I can stay outside Thai gender norms. I try to use different strategies to hide my mistakes, guilts, and unwanted selves. The second one is ‘self-in-cage’ or ‘self-in-society’ which makes me live under social norms and religious belief unconsciously.

Having a younger boyfriend is considered as one strategy for me to cope with my past failures. It creates a space

for me to take a break from society expectation especially gender norms. I don't have to live my life as a wife or a follower. We can negotiate new duties and gender roles. I feel more freedom and flexibility in my relationship. My voice can be heard. Having high education and working in teaching profession help me to be more independent. I can be a "modern woman" who goes out to work and earn money. Relying on men is not a big focus for me. I can use my education and occupation to be an excuse in escaping some gender roles.

However, being liberated and independent is just temporary. My strategies or my strengths do not always make me happy. Everything is like a double-edged sword. It makes me happy and kills me at the same time. There are several "unseen cages" that take control of my life quietly. I'd like to call this kind of self as "self-in-cage" or "self-in-society". I really believe in his self-surveillance idea of Foucault (1977) which is quite similar to "Hiri-ottappa" or "moral shame and moral dread" in Buddhism. I inspect every of my decision and behavior in every minute of my life even if no one does. I'm afraid of sinful acts. I care a lot about my family and how other people look at me. This is the main reason why I step out of Thai social norms and then I step back immediately because of my guilts. One of the most obvious results of my action is that I decided to see a psychiatrist. I couldn't handle things anymore. I was diagnosed with insomnia, anxiety, and depression. I think a lot and too much that's why I can't sleep at night. I can't sleep well without sleeping pills.

I have tried different ways to cope with my failure or weakness, but it doesn't really work. I try hard to step out of Thai norms and I fail every time. I still cared about my family and other people around me. Sometimes, I just wanted to reject what other people think about me but I really couldn't. That were some parts of me telling myself to listen to the other's opinion. What they told were right. You wouldn't have any space in the society to live if you were this arrogant. I'm like a ball in a football match. I am kicked and bounced back and forth for hundreds of times. There are a lot of bruises on my body now.

Importantly, I am struggling with myself due to my traumatic self about my past relationship and avoiding motherhood. I should enjoy myself after I broke up with my boyfriend, but I didn't. The wounds were so deep and permanent. I think studying about gender could help me liberate myself after what I have been through. It helps me understand things in this world but it's me who don't have enough courage to live outside the norms. I pretend like I don't care because I am a modern woman. On the other hands, I have a lot of fear of being rejected from the society. I see some of my friends express themselves as activists or feminists. They take a clear-cut decision to take sides and show their stance.

Therefore, I don't know how long I have to struggle with my 'selves'. I'd like to call my subjectivity as "an unfinished project" because the processes of creating liberated self and a self-in-cage are happening all the time. I am pushed and pulled again and again by society and even by my own self. I can't say that I am totally liberated or trapped in the unseen cages. They win and lose at the same time and they will continue until the last breath of my life.

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