



Summer 8-31-2022

## Schrag '23 Uses Eckley Project to Connect with Others, Discover Self

Julia Perez

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/news>

---

This Article is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by Digital Commons @ IWU with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this material in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/ or on the work itself. This material has been accepted for inclusion by faculty at The Ames Library at Illinois Wesleyan University. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@iwu.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@iwu.edu).

©Copyright is owned by the author of this document.



# Schrag '23 Uses Eckley Project to Connect with Others, Discover Self

Aug. 31, 2022

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. — Anja Schrag '23 is breaking the mold when it comes to typical collegiate research. [As one of six recipients of the 2022 Eckley Scholarship](#), Schrag's project is an act of self reflection, expression and love.

As a theatre arts major, Schrag previously worked as a research assistant for Michelle Gibbs, assistant professor of theatre arts and head of the Theatre Arts Program at Illinois Wesleyan University. It was then that Schrag discovered the research method of autoethnography, something Gibbs herself has undertaken.

"Autoethnography is a qualitative research method that is all about using your own experiences and background to learn from and contribute to larger conversations about social positionings," said Schrag.

With Gibbs serving as her faculty mentor for the Eckley project, Schrag realized using this research method would be the perfect tool to explore her own identity and life experiences through a project titled "An Exploration of Personal Identity Through Autoethnographic Solo Performance."

"I identify as a multi-racial, queer Asian American person, so my journey with identity and how my identity has been perceived by others has been and continues to be complicated," she said.

While the project has a deeply personal vein, Schrag said she also hopes it can provide an example to others of how to start the process of self-reflection.

"I think that it is important to know who you are — not only for your own sake, but for others as well. If you can understand yourself better, you can understand the people around you better, too," said Schrag.

Because Schrag's project was focused on herself, she said the process was "a really transformative, critically reflexive experience." Through research, she was able to explore scholarly articles about other individuals who share her same identity and culture — which she found exciting and comforting.

"I was able to use that research to synthesize and process my own personal experiences into a script for a solo performance piece, which felt powerful and therapeutic. I learned a lot about love and acceptance in particular," said Schrag.

Schrag's Eckley project will culminate with an autoethnographic solo performance called ["CONTACT" from 7-8:30 p.m. on Wednesday, Aug. 31 at Evelyn Chapel](#). A talkback with Schrag and the audience will be available after the performance. The event is free and open to the public.

Schrag said being involved in the Eckley program strengthened her passion and skills for investigating academic works, while also learning how to stay productive and execute an effective research project.

"This opportunity has had such a positive impact on my experience at IWU," said Schrag. "Moving forward, I know that 'identity' is such a vast subject matter, and I think there is still a lot I could do with this project. Autoethnographic work isn't really something that ends, because you as a person are always changing and evolving. I would love to further explore this field and create more performance work if anything comes up that compels me to do so."

[Established by the late IWU President Emeritus Robert Eckley and his wife Nell](#), the Eckley Summer Scholar program provides a stipend of \$4,000 for each scholar to spend the summer conducting academic research or artistic activity under the mentorship of a faculty member. The program is designed to develop and deepen a student's creative and research competencies.



Anja Schrag '23 is one of six 2022 Eckley Scholars. Her project is titled "An Exploration of Personal Identity Through Autoethnographic Solo Performance."

*By Julia Perez*