Affective Reflexivity: Endeavors to Push Methodological and Representational Boundaries of Curriculum

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Fieldwork for exploring desires among immigrant women in terms of affect

- Transnational research on Asian migrant women’s desires for educational success focusing on the cases of Korean immigrant women in the U.S. and Asian immigrant women in Korea, utilizing posthumanist theories of affect, feminist multiple-case study.

- The study conceptualizes desires as fluid, intangible, and elusive, which renders data affective, as something that exceeds or escapes linguistic boundaries (St. Pierre, 1997, Law, 2006).

- Fieldwork was conducted in the U.S. and Korea in 2015, consisting of interviews and participatory observations of workplaces and educational settings.
Affect, Encounter, Reflexivity

• My ways of knowing and perceiving “affect.”

• Emotional fluctuations between negative and positive feelings

• Encounters of specific energies or intensities in the field.

• “Something in the world forced us to think. This something is an object not of recognition but of a fundamental encounter” (Deleuze, 1994, p. 139).

• My encounters with specific affective forces triggered “affective reflexivity” as “a form of additional fieldwork” (Pillow, 2003, p. 179).
Affective Reflexivity

• reflects on affective dimensions of fieldwork.

• supports with my struggles with multiple dualisms by disrupting the binaries.

• discusses my own encounters and experiences of specific affective intensities and material forces in the field by borrowing the concepts Erewhon (Deleuze, 1994), Aporias (Derrida, 1993), and Hinterland (Law, 2004).

• Affective approaches to reflexivity help me understand reflexivity as a “material” labor, which highlights the pervasiveness of material forces in the fieldwork (Childers, 2014) and in the field.
Erewhon

- Originated with Samuel Butler’s novel (1872/2002), refers to the fictional country neither here nor there as by reading “nowhere” backward while transposing the letters “h” and “w.”

- The Deleuzian concept of Erewhon “signifying at once the originary ‘nowhere’ and the displaced, disguised, modified and always re-created ‘here-and-now’” (Deleuze, 1994, p. xxi).

- Evokes feeling of disorientation.

- Particular energies that provoke a keen sense of spatial-temporality in the transnational research settings between New Jersey, U.S. and Seoul, South Korea.
• Café-connection, the “effect” of café, café-attachment, Shi (Bennett, 2010) of café

• “Noises” in the coffee houses in New Jersey and Seoul

• No “pure” or “clean” data (Law, 2006)

• Blurred the distinction between narrative data and data from field (Childers, 2013)

• “Combining effect“: “Superposition” of participants and my own memoires, feelings, or experiences (Barad, 2007)

• Complicates and disrupts the fixed sequence of time-space in understanding or sharing transnational experiences and conducting the fieldwork
Aporia

• Inspired by Derrida (1993), Lather (1998) and Spivak (1999) refer to Aporia as “stuck places” and as “places of doubt, non-passage, and effacement” (Childers, 2013, p. 606).

• Evokes doubts and confusion from a series of stuck-ness particularly during interviews.

‘Wait, wait, wait...Who is interviewing whom? Is that you who interviews me?’ I hesitated to stop her but she suddenly sighed and asked me “where was your question?” ‘Oh my.... she did not even listen to me? But how does she know I was going to stop her then?’ She looked at me and said, “Okay, I will tell you my story,” but her story sounds so familiar. Is she talking about my anxiety about my future? How on the earth could she know my mind? Wait, are all my questions wrong? Am I such a bad interviewer like this?’ (field note in NJ, August, 2015)
• Participants entering my research with their own “desires.”

• Quiet or “covert” desires for my study among participants revealed in their digressions from my intended interview questions through their verbal, nonverbal expressions.

• Affective, active, vibrant (Bennett, 2010) data containing a set of assemblage of desires.

• “VwO” (Voice without Organ) (Mazzei, 2013) : “voice” not as a singular human voice, but as an “entanglement of desires, intensities, and flows” (p. 735).

• As the contagious forces, Aporia situated me within the “impasse” where it is almost impossible to distinguish between the researcher and the participant(s) in terms of voices and desires as well as within the experiment of deterritorializing interview practices in terms of the boundaries of research.

The concept of hinterland, beyond the binary of presence/absence, includes hidden Otherness in addition to absence, both of which are necessary for presence. What distinguishes the two is that absence is manifested, while Otherness is not manifested, but rather hidden, repressed, and insignificant (p. 85).

Evokes embarrassment and perplexity.

Specific material energies that exposed me to the unthought-of relationships with my participants and with nonhuman bodies.
• Exposure to nonhuman forces or thing-power (Bennett, 2010), which was hidden, repressed, or insignificant, allows for getting away from dualistic relations between the researcher and the participant.

• The vibrancy of materials such as, Asian immigrants’ name cards in Korea, my laptop as an audio-recording device, “worked” in constructing, deconstructing, and reversing relations between the participants and me as researcher.

• Discomfort or perplexity evoked by material forces points to “micro-ethics” involved at the level of “ethics in practice,” or everyday ethical issues, which is pertinent to feminist ethical approaches.
Conclusion: Becoming-reflexive

• My encounter with the affects of *Erewhon*, *Aporia*, and *Hinterland* during the fieldwork allowed me to become more aware of material and nonhuman forces pervasive in the field.

• By liberating reflexivity from the reflection that is based on a humanistic notion of reasoning (Pillow, 2003), my encounter of the affects also allowed me to recognize affective reflexivity as the labor of materiality—the work of body and brain—(Madison, 2011) in the material context of research.

• Along with participants’ desires for the study, material vibrancy in the field developed my sensitivity to feminist ethical obligation and made me more aware of the process of the study as co-constructed production of knowledge with participants as well as by the phenomenon (Bøhling, 2015).

• *Affective* reflexivity is in accordance with feminist concerns and interests involving heightened awareness and sensitivity to ethical, critical, and methodological consequences for the research process as whole.