GLOBALIZATION, EDUCATION AND IDENTITY:
A CRITICAL AUTO/ETHNOGRAPHY
OF TRAVELING KOREAN (DESCENDENT) WOMEN
IN U.S. HIGHER EDUCATION

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
The Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the
Graduate School of the Ohio State University

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The Ohio State University
2002

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This is a critical auto/ethnography of traveling women of Korean descent in U.S. higher education. Our collective tales are generated between the names that each traveling woman utilizes to assert her subjectivities and the names that prescribe her subjective positions in-between the repertoires of Korea and the U.S. At this imagined and embodied site of "traveling korean women in U.S. higher education," the study traces how we have been navigating multivalently narrated histories, cultural forms, and relations of Korea and the U.S. to make sense of our transnational localities. It also examines how each of us has strategically and ambivalently explored a traveling self through (un)intentional distancing, rejecting, merging and adopting the signs, practices and institutions of Korea and/or America, to free ourselves and to rework the worlds we are living in.

To make an observation of our historicity, I utilize the problematics and possibilities of the Metropolis/First and Colonized/Third World paradigm. Within the framework, I put together four distinct literatures: (1) foreign students in U.S. higher education; (2) history of migration between Korea and the U.S.; (3) the cultural politics of Asian/immigrants/Americans; and (4) the construction of Korean women in Korean nationalist cultural discourse. By weaving these literatures, I plot multiple routes that
connect the different geographies, cultures, languages and politics in order to display
how the term, "traveling korean women in U.S. higher education," becomes imaginable
for the study. In this way, the study attempts to draw connections and blur the
distinctions between foreign student discourse, minority and majority politics in the
U.S., and First and Third World inequalities.

"Decolonizing methodology" guides the methods and procedures for the study.
Within the paradigm, I discuss the rhizomatic nature of the auto/ethnography that opens
up the research field, the distance between the researcher and the researched, and the
beginning and ending of the project.

Our tales recount different reasons and modes of our travels - temporary
migration, immigration, emigration, adoption, returning, fleeing, constant shuttling,
and/or living in both. Yet, I analyze how our traveling narratives are bound together by
the fact that all of us are "stuck" in-between the recalcitrant signs of Korea and the U.S.
where we share the predicaments of racism, sexism, nationalism, imperialism and/or
subordination. In this oxymoron space of stuck traveling, I examine our prolific acts of
owning and disowning to make the best out of the circumstances, which create a new
possibility for others to "cross paths with it or retrace it." The study also discusses how
the global/multicultural discourse of U.S. higher education interacts with our narratives.
This demands of educators to ask and to think differently about the place of U.S. higher
education in global/local societies. Finally, I address how this project both confirms
and destabilizes our "not unified collectivities." The dissertation ends with a
discussion on the possibilities of "collective narratives of heterogeneities " in traveling
worlds.
Dedicated to my parents
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My advisors, Drs. Patti Lather and Mary Ann Danowitz Sagaria, have always provided me a safe, yet stimulating place to question, reflect, and experiment through their exceptional scholarship and mentorship. I sincerely thank them for the privilege I enjoyed as their advisee. Without their continuous guidance and encouragement, I, as a woman bewildered in my own traveling, could not have completed this work and my program. I also wish to thank my committee member, Dr. Chan-E. Park-Miller, for her heartfelt support and confidence in my work as a senior traveling Korean woman in U.S. higher education.

I cannot stop expressing my gratitude to the women who shared their stories and time with me to create this project. Their willingness to embrace my violent acts of representation, under our imagined collectivity, produced this dissertation. I pray my writing does not betray their/our love, courage and fights for freer travelings in this world.

I am blessed with the spirit I inherited from my parents, 이 헤정 (Lee, Hae-Chung) and 이 준연 (Rhee, Choon-Yeon). I am blessed with their love, vision, and infinite faith in me, which cultivated my love, vision, and infinite faith in the world. Without them, I could never have arrived where I am now. Every word fails to express...
my gratitude and love to my parents. Instead, I dedicate this dissertation and my degree to them.

I wish to specially thank to my postcolonial reading friends, Roland Sintos Coloma, Stephanie Lynn, Helen Mcknight, Binaya Subedi and Sharon Subreenduth, for their invaluable feedbacks, insights, and editing on various parts of my writing. In our emotionally-loaded theorizing discussions, I could grow, recuperate and be playful. Your comradeships have been my survival kit. Additionally, I thank Sharon for her generous friendship and for taking care of my various requirements on campus in an effort to limit my trips between Minnesota and Ohio.

My appreciation also goes to Melissa Rychener for her continuous friendship and feedback on my writing.

I would like to thank to my other family members, numerous friends, professors, and my department staff who have helped me, at various points, to go through such challenging years of doctoral training. While I cannot list them all here, thank you all for your encouragement and good chats that sustained my sanity and assured that I am not alone!

I am particularly grateful to Dr. Brenda James, my godmotherly friend, for her brilliant, critical, and spiritual mind. She has provided me a home, both literally and figuratively, in this once foreign place. Your wisdom, strength, and generosity have been my inspiration ever since I met you.

Finally, I thank my life-long partner, 곽승건 (Kwak, Seung-Keon), for his love and delightful spirit. He has walked with me from the beginning to the last step of this journey, sharing all the moments of my life, in fact, for the last 15 years. I am grateful
for your loving and inspirational companionship. Our daughter, Bethia 주현(Ju-hyun), has been an exceptional blessing. Through her eyes, I am relearning how to appreciate and rework these messy connections of the world and the lives of those who inhabit it. Thank you, Bethia, for your endless smiles and love. You have been and will always be a source of my well-being.

This research was supported by Critical Difference of Women Professional Development Grants and Porterfield-Dickens Award from the Ohio State University.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

NARRATING AN IMAGINED NAME

From a voluntary to an enforced designation, the distance is plain but the appearance remains intentionally ambiguous. Terming us the “natives” focuses on our innate qualities and belonging to a particular place by birth; terming them the “natives” focuses on their being born inferior and “non-Europeans.” As homonyms, these two natives sometime claim to merge and other times hear nothing of each other. (Minh-ha, 1993, p. 52)

This is an auto/ethnographical study of “traveling women of Korean descent in U.S. higher education.” The study performs the still necessary enunciation of an unrecognized specificity neither as a “cultural type nor as a unique individual” (Clifford, 1997, p. 23). Within a dominant ethnographic paradigm, local natives’ supposed enchantment, tradition, culture, and simplicity is contrasted with the mobile ethnographer’s enlightenment, modernity, science, and development (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997b, p. 9). However, our displacement, mobility and dispersed multiple localities as migrant women of color who reside in U.S. higher education unsettles the dominant paradigm. This is a research tale of encounters, ruptures and merges between
"we," the natives, and "they," the natives, as described in the epigraph by Trinh T. Minh-ha (1993).

The contemporary phenomenon of globalization creates the context of the study. Countless people travel, migrate, and live globally for various reasons in various conditions, disrupting, negotiating and reinforcing the linkage of cultures, peoples, identities, nations, and specific places. There are also rapid movements of capital, markets, knowledge, technologies, cultures, languages, and ideologies. These enormous flows inextricably complicate every sphere of our lives. The increasing world movements of capital, images, ideas and people have created a new world order, with its own institutions and configurations of power that have restructured the previous nation-state boundaries, capital/labor relations and politics of race, gender and class in an emergent cultural logic of capitalism and global culture (Chilcote, 1999; Burbules & Torres, 2000; James & Miyoshi, 1998; Lavie & Swedenburg, 1996; Wilson & Dissanayake, 1996). As Marianna Torgovnick (1990) states, this is the postmodern, with “its polyglot, syncretic nature, its hodgepodge of the indigenous and the imported, the native and the foreign” (cited in Kelsky, 1996, p. 47). It is, indeed, the era of globalization.

For many people, especially the racialized, exoticized, exploited, and colonized, however, today’s global configuration of structure and power holds uncertain promise (Amin, 1999; Bamyeh, 2000; Chen, 2000; Chow, 1993a, 1993b; Coronil, 2000; Dirlik, 1997; Lavie & Swedenburg, 1996a; Mohanty, Russo & Torres, 1991; Ong, 1997; Petras, 1999; Said, 1993; Smith, 1999; Williams & Chrisman, 1994). The clash between the promise of globality and its realities provide a site of fierce contestation.
From the them/us perspective, the flow of capital, goods and technology both contributes to and serves as justification for growing social inequalities in the contemporary period. For instance, Edward Said (1993, P. 282) states that globalization is another form of imperialism and/or Westernization: “Imperialism did not end, did not suddenly become ‘past’” in the face of globalization. For us, therefore, it is not possible to partake in carnivalesque celebrating and rejoicing brought in by the crossing and recrossing of things, and the belief that contact and polyphony are inherently liberating. The interpenetration of Third and First World has not been festive for all (Torgovnik, 1990, cited in Kelsky, 1996, p. 47).

The colonial era saw the world/s drastically divided between the world “here” (the West) and the world “out there” (the non-West or all the rest). This division impacted, and continues to impact, the relationships between peoples: “they” were supposed to be “there” and “we” were supposed to be “here” except when “we” showed up “there” as colonizers, development experts, missionaries, tourists or ethnographers. The West “we” used the “homogeneity within” and “difference between” to drastically separate “us” from “them,” to justify the the superiority of the West, and to perpetuate this hierarchy (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997a, 1997b; Lavie & Swedenburg, 1996b, pp. 1-2). In the current globalized and post-colonial world, these Others who were once supposed to be “there” are found in the world “here.” Their visible presence disturbs “homogeneity of home” visibly, which destabilizes the mark of the West (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997a, 1997b; Lavie & Swedenburg, 1996). Kristine Koptiuch (1996) names our traveling to the West as “Third Worlding at home.”
Through this traveling to the west, we as Others learn that we are living in a web of spatial, temporal and imagined places with multiple and conflicting positions and complex relations with various peoples. We are also aware that our relations to a remembered/imagined home are changing. Recognizing different effects of structural relations of power and inequity, we now envision and re/build the connections between our communities (e.g. Appadurai, 1991; Joseph, 1999; Lavie & Swedenburg, 1996a; U. Narayan, 1997a; Ong, 1995, 1999). By this different effect of world power structures, we have experienced that a person who was not born a person of color “there” becomes a person of color “here.” An elite “there” becomes a subaltern “here.” An abandoned “there” becomes a rescued “here.” As women of color in the battle against sexism, we find ourselves building a coalition with men of color, sometimes against white sisters “here.” The names we call and see ourselves are continuously changing. Our experiences are calling into question the stable, fixed and taken-for-granted notions of gender, race, culture, nation and identity in Western discourse. Yet, most Western/scholarly explanations of globalization (and multiculturalism), particularly in the field of U.S. education, do not take into consideration the constitutive roles of migrant people (of color) in the cultural, political, and economical formation of the global/local societies. This is pertinent to what Raymond P. McDermott (1997) criticizes in “Achieving School Failure 1972-1997.” He argues that a familiar mode of educational inquiry for last three decades has continuously been to ask what Jews, African Americans, Vietnamese and Hispanic Americans look like and how they behave. McDermott continues:
Sometimes we are invited to know how their behavior explains their position inside U.S. social structure, and stereotypes are available to guide our explanations. Only rarely are we invited to understand the conditions for a group being recognized, stereotyped, analyzed and condemned. Only rarely are we invited to examine the role of mainstream bias in the organization of borders, stereotypes and the social structure outcomes that maintain the borders. (p. 116)

In the backdrop of his statement, my interest is to interrogate how the constant influx of historical Third World subjects\(^1\) to U.S. social scenes is transforming, resisting and/or maintaining the borders and the condition of differentiations among the groups within U.S. educational discourse. In addition, what does this increasing movement of Third World people to the U.S. indicate about contemporary global/local power relations and implications for the field of education?

Asking these questions, in this study, our collective voices\(^2\) are imagined under a new sign of "traveling women of Korean descent" through the practice of our geographical, cultural, political and historical traveling. Seven other Korean descendant women and I, connected to U.S. higher education institutions, will weave together our narratives to delineate how we come to where we are now. Each of us makes this site a different moment in her journey: final destination, transition, and/or returning point.

Who are "we"? Why are we "here"? What are we doing "here"? How did we have this option of world traveling to "here"? How do we complete and challenge the

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\(^1\) I am using Third World subjects to reflect the way peoples outside the West have been historically referred to and signified. I discuss more about the conceptualization of the First and the Third World in Chapter 2.

\(^2\) When I refer to our collective voice/s of traveling women of Korean descent in this study, I will use the word "voice" interchangeably in singular and plural forms. Neither as a cultural type nor as a unique individual, I conceptualize our collective voice/s as both singular and plural.
demarcation of “here” and “there”? Where do we belong? Where are our localities by which our cultural, racial, economic, gender, and other identities are situated? How does each of us make sense and negotiate our multiple local/global relations, displacement and identities? How do our lives on the move shape the global/local socio-political contexts in general, and Korea/U.S. configurations in specific? Bearing these questions in mind, I still ask, what would be the consequences of my act of labeling these women as “traveling women of Korean descent in U.S. higher education” to make up a collective voice? Some of us say that they/we are Asian/American, not Korean. Some of us say that they/we are only Korean, never American: we have lived in different class backgrounds, citizenships, cultural identifications, language fluency, sexuality and positions in universities. So, is it even possible to group all these women collectively “we” based on our diverse and conflicting links to Korea and the U.S. or is this another imperial way of studying, thinking about and writing about an ethnicized and essentialized group of people?

By naming us traveling women, whether our traveling was voluntary or not, emphasized is our mobility, which used to be tied with or available only to (male) colonizers (K. Narayan, 1997). The modes of our traveling entail sojourns, immigration, emigration, exile, and diaspora, making it difficult, if not impossible, to identify a (naturally) shared home in a particular place which is very closely linked to the concept of nation-state. Due to our slippery positions in relation to a particular nation-state, the term “traveling” is highlighted in our name. In this way, the name
“korean\textsuperscript{3}” in this study signifies at different times a national self, an ethnic self, a cultural self, a racial self and/or something else for different individuals. In a similar way, the name “women” does not assume a coherent, already constituted (and perpetually victimized) group; signification is not fixed in essential kinship, legalities and/or other social structures (Mohanty, 1991b).

In order to examine these women’s traveling trajectories and rationalities with the specific histories between Korea and the U.S., U.S. higher education serves as an immediate and critical site. Hosting the largest number of migrant students and scholars in the world, U.S. higher education creates chaotic contact zones for its trans/national subjects. Operating within, and yet harboring resistant individuals against, Eurocentric/U.S. imperialism and global capitalism, it re-produces and disseminates particular world knowledge. While it is inherently interdependent with the imperial regime of the U.S. nation-state, U.S. higher education still establishes a specific institutional context and particular power relations within which its subjects are localized, disciplined and normalized. In other words, U.S. higher education manages its own regime, power/knowledge systems that seek to normalize power relations (Foucault, 1984). At the same time, its excessively, multivalently intertwined relationships with numerous global/local regimes - such as educational institutions, nation-states, and corporations - delineate a useful field to interrogate our present subjective formation, its characters and historical, cultural and social conditions under which they take shape and find articulation (at this moment).

\textsuperscript{3} When Korea refers to a nation-state located on the Korean peninsula, I use the official sign of “Korea” with capital K. On the other hand, lower case korea is used to multiply its meanings and constructions which exceed and resist its essentialized nation-state official discourse.
The purpose of this study is to articulate and specify the relations of global/local via shifting, conflicting and connected narratives of our traveling practices at the site of U.S. higher education. Within the site of U.S. higher education, this study addresses two research questions:

1. At the junctures of local/global and transnational discourses and practices, how are traveling Korean women constituted, and constituting themselves?
2. In what ways have these women’s traveling practice affected their negotiations of the multivalent power relations to which they are subject in their everyday life?

**Against Methodological Policing**

Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1991b) indicates, “Colonization includes the production of a particular cultural discourse about what is called the ‘third world.’ However sophisticated or problematical its use as an explanatory construct, colonization almost invariably implies a relation of structural domination, and a suppression - often violent - of the heterogeneity of the subject(s) in question” (p. 51). Once we are named (Bulter, 1997; Fanon, 1967) such as Korean women, women of color, Asian/Americans, or Third World women, we are assumed to represent ourselves and our history in accord with the referent and the discourse of the referent as dictated within/by colonial, national, imperial and masculine regimes of power. Our narratives are expected to be authentic without complexities, diversities, and ambiguities as if we live in a bounded place/culture disconnected from and untouched by global/local social processes. It is as if we have/are our own genuine meaning
systems, a holistic logic set apart from other cultures (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997a, 1997b; K. Narayan, 1997).

Caught in multivalent power relations, however, many Third World feminists have argued the impossibility of stable and essential names of gender, race, class, culture, and nation (Bulbeck, 1998; Chow, 1993b; Kim & Choi, 1998; Koptiuch, 1996; Minh-ha, 1989; Mohanty, Russo & Torres, 1991; Moraga & Anzaldua, 1983; U. Narayan, 1997; Ong, 1995; Williams & Christman, 1994). For instance, culture is never a sealed room with a homogeneous space inside it, inhabited by authentic insiders (Narayan, 1997b, p. 412). What this thesis argues is that culture is often nothing but a myth; Roland Barthes defines myth as “a type of speech which hides its political meaning by naturalizing it” (Chow, 1993b, p. 77). According to Serena Nanda (1987), culture describes the specifically human type of learned behavior in which arbitrary rules and norms are so important. Stated differently, “Culture as a system of norms, meanings and expectations does limit human behavior both by channeling it in culturally approved directions and by punishing known violations” (p. 57). Who gets to define the systems of norms, meanings and expectations - culture - for what purpose by what authority? Who accumulates benefits through these systems which constitute culture? Or at least, how do differently positioned people in a culture experience it differently? What happens when some of its members contest and rebel against their entitled culture?

Such uncertainty and heterogeneity can be applied to salient analytical names of race, gender, class and citizenship in contemporary U.S. educational discourse. For instance, Mohanty's (1991a, 1991b) call against "women as a category of analysis"
underscores that women can never be bound together through a sociological notion of sameness in their oppression. She argues, in dominant Western (white) feminist analysis:

The discursively consensual homogeneity of "women" as a group is mistaken for the historically specific material reality of groups of women. This results in an assumption of women as an always already constituted group, one which has been labeled "powerless," "exploited," "sexually harassed," etc. … This focus is not on uncovering the material and ideological specificities that constitute a particular group of women as “powerless” in a particular context. It is, rather, on finding a variety of cases of "powerless" groups of women to prove the general point that women as a group are powerless. (1991b, pp. 56-57)

Rey Chow (1991) presents a thesis similar to Mohanty’s call against women as a category of analysis in reading Third World women's lives. After the massacre at Beijing's Tiananmen Square on June 4, 1989, a feminist in the U.S. academia asked, "How should we read what is going on in China in terms of gender? " Chow responded:

My immediate response to that question was, and is: "We do not, because at the moment of shock Chinese people are degendered and become simply 'Chinese.'" To ask how we can use gender to "read" a political crisis such as the present one is to insist on the universal and timeless sufficiency of an analytical category, and to forget the historicity that accompanies all categorical explanatory power. (p. 82)

Consequently, she argues that the question we should ask is “What do these stories tell us about gender as a category, especially as it relates to the so called third world/minority contexts? What are gender's limits, where does it work, and where does it not work?” (p. 82). Can we read or understand degendered moments of “othered” women’s experiences through existing western feminist discourse?

What I am trying to confront in this study is methodological policing: the static and repetitive analysis along the axes of race, gender, class, culture and citizenship
through which our essentialized gendered, racialized and cultured voice is framed and contained. Under this way of studying, talking, and thinking, the boundaries of categories and structured domination are easily policed. This is a methodological policing. My argument is that unless we interrogate how we define, describe and interpret our own lives in specific and dynamic historical processes, that exceed the voice of our presumed race, gender class and cultural locations, “we are denied the right to be critical” (Spivak, 1992, p. 187). Homi Bhabha (1994) states,

It's never adequate to say their voices must be heard as voice because none of their voices are just innocent voices. Their voices are mediated ....through their own ideologies, so they are also framed voices, if you like, produced voices. But in just that sense they are testimonials of the construction of a changing identity, of a changing polity, of a changing transnational community. (p. 199)

This allows me to approach every different “name,” which often has turned into “a thing,” as “a contested, contingent political field, the battlefield in an ongoing ‘war of position’” (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997a, p. 5).

Hence, in this auto/ethnographical study, I read our self-produced narratives to make sense of power relations and systems of domination of which we are part and that have shaped our traveling experiences between Korea and the U.S. Michael Foucault once said, “An experience is something you come out of changed” and “An experience is neither true nor false: it is always a fiction, something constructed which exists only after it has been made, not before; it isn’t something that is ‘true’ but it has been a reality” (cited in Gupta & Ferguson, 1997b, p. 19). What is at stake is then not the verisimilitude of my study of our experiences. Rather, my attention is directed to how to concretize our reality, the workings of multiple, fluid structures of trans/national domination which intersect to place us differently in our engagements in the daily life
experienced in our particular location in U.S. higher education. At the same time, I intend to examine how we come out changed through these experiences regulated by structural locations, which ironically always involve our oppositional agency to alter the direction of power. In this way, this study seeks to articulate our experiences in relation to the multiple intersections of structures of power that link dispersed localities to (realize) the global.

At Home/s Where I Write

In this section, I give an account of my own writing position to create a suturing point between my theoretical frameworks, my subjectivities as a researcher/researched, and the other women sharing their stories in this project. My intention is not to claim an individual truth through confessional writing nor assert subaltern authority through self-dramatization (Chow, 1993b; Kang, 1995; Lather, 2001a). Rather, this is an analytic, political/ethical and personal determination and dilemma I enact to delineate my tangled web of spatial, temporal and imagined places with multiple and conflicting positions and complex relations with various others in this study.

I begin with my journal entry written about 3 years ago, which displays how I came to move in and out of my given identity/positionality as a foreign student in U.S. higher education: The narrow international student discourse worked as a divide and conquer strategy against my political subjectivity. As a Third World woman of color, I am able to observe that one of my positionalities, international student, tends to highlight my alien position through my different nationality from U.S. citizens, especially people of color, through a binary opposition of domestic vs. foreign.
Another binary illusion: we, Americans and the Others, the rest of the world. This differentiation between and homogenization within effaces negotiable differences among international students. The naturalized term, “international student” depoliticizes my position by heightening my foreignness to the U.S. nation-state, sending a message that I am an outsider who should not meddle with internal affairs such as racism, as if I have nothing to do with all different types of domination of/in the U.S. In turn, representation of foreign students as the absolute Other to the U.S. nation-state in U.S. higher education practices and discourse buttresses the fiction of U.S. nationalism which naturalizes the hegemony of one, eurocentric, collectivity and its access to the ideological apparatuses of both society and civil society. This naturalization is at the roots of the inherent connection that exists between nationalism and racism. Therefore, even when U.S. nationalism constructs minorities into its assumed deviants from the “normal” and excludes them from important power resources, othering practices of foreign students (of color, or from the Third World) promote the myth of equal citizenship through one collectivity in this nation-state (e.g. Anderson, 1983/2000; Yuval-Davis, 1997). A good example is the continuous and relentless stigmatization on foreign students’ English proficiency as “the problem of foreign students,” which naturalizes the monolithism of U.S. Anglo-English hegemony when much of the world are more than bilingual. Let me ask, “Would my experience, struggle, and dilemma as a Third World researcher, student and scholar in U.S. academia share more commonalities with white foreign students from European countries or with Americans of color? Who are more insulted, degraded, and functionally degraded through the learning inculcated through the current U.S. higher
education institution as a whole, European international students or American Indians, for instance (Churchill, 1999)?” The myth of equal citizenship, one collectivity and nationalism is fractured.

While this coming out act from the foreign student room allowed me to imagine this project, I still find myself entrapped. At the inception of the study, I wrote

she can’t celebrate korea
angerresentmendmentdisgust
i am living in

my love love love
helpless attachment to korea
can’t insult it

humiliation,
alienation,
indignity,
and
rage

she can’t identify with the “West”
desire, yearning and power
connected to west
can’t reject it

impure, guilty, not innocent
inauthentic native, almost like us
but not,
alien

From time to time I hear that I am "미국을 먹은 여자 - migukmul mōken yōja " literally translated as "a woman who drank U.S. water," implying that I have been
westernized through "living" in U.S. culture /territory/ nation-state. Many times, I consider this is an Othering practice exercised from my own cultural/national group to deauthorize my koreaness. My difference, deviance, and contest against the domination exercised in the name of the Korean, then, are attributed to my tainted koreaness as 미국을 먹은 여자 - migukmul mōken yōja - and dismissed easily as irrelevant and illegitimate within Korean nationalist discourse. As Uma Narayan (1997) suggests, I occupy a suspect location of a U.S. university sanctioned researcher and my perspectives are suspiciously tainted and problematic products of my "Westernization." So, are my criticisms of my Korean cultures merely one more incarnation of a colonized consciousness, the views of "privileged native women in whiteface," seeking to attack my "non-Western culture" on the basis of "Western" values (Narayan, 1997, p. 3)?^4

Despite my status as less korean, particularly within the Korean cultural nationalist discourse, my identity of "korean woman" becomes the most important strategic site of multiple struggles to resist and fight back against various forms of Western imperial domination - ironically as the amount of U.S. water I have been drinking increases. At the same time, however, I often desire to re/sign^5 this very sign, "Korean women," because of its reflection of a controlling, patriarchal regime built and


^5 I borrowed this concept of re/sign from Kent Ono's (1995) "Re/signing 'Asian American': Rhetorical Problems of Nation." In this article, he argues that the term "Asian American" should be resigned, scrapped or disused and yet simultaneously we may be able to re-sign it. By shuttling between resigning/retiring and resigning/refiguring, he hopes to enact a critical, rhetorical practice that creates slippage between using and disusing the term, Asian American.
maintained for a long historical period over the women who need and want to identify with the sign, korean women in this world.

This internal conflict, tension, and fragmentation gets messier as the co-occurrence of my incessant yearning for home, "korea," and my continuous living at home, "the u.s.,” force me to reconfigure the presumed distance of Korea and the U.S. Is my traveling to return or to stay? Even at this moment, (unfortunately) I feel urged to acknowledge that my claim for being at home in the U.S. may make some people irritated because I am defined as an “alien,” legally, in the U.S. territory. So, my claim for home in the U.S. may sound like the alien invasion to non-aliens!

One typical spring day, I walked along a campus street in my campus area. Passing by, a white man pushing his cart said to me, “It’s time Chinese people go home.” I am not a Chinese but I was a Chinese at the moment because I knew that the word “Chinese” included me regardless of my ethnicity and nationality as well as despite my collective memory/history of Chinese imperialism on Korea as a Korean woman. He was talking to me, as a Chinese, an Oriental native. “Chinese, go home.” I could not pretend that I have nothing to do with what he said, because my frequent travels to this white/western world allowed me to understand how I am constructed in it (Lugones, 1987).

As an alien woman of color, I travel everyday to the mainstream white organization of life in the U.S. This practice of travel contests and complicates the dominant concepts of travel which James Clifford (1997) defines as more or less voluntary practices of leaving “home” to go to some “other” place for the purpose of gain-material, spiritual, scientific. Maria Lugones (1987) articulates,
As outsiders to the U.S. mainstream, women of color practice “world” traveling, mostly out of necessity. I affirm this practice as a skillful, creative, rich, enriching, and, given certain circumstances, as a loving way of being and living. I recognize that we do much of our traveling, in some sense against our wills, to hostile White/Anglo “worlds.” The hostility of these “worlds” and the compulsory nature of the “traveling” have obscured for us the enormous value of this aspect of our living and its connection to loving. Racism has a vested interest in obscuring and devaluing the complex skills involved in this. (p. 390)

Through this mostly compulsory traveling, I have learned that the west, the U.S. or America is not a homogeneous space inhabited by authentic insiders. I have met people who are living in the West but can not and do not claim themselves as and/or within the West. I may be identified as "미국을 먹은 여자- migukmul moken yōja," an illegitimate Korean woman who is westernized in Korean nationalistic cultural discourse. Yet, here in the West, I am Chinese and should go back home. In this traveling, I had to learn to relate myself to the categorized, defined, and reduced constructs of me in a certain world. I also had to learn to unlearn the categorized, defined, and reduced me in order to re-claim myself in another world. Now I am able to see these worlds connected through me. As others claim their home in homelessness, I as a traveling woman finally come to claim home through "traveling-in-dwelling and dwelling-in-traveling," in Clifford's words, but in a different mode at different intersections of history and power. My resistance against and desire for home(s) grow together. In this contradictory place, this study is contrived.

**Organization of Dissertation**

In chapter Two, I review the literatures on conceptualizations of imperialism, globalization and culture and four dispersed contexts/discourses informing this study: 1.
Foreign/international/migrant students in U.S. higher education; 2. Migration between Korea and the U.S within its historical relationships; 3. U.S. cultural discourses of immigration and Asian/American; and 4. Korean national discourses of gender, family and nation building. By pulling together these seemingly distinct themes and separate literatures, the fields of the study are configured from our location in U.S. higher education.

In Chapter Three, I theorize the “decolonizing” methodology of this study as a way to discuss the validity, ethics, and politics of this research. Within that paradigm, I discuss the frame of auto/ethnography utilized, selection of participants, data collection and analysis procedures. By inserting each participant’s response to a question of why she participated in the project, I also problematize a conventional notion of “research for the researched.”

In Chapter Four, I present seven Korean descendant women’s transnational traveling tales. These stories are re/presented and fractured through my translation, my ways of telling a story, and gaps that cannot be filled due to different subject positions each woman and I occupy. These women still have more stories to tell, which I did not have access to (in this project) for various reasons: they did not want to reveal some parts of their lives to me; I was afraid to ask; they did not (want to) remember; I failed to understand. And, there are other stories that I could not include in this project because of the women’s refusal to make them public and my respect for their requests. However, the incomplete narratives I re/present here were still sufficient for us to look at each other in loving eyes rather than in arrogant eyes (Lugones, 1987) in order to understand how the world has unraveled with and through their/our lives.
Chapter Five, the conclusion, renarrates, interrogates and confirms our collective tales of traveling Korean women in U.S. higher education through open "eye/I (Kondo, 1990) in terms of its political, academic and cultural significances. In this chapter, I discuss how this project of re/searching and writing us both confirms and destabilizes our collectivities by highlighting our indefinite connections among ourselves.
CHAPTER 2

CONFIGURING THE FIELDS:

OVERLAPPING TERRITORIES, INTERTWINED HISTORIES

In this chapter, I review several bodies of literature to stage the multi-sited perspectives of the study. The chapter consists of two sections. The first part discusses the main theoretical framework that I utilize to examine contemporary power relations of globalization. This serves as the big picture which situates the second part of the literature review. In section two, I survey four distinct yet connected sets of literature in order to contextualize the study. Through the flows of these four sets of literature, I configure the shifting historical, social and cultural fields of the study.

Imperialism, Globalization, and Cultural Politics

Metropolitan/First World - Colonial/Third World Paradigm

For the first half of the twentieth century, the colonial powers – Great Britain, France and the United States as well as Japan\textsuperscript{2} - subjugated eighty-five percent of the

\footnote{1}{I borrowed this subtitle from Said (1993).}

\footnote{2}{While Japanese colonialism takes an important part in shaping the contemporary power relations, I argue that it has lacked cultural force in its domination.}
earth’s land, and colonialism was the dominant geopolitical pattern (Miyoshi, 1998). A half century after WWII, however, the categories of First World and Third World have become problematic and ambiguous (Bulbeck, 1998; KOPTIUCH, 1996, 1997; U Narayan, 1997). Particularly since the early 1970s, the upheavals of a new transnational division of labor and the global restructuring of the regimes of capital accumulation have meant that the Third World can no longer be geographically mapped off as a space separate from a seignorial First World (KOPTIUCH, 1997, p. 236).

Yet, it must be remembered that the imperial projects of the nineteenth century resulted in the “worlding” of what is now called the “Third World” and the “First World” (Spivak, 1985), producing the modern world order, structures, relations and inequity. Said (1993) emphasizes the continuity of historicity as such: “Even as we must fully comprehend the pastness of the past, there is no just way in which the past can be quarantined from the present. Past and present inform each other, each implies the other and each co-exists with the other” (p. 4). Therefore, the juxtaposed concept of “First and Third World” informs the study in this trajectory of ongoing world history.

I also agree with KOPTIUCH’s notion (1996, 1997) that the Third World at the present time can be a name, a representation, and not necessarily a place. She writes, “Third World names the effects of a process of exploitative incorporation and hegemonic domination - and its fierce contestation by subjugated people - that used to take place at a safe, reassuring distance” (KOPTIUCH, 1997, p. 236). In this sense, Third World subjects encompass minorities of the First World whose lives, cultures and knowledges are marginalized and devalued (U. Narayan, 1997). This construction emphasizes that Third World subjects, regardless of their current geopolitical locations,
carry the burden of colonial history. As Massao Miyoshi (1996) articulates, “Once absolved into the ‘chronopolitics’ of the secular West, colonized space cannot reclaim autonomy and seclusion; once dragged out of their precolonial state, the indigens of peripheries have to deal with the knowledge of outside world, irrespective of their own wishes and inclination” (p. 81).

In Relation to Globalization

The emergent discourse of globalization and/or transnationalization complicates any analysis of contemporary imperialism. Many critics of globalization indicate that the current phase of globalization in which the vast volume of transnational trade, capital and workers flows across nations is not new (Chilcote, 1999a; Burbules & Torres, 2000; James & Miyoshi, 1998; Wilson & Dissanayake, 1996). What appears significantly new, however, is a transformation of the volume, character, and concentration of financial flows (enabled by new technologies of production and communication) that has led to a contradictory combination of new patterns of global integration and a heightened social polarization with and among nations (Bamyeh, 2000). This corresponds with Fredric Jameson’s (1998) meaning of globalization as “an untotizable totality” which intensifies binary relations between its parts - mostly nations. In other words, globalization simultaneously contests and consolidates the borders of the nation-state.

Amidst these contradictory relations, imperialism can be approached as one of the manifestations of globalization. Mohammed A. Bamyeh (2000) states
Imperialism has always been defined with respect to differential power relations between systems of governance, and in terms of a more covert mode of economic and political domination. In addition, it has also been defined as organized cultural hegemony. Globalization, on the other hand, is a broader concept. Elements of power, hegemony, and domination are indeed part of its story, but so are voluntaristic associations, codependencies, religious and cultural affiliations, and trade and other economic venues. Unlike globalization, imperialism is exclusively definable by primary attentiveness to, and regularized exploitation of, the power differentials that could exist in any of these venues. (p. 3)

What this implies is that an entity that practices imperialism in today’s world can be a nation-state and/or any other social interest groups that transcends the concept of nation-state (e.g. Dirlik, 1997; Hardt & Negri, 2000). For instance, while the gap between rich and poor nations - as well as between the rich and the poor - is widening everywhere, global wealth is concentrated in fewer hands, and these few include those of “subaltern elites” (Coronil, 2000). Accordingly, Miyoshi (1996) in his analysis of transnational corporations (TNC) urgently calls for further study on an emerging transnational class of professionals who can live and travel globally, while freely conversing with their colleagues in English, the lingua franca of the TNC era.

Apparent that these are people who express their loyalty to the corporate identity rather than to their own national identities and have benefited and are privileged through the current process of unregulated and mobile markets. How do they relate or not relate to those kept outside: the unemployed, the underemployed, the displaced, and the homeless (Reich, 1991 cited in Miyoshi, 1996, p. 90; see also Burbules & Torres, 2000; Dirlik, 1997)? As Fernando Coronil (2000) points out, the closer worldwide connection of ruling sectors and the marginalization of subordinate majorities have undermined the cohesiveness of the geopolitical units. However, he argues that this
weakening of collective bonds undermines more severely the Third World countries than the metropolitan nations.

At this point, it is important to note that, partially as a result of the end of the Cold War, capitalism is a global norm that does not have credible alternatives on the same scale at this time (Amin, 1999; Bamyeh, 2000; Chilcote, 1999b; Petras, 1999). In its dominance, current theorizing efforts of globalization have concentrated mostly on the economic aspects (Chen, 2000; Hardt & Negri, 2000). However, by prioritizing and separating economics from other realms of global politics in globalization discourse, we often neglect the power and roles of culture - or knowledge - that legitimate and justify ideologically the current structures of global power relations (Chen, 2000; Kaplan & Peace, 1993). ³

**Culture, Knowledge and Empire**


Neither imperialism nor colonialism is a simple act of accumulation and acquisition. Both are supported and perhaps even impelled by impressive ideological formations which include notions that certain territories and people

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³Bruce Cummings (1999) and Miyoshi (1996) examine Japan as a case to forward their argument for the imperative of cultural force in domination. Both of them state that Japan has been winning in the world trade for many years, but it was never and is not, hegemonic in world power relations. Nevertheless, it must be still underscored that the ways Japan accumulated its wealth after WWII are not unrelated to its colonial history.
require and beseech domination, as well as forms of knowledge affiliated with the domination. (p. 9)

In other words, the formation of empire is never merely matter of political, economic, and military operation. There must be a cultural discourse that provides and articulates the “theoretical” foundation for the power bloc in the making an empire (Chen, 2000; Hardt & Negri, 2000; Kaplan & Peace, 1993; Williams & Christman, 1994).

Said (1993) argues that there has been a unique coherence and a special cultural centrality which connect British, French and American imperial experiences despite their technical and procedural differences: the superior status of (white) West. Consequently, this classical or high imperialism still remains as a culturally influential force in the present although the gigantic colonial structure has disintegrated. From a companion perspective, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) also writes in “Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous People,”

The nexus between cultural ways of knowing, scientific discoveries, economic impulses, and imperial power enabled the West to make ideological claims to having a superior civilization. The ‘idea’ of the West became a reality when it was re-presented back to indigenous nations through colonialism. By the nineteenth century colonialism not only meant the imposition of Western authority over indigenous lands, indigenous modes of production and indigenous law and government, but the imposition of Western authority over all aspects of indigenous knowledge, languages and cultures. (p. 64)

Unfortunately, even at this moment, the globalization of Western knowledge and culture constantly reaffirms the West’s view of itself as the center of legitimate knowledge, the arbiter of what counts as knowledge and the source of “civilized” knowledge (Smith, 1999, p. 63). This unequal power relation manifests itself in an almost unidirectional flow of international students and scholars from Third World to
First World - and the accompanying phenomenon of “Brain Drain.” In this journey, Smith (1999) writes in her context of Maori society:

These people experienced that their tertiary education was alienating and disconnected from the needs of their own communities. The more educated they became it was assumed that they would not want to return to their own communities. Assimilation policies in education were intended to provide one way roads out for those indigenous people who “qualified.” Many did take that road and have never returned. (p. 199)

If, as Gandhi (1998, p. 67) repeats, the peculiarly “Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient” (Said 1978/1995, p. 3) is inextricable from the peculiarly Western style of studying and thinking about, writing about, and teaching the Orient, it is imperative to pay critical attention to and re-read the practices and politics of education between these two worlds in light of this violent scheme.

Dispersed Contexts of the Study

Foreign/International/Migrant Students in U.S. Higher Education

Currently, more than 1.6 million students and scholars are seeking higher educational experiences outside of their home countries. A celebratory discourse acclaims that the movement of students across regions and countries is, in part, a response of young people to their growing awareness of the world and their interest in

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4 I interchangeably use the terms, “foreign,” “international,” and “migrant” students despite or due to their different connotations. For me, being a foreign student highlights my position as a non-citizen of the U.S. nation-state where my educational institution is located. This term points out my outsider status as a non-citizen through the concept and structure of the nation-state. Being an international student celebrates and romanticizes the expansionism of U.S. higher education as well as the movements of people across nations-states. As an academic institution, U.S. higher education transcends the nation-state boundary to “educate” people in the world while the term “international student” paradoxically endorses that this exchange is an inter-national practice. The term of “migrant student” emphasizes our traveling from one place to the other. In this sense, it includes immigrant and refugee students in the U.S.
preparing themselves to live in an interdependent world (UNESCO, 1998). Others argue that the globalization of education allows people to have more access to better education. Sometimes, international students are called a new global generation (Rizvi, 2000). However, these phenomena are not detached from world power relations. For instance, the direction of student flows has been almost one way, that is, mostly Third World people studying in the First World institutions, which needs to be considered in relation to various issues, such as brain drain, Third Worlding at home and Western intellectual colonization (Burbules & Torres, 2000; Grubel, 1994; Smith, 1999). As Smith (1999) points out, this contemporary globalization of education needs to be analyzed in relation to globalization/imperialism of Western culture and knowledge.

It is not surprising that the United States, since WWII, has hosted more foreign students and scholars than any other countries. This reflects its dominant position in the contemporary world economy, scientific and military systems, mass media, and publishing and intellectual industry through English language (Luke & Luke, 2000). This massive migration of students to the U.S. coincided with the transformation of the U.S. from a British cultural colony to an imperialist nation (Goodwin & Nacht, 1983; McClintock, 1992; McGinn, 1997). According to “Open Doors,” an annual report on U.S. international education, in 2001, 547,867 international students and 79,651 international scholars resided in the U.S. higher education systems. About eighty percent of these migrant students and scholars come from the Third World countries of Africa, Middle East, Latin America, and Asia.

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5 Foreign students are distinguished from foreign scholars by their pursuit of degrees or formal course of study.
Despite the large numbers and long history of international students and scholars, they have been a peripheral subject of social science and higher education research (Altbach, 1991; Fasheh, 1984; Goodwin & Nacht, 1983; Goodwin & Nacht, 1984). There is very limited knowledge about their lives and experiences especially from historical, cultural, social, economic and political perspectives. When international students and scholars have been studied, the work has principally described cross-cultural psychological and adjustment issues, which “personalize” the situations that these groups of people experience. This has resulted in the monolithic domesticated representation of (male) foreign students - mostly Third World (male) students - whose needs and interests are reduced and defined to reified items such as visas, English proficiency, housing, contacts with Americans, financial issues, academic grades, and alienation. Accordingly, the everyday, political, and dynamic nature of their lives is collapsed into “a few frozen indicators of their well being” (Mohanty, 1991a, p. 6) in U.S. higher education discourse. This is associated with a tendency to study international students and scholars as a homogenous group and to disregard their vast differences in gender, race, nationality, ethnicity, class, sexuality, and religion. In addition, although numerous women accompany male students and scholars as wives, they have been completely disregarded and thus unheard in U.S. higher education literature.

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6 Korea has been a major sending country for more than three decades. Two thirds of all Korean students and scholars are male and one third of them are female. In this report, the number of Korean women who have come to the U.S. as wives to male students and scholars is not documented.

7 See, e.g. Hayes & Lin (1994); Heikinheimo & Shute, 1986; Nichols & McAndrew (1984); Perrucci & Hu (1995); Pyle (1990); Saidla & Grant (1993); Schram & Lauver (1988); Tillman (1990); Trice (1997); Yang, Terzoka, Eichenfield, & Audas (1994).
U.S. national data indicate that about 40% of international students and scholars eventually stay in the U.S. for more permanent employment (Institute of International Education, 1995). Nevertheless, there has not been an effort to connect their lives and experiences to history and current social, cultural and political issues of immigrant groups in the U.S society. Especially, considering the large number of Third World foreign students, scholars and their families, further study is necessary to understand the multiple trajectories of how they relate to concerns and issues of the racialized populations in the U.S. In this context, this study attempts to draw connections and blur the distinctions between foreign student discourse, minority and majority politics in the U.S., and First and Third World inequalities.

**Historical Relationships between Korea and the U.S.**

In this section, I briefly examine the history of Korea - United States’ relations in an effort to broadly sketch the various pull and push factors of migration between these two distant territories over the last 100 years. Due to a relatively short, yet intense, history of the encounters between Korea and the U.S., spanning three to four generational lived experiences, most of these historical accounts - perhaps with different twists and hues - have been accessible and so familiar to many Koreans raised in the tradition of oral histories or story telling, including some of the participants in this study. What this suggests is that, for Koreans who have lived in/through these cultural spaces and times, these historical accounts have been transformed into their - and my - everyday experiences in which our choices, desires, and resistances are
enacted. For further historical contextualization, note that all of the participants in this study were born between mid 1960s and mid 1970s.

**Initial Encounters: Penetrating Missionaries, Emitting Emigrants (1882-1945)**

The official history of Korea and the U.S. relationships began with the Korean-American Treaty of 1882, which is still debated by historians in terms of how willingly Korea signed the treaty, sixteen years after the first arrival of American merchants in the Korean peninsula in 1866 (Cumings, 1997; Kim, 1997). By 1900, a small number of Korean students, diplomats and ginseng merchants - fewer than fifty - made their way to the U.S. (Abelmann & Lie, 1995; Park, 1997). Since that time, the borders of these two lands have been permeable in varying degrees for people from these nations, thereby creating transnational spaces, histories and imaginations.

The history of Korean migration to America began in 1903 as plantation laborers to Hawaii. From 1903 to 1905, a total of 7,226 Korean laborers migrated to Hawaii to replace the predominantly Japanese work-force that initiated strikes to demand wage increases. Within the social context of several seasons of famines in Korea and the needs to cut the costs in Hawaiian plantations, Christian missionaries from the United States played an important role in promoting early Korean migration to the U.S. by constructing the U.S. as “the land flowing with milk and honey” (Kim, 1997, p. 3) as well as a place of modernity (Abelmann & Lie, 1995). American protestant missionaries functioned not only as Christian disciples but also as cultural

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8 Jung Ha Kim (1997) indicates that according to Sunoo, Sonia Shia’s (1982) “Korea Kaleidoscope: Oral Histories,” the majority of the first migrant laborers to Hawaii came from the Youngdong Church of Reverend Jones in Inchon.
transformers who transmitted modern Western civilization to Korea. In the areas of
education, their involvement embarked the history of Korean modern schooling. In
1885, the first modern school in Korea, Ewha Girl’s school, was established by
American missionary Mary F. Scranton. By early 1900s, institutions of Western higher
education were introduced. In only twenty years after the initial introduction of
Western schools, American missionaries were able to establish a Western system of
education, from the primary level to college, in Korea (Suh, 1984). According to
Dong Suh Bark (1984), their involvement with education had contributed to a
formation of pro-American attitude in Korean population, which, in turn, increased
their influences to promote transnational emigration of Koreans to the U.S.

American Military Occupation and A Big Brother: Post 1945

After 1945, the end of WWII, or the year Korea decolonized itself from Japan’s
thirty-six years of the rule, the relationships between South Korea and the U.S. became
sum up the dynamics as such “Korean modern history is a palimpsest of multiple layers
of Japanese colonialism and neo-imperial domination, especially by U.S. hegemony,
which superimposed its systems on political and social infrastructures of Japanese
colonial rules” (p. 2). As soon as the Japanese were evacuating their colonial state
structures in Korea - in fact before they did - Americans came in and reinstated the full-

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9 In 1908, the U.S. and Japan established the Taft-Katsura Treaty, through which the U.S. recognized
Japanese dominance over Korea in return for Japan’s promise not to invade the Philippines. As a side
effect, American missionaries enjoyed quite a freedom in their various mission works in Korea,
including establishment of school systems, without much regulations from Japanese colonial government
(Bark, 1984; Kim, 1997; Suh, 1984).
government-general apparatus in 1945 (Cumings, 1999, pp. 62-63). As if to symbolize this turn of takeover, Yongsan Garrison in Seoul, once the headquarters for the Japanese Imperial Army, became the headquarters for the U.S. military (Yuh, 1999, p. 20). This proceeded the U.S. Army’s three-year military occupation of Korea from 1945 to 1948, a post-colonial period that was extremely critical for the future of Korea (Kim, 1991). The attitudes of U.S. Army Military Government in Korea (USAMGIK) is revealed through the statement made by General Hodge, a Commanding General at the time,

I’m enough of an imperialist to want to preserve the standards of living we’ve achieved in the U.S. and I firmly believe that we have benefited the nations into which we have extended our influence. All nations with a high standard of living have been imperialist. Our imperialism hasn’t been a bad imperialism. (cited in Cumings, 1981, p. 248)

Under the U.S. Army Military Government, the imperial discourses of civilizing mission, westernizing development, and U.S. capitalistic democracy became imbued Korean social and cultural realms. Cheon Kie Kim (1991) argues that the permanent imprint of U.S. imposition on Korean was shaped at this time:

During the period, the impact of the Americans’ intensive control was so enormous that it deeply and lastingly permeated into almost every domain of Korean society. In fact the basic dominative political structures of Korean society established during the period of American military control has continuously been maintained without fundamental change. Besides, educational change during this period determined the ideological nature of contemporary Korean education. (p. 3)

In light of this lack of sovereignty and political autonomy under the domination of the U.S., Choi (1998) points out that Korea’s “post-colonial” status has not really taken place; Korea’s “post-coloniality” has been “deferred.”
Shortly after USAMGIK came in place, the Korean War, an ongoing war even after the era of Cold War, generated by colonialism, national division and foreign intervention, (has) devastated the whole nation. Framed mainly as a Cold War in which South Korea allied with the U.S. against the communism of North Korea sponsored by the former Soviet Union, the Korean War has divided Korea into two (allegedly enemy) nation-states which separated families and kin. This ideological war, the origin of which has become increasingly controversial,\(^{10}\) consequently, consolidated the political, military, economic and cultural domination of the U.S. over South Korea (Hereafter Korea refers to South Korea).

As part of the profound impact of the American military occupation, GIs took over the missionaries’ roles in early 1900s as the central conduit of Korean-American interactions. Over the years, an estimated one million U.S. service men and women have been stationed in South Korea (Hellman, 1984 cited in Abelmann & Lie, 1995, p. 57). While the number of these military personnel itself is significant, the influence of the American presence in Korea must be examined with the Korean official discourse, which had constructed the U.S. in the absolute position of a benevolent “Big Brother” to Korea - at least until the 1980 Kwangju uprising, a brutal massacre on civilian insurrection in which the U.S. was implicated (Lee, 1988; Lee, 1995; Yun, 1999).

Under this official and dominant discourse, America represented through GIs was the savior who rescued Korea from Japanese imperialism and then saved Korea from communism.

Intensified by Korean postwar scarcities, American heroism and generosity juxtaposed with American material abundance produced an American image of utopia (Yun, 1999). Nancy Abellman and John Lie (1995) accurately pick up this particular image of the U.S. in Korean quotidian lives: “One of the most visceral signs of military presence has been the ever changing stock of American food products that had made their way onto the black market…. [w]hich some South Koreans could afford in small quantities at great cost: Spam, marshmallows, Hershey’s Kisses, M&M’s, conflakes, canned fruit cup, ham, Taster’s choice coffee and so on” (pp. 61-62). Ironically Koreans who had access to these expensive products were either people who could afford them or those who served the needs of GIs at camptowns around the bases: two different groups residing at opposite sides of the Korean social hierarchy. Koreans’ imagined luxurious American life-styles were concretized and glamorized through the narratives of Koreans who had contacts with Americans, watched Hollywood movies and listened to the daily broadcasts of AFKN, the U.S. military’s television network in Korea which featured various American T.V. programs.

**You Are Here So We Are There: Three Modes of Emigrations**

The impact of the GI presence on Korean’s everyday lives is well demonstrated by the number of women, approximately 28,000, who married GIs between 1950 and 1972 and became the largest group of Koreans to emigrate to the United States from 1945 to 1965 (I. Kim, 1987 cited in Abellmann & Lie, 1995, p. 58). Daniel B. Lee (1997) estimates that close to 100,000 Korean women came to the U.S. as brides of U.S. soldiers in the last half century (cited in Yuh, 1999, p. xxiii). Ji-Yeon Yuh (1999)
argues that the American presence in Korea not only created the physical context—military bases and nearby camptowns—where Koreans and Americans met, it also helped to create the social and cultural contexts—militarized prostitution, local civilian employment on bases, and the lure of America—that made marriage to U.S. soldiers appealing to Korean women.\(^{11}\) She contextualizes this particular form of marriage:

Their marriages are a consequences of a half century of American military domination over Korea, a domination that includes the sexual subordination of Korean women, the glaring contrast between Korean poverty and American wealth, between Korean backwardness and American modernity, and the resulting lure that America has held for many Koreans.... Marriages between Korean women and American soldiers may be personal choices at the individual level, but—at least for the women, these choices are profoundly shaped by the context of Korean subordination to American domination. Korea is inscribed as the feminine other while the United States takes on the role of the masculine superior. This is reflected in the male dominated, masculine, and strong U.S. military occupying a weak Korea in need of protection. This gendered context of neo-imperialism is a major factor in the skewed gender profile of intermarriages between Koreans and Americans. (p. 2)

Resulting from this marriage-based immigration, the sex ratio of Korean immigrants was significantly skewed over a long period, although the disproportional balance has declined since the 1950s. Immigration and Naturalization Service’s (INS) statistics indicate that women represented 81 percent of the total in 1965, 67 percent in 1970, 58 percent in 1975, and 55 percent by 1990 (Abelmann & Lie, 1995, p. 58, p. 202).

Another large group of Korean migrants to the U.S. were “war orphans,” from the loss of parents, wartime dislocations, interracial union, or poverty, who went to the U.S. to be adopted by families. The origin of Korean overseas adoption is attributed to the Korean War which produced large numbers of war orphans and Amerasian (mixed race) children fathered by American soldiers. Imbued by strong prejudice against

\(^{11}\) It is important to analyze the other side of this particular form of marriage since Korean women’s marriage to U.S. soldiers could be also read as their acts of defying Korean patriarchy.
racial mixing, the stigma attached to Korean women’s association with foreign men, the patriarchal belief that children belong to paternal lineage, and the lack of social and economic resources to provide appropriate care for these children, the Korean government established an agency called “Yangyeonhwe” in 1954 to help Amerasian children to be adopted in their father country. However, even after Korea has achieved economic prosperity, inter-country adoption has continued partly because of its patriarchal Confucian culture and social structure in which unmarried mothers and children born out of wedlock, even those of Korean descent, are stigmatized as well as non-related adoption is avoided (Chun, 1989; Song, 1999). Consequently, it was assumed that most children adopted after the postwar period were born to single, unwed mothers. Ilsoo Kim (1987) estimates over 45,000 Korean children were adopted into U.S. families between 1962 and 1983.

Another large group of post-Korean War migrants include (mostly male) Korean students who represent the upper echelon of Korean society. It is not known what proportion of these student groups has eventually stayed in the U.S. or returned to Korea. However, it is not difficult to speculate that the modes, purposes and experiences of this group have been quite different from military brides and adoptee migrants, resulting in different narratives about the U.S. Whether they have stayed in the U.S. or returned to Korea, their cultivated American tastes, styles and credentials along with Korean elite class status confer legitimacy and high status in both public and private spheres in South Korea. These are central to understanding how the U.S. secured a place in the plans and dreams of a sizable number of Koreans (Abelmann & Lie, 1995, p. 60; Bark, 1984). Over the decades, the number of Korean students in the
U.S. has been steadily increasing [See Appendix 1]. In 2001, 45,685 South Korean students resided in U.S. higher education institutions, representing the fourth largest group behind China, India and Japan (Institute of International Education, 2001).\(^\text{12}\)

**Predicaments of a Neo/colonized Subempire**

The power of the U.S. and its material representation was not only irresistibly seductive but also repulsive to many South Koreans, who harbored a hidden sense of shame for their self-contradictions, which were repressed by the totalizing discourse of anti-colonial/communist nationalism (Choi, 1998). Choi (1998) narrates her childhood memories, revealing the appallingly ambivalent feelings of many Koreans:

I remember a bright red-and-green checkered winter coat that my mother brought home one day. It was unusually beautiful, with a tapered waist and a warm hood, unmistakably a "relief supply (kahomulja)" item from America. The beautiful flea market coat posed a dilemma for me: my own sense of dignity and my sympathy toward my mother, who had swallowed her pride as a descendent of eminent scholars in a fallen country and, for the first time in her life, rummaged through the flea market - *Yanki* (*Yankee*) Market it was called - to protect her daughter from the harsh Korean winter. I resolved the dilemma by wearing the coat until I could no longer be seen from my house. Then I carried it inside out the rest of the thirty-minute walk to school on crisp winter mornings. Resistance to the warmth of the wool weighted heavily on a ten-year-old girl in destitute post-war Korea. This was a burden of history. (pp. 11-12)

Even for people in my generation whose lives have not been directly inflicted in war time memories and extreme post-war poverty, this is not an unfamiliar feeling. We grew up listening repeatedly to our parents and grandparents who shared their stories, imagining as if we were there when they begged for chocolates, candies, toys, sweaters

\(^\text{12}\) When the total population of each country is considered, the number of Korean students in the U.S. becomes more significant.
and all sorts of materials from U.S. governmental agencies, missionary organizations, or passing soldiers.

Not surprisingly, Korean national development of modernization, especially after the 1970s when people were recuperating from post-war trauma, becomes synonymous with economic development. This economic imperative is, in fact, not unique to official Korean nationalism. As Seungsook Moon (1998, pp. 36-37) argues, with the memory of the power of the colonizer represented through their material superiority, most postcolonial nationals in the Third World, if not every, could not resist the imperative of the capitalistic modernization project based on the financial, technological and market system of the West. What is unique for Korea is that, within the interconnected context of the fluidity of world capital in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, the Cold War political situation in which the U.S. was actively supporting capitalist economies in the East Asian region, and South Korea’s ability to follow the Japanese model of export-led industrialization, Korea has created a “compressed rush to development” (Cho, 2000) through imitation that sought the development of a powerful nation. According to Haejoang Cho (2000), this has been abnormal modernization. She explains:

Until per capita income reached ten thousand dollars, society operated under the principle that it was necessary to “compete by cutting the costs”, and if wealth did accumulate, it was squandered or imperialist imitation. National leaders were so anxious to join the ranks of the “superpowers,” and the people always had something to catch up to.... When South Korea held the Olympics in 1988 and later joined the OECD, the mood became one of celebration of finally being included in the circle of the powerful. In the history of a world divided into developed and underdeveloped nations, South Korean Kukmin (nation’s people)’s pride has been severely hurt as members of an underdeveloped country. They could not miss the opportunity to join the ranks of the developed nations. (p. 52, p. 59)
These symptoms go along with what Choi (1993) refers to “a product at once of assimilation and of separatism.” According to Choi, this is the reproduction of the contradictory colonial double discourse which has created for colonized people an illusion of living in the same social and cultural sphere as that of the metropolis, while it ruthlessly exercises discriminatory policies of hierarchy. Under these circumstances, (post)colonized people continue to live at the edge of the metropolis (p. 89). This results in a peculiar South Korean nationalism, “developed in conjunction and disjunction with anti-Japanese colonialism, anti-communism, pro-Americanism, and now imperialism itself” (Cho, 2000, p. 59). We, therefore, also desire to be a subempire nation-state (Chen, 2000).

The predicaments of postcolonial and/or neocolonial conditions are at the same time complicated by escalating popular political struggle as well as anti-Americanism in the 1980s. By living through the Kwangju massacre of 1980, complete accounts of which have yet to appear, many Koreans have begun to question their historical, political, and economic relationships with the U.S. The dependent nature of Korea’s economy, historical accounts of the U.S. roles for the North-South Korea division, U.S. government’s political support of Korean authoritative military regimes, the nature and extent of U.S. military presence, and the crimes of U.S. military troops were questioned, disclosed and discussed in various parts of Korean society (Abelmann & Lie, 1995; Kim, 1998; Lee, 1988). These broad criticisms of the U.S. have occurred with the revival of Korean cultural movements in/through which various forms of Korean cultural representation such as music, movies, dramas, novels, and dance are
popularized over Hollywood movies, music, and American T.V. programs.

Interestingly, as Korea became economically more prosperous and politically, socially and culturally stable especially from late 1980s to mid 1990s, the number of Koreans who emigrated to the U.S. decreased while the number of student migrants dramatically increased. In 1992 fewer than 20,000 South Koreans emigrated to the U.S., the lowest number since 1972 (Seo, 1993 cited in Abelmann & Lie, 1995, p. 77). Yet the student patterns in this era present different scenarios [See Appendix 1].

At this point, it needs to be emphasized that transnational access, (cultural) capital, and commodities have simultaneously and continuously served Koreans as class and status markers. When the Korean nation-state achieved its economic prosperity in 1980s to mid 90s, an increasing number of middle class Koreans began to participate in the flows of international tourists: to an exotic or nostalgic place where Koreans mimicked the behaviors of American soldiers by giving away some coins and candies to poor local children; or to a metropolis to gauge how far we caught up to the progress and learn to behave like a (western) cosmopolitan. Under the influence of transnational capitalism along with upper and middle class Koreans’ increasing economic power, European brands, American products and Japanese goods started to creep into everyday consumer activities. The privilege of U.S. degrees continues to provide better job opportunities, social respect and economic return.\textsuperscript{13} This is especially the case in higher education institutions where a majority of U.S. educated academics hold jobs. It also has become more difficult to obtain a faculty position in a

\textsuperscript{13} A recent survey on residents of “Bun-dang” city - a predominantly upper/middle class area – indicates that about 60\% of respondents have planned to send or have sent their child/ren to a foreign country for education (K. Kim, 2000).
Korean university without a foreign degree, even though there is increasing criticism that a U.S. degree symbolizes (neo-) colonized education. A recent report from the Korean Higher Education Committee (2000) indicates that the number of newly hired faculty with doctoral degrees from domestic institutions is decreasing. In 1965, 66% of newly hired faculty had earned a Ph.D degree from a domestic institution. But, in 1999, the number had decreased to 35.5%. Approximately 52% of newly hired faculty were foreign Ph.D. degree holders. Among them, 70.5% had received their Ph.D. from U.S. institutions. In 1999, there were a total of 45,008 full-time faculty in 4 year colleges. Among them, 40.1% had foreign degrees, and 67.2% of those faculty had earned Ph.D degrees from U.S. institutions of higher education (Sol, 2000). These messy scenes manifest the coexistence of multiple, contradictory and contesting imperial, neocolonial, and anti-colonial discourses and practices operating through transnational capitalist mechanisms in Korean quotidian experiences.¹⁴

Are We Participating in Globalization or Subjugated by Neocolonization?

A recent turning point which has changed the migration trajectories of Korea and the U.S. occurred in 1997 when the International Monetary Fund (IMF) financially bailed out Korea. The news was delivered at a very high spirited moment of Korean history. Koreans were not prepared to learn that their newly developing country was deeply in debt. Under IMF’s trusteeship, Korea had to implement constant,

¹⁴ Various phenomena regarding this issue are summed up well in a series of special reports by Kang, Kim, Lee, Noe, and Sol in Newsmaker (May 06, 2000). The report titles provide a hint on the debates: “Using English guarantee the success in the box office,” “Imitating American style,” “Korea’s industry and finance are in the hands of the U.S.,” “American Ph.D.s dominate our higher education community,” and “American style neighborhood, Chungdam-dong is now…”
multifarious adjustments at every level of society. This has widened and consolidated the upper and working classes by eliminating the middle class in Korean society, similar to the World class structure that is being polarized into wealthy and poor classes. Domestic educational attainment lost its guarantee for social mobility in Korean economic structure. A high unemployment rate of domestic college graduates continues. Highly educated professionals find that there are no equivalent jobs available for their training (Lee, 2000; “사람 [Human Capital]”, 2002). People who have not been laid off during this economic restructuring often find themselves working from 7 am to 10 pm. Increasing competitiveness without the certainty of upward mobility has exacerbated the unstable conditions of Korean society. The number of abandoned children is increasing, reversing a decline for the first time in 11 years and also reflecting a dire situation. In 1998, 9,292 children were abandoned, a 38% increase from the previous year. Consequently, in the same year, the number of children from Korea adopted overseas rose 9.3% from the previous year (Song, 1999). For people who have options to explore transnational travels, emigration has become once again appealing. This time, it is not only to the U.S. but also to other Anglo countries such as Canada, New Zealand and Australia (Moon, 2002).15

The realization and anxiety of an ever increasing Korean dependency on the global system and U.S. hegemony have resulted in English education fever. Interestingly, this English fever coincides with the forced opening of educational

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15 Information on these phenomenon was gathered through personal communications with people in Korea and various Korean mainstream newspapers at the time.
In markets (e.g. Rust & Kim, 1997). While the subject of English has long ingrained Korea’s secondary and tertiary education and employment systems since the U.S. Army Military Government in Korea, Koreans display an enormous desire for English in this contemporary period. Without systematic examination of existing curricular, pedagogical and evaluation methods, the attention is now being directed to younger children, after the old generation’s failures of learning communicative English in their secondary and tertiary educational levels. It is not uncommon to find children starting to learn English at age 2 in private institutions. The number of English kindergartens is increasing. Study abroad programs for elementary school students are becoming popular. Some parents even have their children undergo tongue surgery, based on rumors that the operation will improve their children’s English pronunciation (Choi, 2001). The number of people who come to the U.S. for English as a Second Language is another evidence of this English fever [See Appendix 2].

What Is Left Now?

The lure of the U.S. which is a result of over a century of neo-colonialism is difficult to resist because the U.S. has been represented as a liberator, not as a colonizer (Yuh, 1999). This allure was fed both by U.S. self-representation and by Korean

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16 On May 27, 2002, DongA newspaper reported that Neil Bush, a brother of George W. Bush, established a private educational institute in Korea, which will deliver “localized U.S. curriculum” in English. This institute will cover from preschool to middle school level.

17 This is a popular rhetoric circulating in Korean society.

18 According to congressman Jaejung Lee’s recent survey of 6 Gus in Seoul, 218 elementary school children participated in study abroad program during the 2001 winter break. For the 2001 summer break, the number increased to 1,023 (Choi, 2001).
military authoritarian regimes which practiced strict “thought control policies”
especially after the Korean War. Such policies have punished critics of the U.S. and
have labeled alternative or resistant dialogues, as anti-national or communist (Kim,
1991; Yun, 1999). While it is true that recently – after late 1980s - there have been
more counter-discourses emerging against the heroic or messianic image of the U.S.,
the U.S. is still primarily considered as an old friend,\(^\text{19}\) probably in “intimate enmity”
(Nandy, 1983 cited in Ghandi 1998, p. 12), who represents an advanced democratic
state of human living. This is a much more ambiguous relationship than the clear
colonizer and colonized one because both parties, Korea and the U.S., tend to deny and
refuse to examine their relationship via the paradigm of imperialism for different
reasons.

The historical accounts, discussed above, of various infusions and encounters of
these two seemingly distinct and separate nation-states through movements of people
have delineated a strange space where the boundaries of Korea and the U.S. are blurred.
Even in that space, unequal power relations persist. Furthermore, gender relations are
remarkably absent from the main discussions of these phenomena, as it has been from

\(^\text{19}\) Cummings (1999, p. 5) provides exemplar Korean reactions to the 1997 economic crisis, which reflect
the current sentiments of Koreans toward the U.S. He writes, “In late 1997 the South Korean press, for
example, was full of shock at the peremptory way in which the International Monetary Fund, supported
by the highest American officials, presumed to rewrite the rules of Korean political economy. This was
followed by much outraged commentary about American perfidy in breaking a trust with an old friend,
in dissolving the “blood alliance” (hyölt’ong) that had existed since 1950. Meanwhile, the average well-
educated American knows next to nothing about Korean and couldn’t care less if its economy is in
trouble (they are more likely applaud).”
other international practices and discourses. Consequently, it is virtually unknown how this historiography is shaping and shaped by gender relations in Korean society.

A half-century of U.S. imperialism over postcolonial Korea ranges from more ostensible military control to cunning educational and cultural domination in structures, theories and ideologies. These dominations have resulted in Koreans, as described in other colonial conditions, “the puzzling circulation of desire around the traumatic scene of oppression” (Ghandi, 1998, p. 11), which Koreans must examine. Albert Memmi’s inquiry (1968, p. 45) is highly pertinent to us: “How could he (the colonized) hate the colonizers and yet admire them so passionately?” (cited in Ghandi, 1998, p. 11) Why have so many Koreans migrated to the U.S.? Why have so many Korean students and scholars been desiring and pursuing their education in the U.S. in this historical and contemporary context of neo-colonialism? What have Korean migrants sought in their migration?

**Immigration, Asian/Americans, and U.S. Cultural Discourse**

In what follows, I will stage the narratives of simultaneous inclusion and exclusion of Asian immigrant and/or American subjects in U.S. nationalist cultural discourse. By interrogating the fissures and gaps that disrupt the linear, continuous and pretentiously multicultural U.S. American national identity, I discuss particular subjective position/s of Asian/immigrant/American through which we can examine the possibilities and limits of nation building projects.

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Orientals, Real Americans, and Immigration Laws

Drawing upon Said’s (1978/1995) “Orientalism,” historians, literary critics, and ethnic studies scholars have argued how the Orientalist legacy has been an integral part of making U.S. American national identity (Kang, 1995; Koptiuch, 1996; Lowe, 1996; Tchen, 1999; Uchida, 1998; Yanagisako, 1995). While Said’s concept explores specifically British and French empire discourses on the Middle East, his thesis has provided a ground to analyze how Asian people, culture and objects have been represented and made as antithetical and inferior to those of Europeanized America, the West. Yet, at the same time, Orientalism encompasses a desire of the Occident. As Said (1978/1995, p. 12) states, “It is, rather than expresses, a certain will or intention to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even to incorporate, what is a manifestly different (or alternative and novel) world.” Through these contradictory distancing and encompassing, different national/ethnic gendered Asians at different times have been placed “within” the U.S. nation-state, its workplace, and its markets, yet linguistically, culturally and racially marked as “foreign” and “outside” the national polity (Lowe, 1996).

The most literal construction of American as not oriental is read in the history of immigration and naturalization laws. For instance, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the “first” law to ban immigration to the U.S. on the basis of nationality, introduced a new legal category of “aliens ineligible for citizenship.” Since the

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21 Here I selectively pay attention to race and national origin based discrimination in order to delineate a particular Asian/American subjective position. But, I also emphasize that the definitions of American have been also complexly interwoven through multiple discourses of gender, class and sexuality (See Lowe, 1996).
Naturalization Act of 1790 made "free white persons" eligible for naturalization and an 1870 law proclaimed the eligibility of persons of "African descent or nativity," the Chinese and later Japanese (1924) and Koreans (1924) were declared as racially ineligible. Then the Immigration Act of 1917 prescribed an " Asiatic Barred Zone," which banned any immigrant laborers from India, Indochina, Afghanistan, Arabia, the East Indies, and other Asian countries. The Act was the "first" step in establishing a federal policy of restriction wholly based on a rank order of eligible immigrants that favored national groups thought to be most "assimilable." The Immigration Act of 1924 finally barred the immigration of all "aliens ineligible for citizenship," a shift from a denial of naturalization to a total ban on future Asian immigration. Through the successive immigration and naturalization process, Asians living and working in the U.S. were first pushed outside the borders of U.S. citizenry. Then, there became no clear demarcation between Asian Americans and Asian aliens ineligible citizenship (Kang, 1995, pp. 142-149). Asian as "perpetual foreigner" or "foreigner within" was both symptomatic and determining of the racialized construction of who the citizenry was.22

The importance of surveying juridical discourse in U.S. history lies in the fact that the contemporary and persisting stereotypical images that construct Asians as the threatening yellow peril or the domesticated model minority are not exclusively a matter of discursive practice in the cultural space. Rather they have historically been

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22 The ban on Asian immigration continued until WWII. After the War Brides Act of 1945 and an amendment to the act in 1947, the Walter-McCarran Act 1952 lifted its previous bans and allowed 100 immigrants per year from nations in the "Asian-Pacific Triangles" (Kang, 1995; and also see Lowe, 1996).
instantiated through the government’s classification of racialized Asian immigrant identities (Lowe, 1996, p. 19). The egregious violence of the Orientalist discursive practice institutionalized by the U.S. government can be traced through the incarceration of Japanese Americans during WWII to the very recent China espionage accusation against Wen Ho Lee and to the surveillance of Arabic Americans after the September 11, 2001 attack. As Lisa Lowe (1996, p. 19) argues, the liberal state still discriminates, examines and produces immigrant identities through the binary language of legal and illegal, citizen and noncitizen, and U.S. born and permanent resident. In any case, Asian coding always restrains their being and becoming “real” Americans.

**Nationalist Redemptive Amnesia Vs. Capitalist Flexible Accumulation**

“Asian American” is an enigmatic term that encompasses people from vastly diverse ethnic, linguistic, national, religious, cultural and immigration backgrounds/histories whose only common experience is that of having been labeled and treated “Oriental” in a supposedly “Occidental” nation (Yanagisako, 1995). This was a political term forged to bridge different Asian American communities within the context of the 1960s and 1970s social movements as they also built solidarities with other racialized groups of African Americans, Native Americans and Chicanos, with the U.S. women’s movement as well as with Third World liberation struggles. Grounded within the U.S. nation-state and implicated in their peculiar exclusion and omission from dominant U.S. national history, Asian American scholarship challenged, reconstructed and claimed their rootedness in the making of U.S. history. These struggles, partaking in the Civil Rights movement, inserted a re-visioned narrative of
Asian American experiences into the grand U.S. national discourse which aimed to end the long-lasting notion of Asians as temporary residents in the U.S. It is critical to underscore that the (partial) inclusion and integration “promised” for Asians as Americans opened a space to imagine Asian America. However, what is equally important is to examine what has been made unthinkable by this political fiction of Asian American.

Laura Hyun Yi Kang (1995, pp. 158-159) argues cogently the problematics of “the pluralist integration of Asians as Americans.” According to Kang, a dominant discourse of Asian American history mainly purports to prove that Asian Americans have been and are “really” Americans by showing how they persisted in their integrationist aspiration in spite of all the evidence of specific exclusions and marginalizations. Yet, to make this narrative possible, what Asian/Americans (must) have is our genuine and unmitigated desire to be recognized as full “Americans.”


Their stories belong to our country’s history and need to be recorded in our history books, for they reflect the making of America as a nation of immigrants, as a place where men and women came to find a new beginning. (cited in Kang, 1995, p. 161)

Kang responds,

He inserts Asians into this unique “American” narrative of pluralism through immigration: “American represented liminality, and the Asian immigrants’ actions enabled them to make history even in conditions they did not choose” (18). The invocation of Asian/Americans as historical actors befitting the
“liminality” of the U.S. strategically addresses the instances of exclusion as merely aberrant and therefore unrepresentative moments in a longer, deeper history of freedom and possibility. That certain Asian immigrants were able to “make history” against generally unfavorable odds has two implications. First, beneath specific laws and practices of Asian exclusion, the fundamental principles of democracy functioned (all along) to effect their inclusion and to enable them to “make history” in the sense of doing something worthwhile and notable. Secondly, their assumed presence as constituted by the book masks another “making of history” - Takaki’s own historiographical narration. (p. 161)

Takaki’s redemptive criticism in fact brings another triumph to the foundational myth of U.S. nation-state that successively transforms unassimilable aliens into one American people within its borders.

Ironically, this emerging Asian American narrative of inclusion, integration and accommodation to/by the U.S. nation-state is contested by another new wave of Asian immigration, made possible through the 1965 Act, which abolished racial and national origin basis as immigration criteria. In one respect, the new immigration heightened the visibility and accordingly strengthened the political power of Asian Americans by increasing the numbers of Asians in the U.S.: from a total of around 1,357,000 in 1970, to 37,000,000 Asian American and Pacific Islanders in 1980, 7,274,000 in 1990, and 10,642,000 in 2000 (Dirlik, 1996; U.S.Census Bureau, 2001). On the other hand, as Arif Dirlik (1996, p. 10) contends, this visibility of new immigrants almost immediately made irrelevant the fundamental assumption that had guided the struggle for Asian America: the rootedness of Asian Americans in U.S. history. Roots for this new population was more likely to mean roots somewhere in Asia or the Pacific than in the U.S.

Furthermore, the contemporary U.S. national cultural discourse bewilders the post-1965 immigration that consists of an increasing number of immigrants from the
Philippines, South Korea, and South Vietnam, countries defaced by U.S. colonialism, imperialistic wars, and occupations. Lowe (1996) writes “It [Their immigrant displacement] embodies the displacement from Asian societies in the aftermath of war and colonialism to a United States with whose sense of national identity the immigrants are in contradiction precisely because of that history” (p. 16). Consequently, for them, re-membering “Asians as Americans” necessarily forces forgetting. When they are required to accede to a political fiction of equal rights in the name of American citizenry that is generated through the denial of history, a denial that reproduces the omission of history as the ontology of the nation, it involves forgetting the history of war in Asia and adopting American national historical narrative that disavows the existence of an American imperial project (Lowe, 1996, p. 27).

Lastly, it must be also noted that the 1965 Act gave preference to professional, capitalist and technician immigrants in the logic of growing global capitalism. The Asian immigrant population still largely consists of low-wage manual and service sector workers that have put an onerous burden on the increased (international) proletarianization of Asian (immigrant) women’s labor. However, there is also a new Asian immigrant class of professional whose emergence is located at the intersection of economic, political, and personal desires of these subjects, the needs of U.S. capitalism to recruit and regulate flexible labor and capital for maximum profit, and the operation of transnational movements. At the local level, these professional Asians disrupt the proper location of minorities in ethno-racial hierarchy as suggested through the American prototype of immigration success/assimilation narratives. Aihwa Ong (1999) in her study on transnational Chinese subjects describes this tension:
In the commonsensical view of ethnic succession, recent arrivals from non-Western countries are expected to enter at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder and wait their proper turn to reach middle class status. Affluent Asian immigrants who arrive in the country already possessing the economic and social attributes associated with Americans occupying the top ranks of society thus confound the expectation of an orderly ethnic succession. . . . [W]ell to do Asian new comers breach the spatial and symbolic borders that have disciplined Asian Americans and kept them on the margins of American nation. Accustomed as they are to being economically and socially superior to Asian immigrants, middle-class whites seek in the English only and antidevelopment campaigns to express anxiety over their own displacement in geographical and economic terms. (p. 100)

The uneasiness of (white) American nativism is clearly marked by flying phrases in mass media such as “colonization of California” (Piore, 2001). Yet, the tension based on racial and economic issues complicates the contemporary identities of Asian/American and its politics as the vast heterogeneities within Asian/American make it impossible to delineate who is an Asian/American in descriptive, abstract, or generic terms. These days it becomes more common to hear the heated conflicts among Asian/Americans that are expressed in the language of cultural authenticity, “real Americans” versus “real Asians” (Dirlik, 1996). Orientalist discourse intransigently resuscitates at various moments to demarcate and unify true “Americans”: Orientals are still required to define what is not American.

**Women, Family and Nation in Korean Cultural Discourse**

Many feminist scholars have shown the role of gender in the development of nation-states (Gandhi, 1998; Kim & Choi, 1998; Ryang, 1998; Yuval-Davis, 1997). Based on their analytical framework, I briefly examine the extent to which Korean national discourse authenticates its cultural identity through the regulation of Korean
women particularly in responding to foreign power. The analysis highlights the contentious position of “traveling Korean women” tainted by our connections with the foreign.

Seungsook Moon’s analysis (1998, pp. 40-42) on 단군- *Tan’gun* myth provides a good beginning to uncover the interlocking nature of andro-centric Korean postcolonial nationalism, patriarchal family, and women's subordination ideology. 단군- *Tangun* myth, which was revived and had gained hegemony during and after Japanese colonization, explains the origin of the Korean nation. Its symbolic power and significance are appraised through the fact that Korea has been using 단군- *Tangun’s year* (단기- *tangi*) which adds 2333 to the dominical year along with the latter in its official calendar, despite its historical ambiguities and having a national holiday (개천절- *kaech’onjol*) on October 3rd commemorating the foundation of Korea by 단군- *Tan’gun*, since the independence from Japan. According to 단군- *Tan’gun* myth,

Korean history started with Tan’gun wang’gom, the legendary founder of the Korean nation, roughly five millennia ago. He was the son of Hwanung, an illegitimate son of Hwanin, the heavenly lord, and Wungnyu (which literally means a "bear woman"). The illegitimate Hwanung (literally meaning "heavenly male") was interested in ruling the human world, and his father allowed him to descend on earth with his entourage and magical power. One day a bear and a tiger anxious to become humans asked Hwanung to fulfill their wish. He ordered them to stay in a cave without sunlight and to eat garlic for one hundred days. While the tiger failed to observe the command, the bear patiently followed it and became a woman. Then Hwanung married the bear-woman and begot Tan’gun. (Moon, 1998, pp. 40-41)

As Moon (1998, pp. 41-42) states, what is noteworthy in this myth is that it enunciates the link between the nation and heterosexual patriarchal family, in which a
woman is only depicted as the bearer of the heir. This explicitly suggests that the woman's only contribution to the creation of the Korean nation was providing a proto-nationalist womb. In this relationship, the heavenly man, 환웅 - Hwanung, and the bear-woman, 웅녀 - Wungnyu, symbolize the essentialized difference between men and women and the heterosexualized gender hierarchy as the very foundation of Korean nationhood. In addition, 환웅's description as an "illegitimate son" reflects a set of patriarchal social relations which creates a hierarchy of women linked to women's relations with men, such as a legitimate wife vs. an illegitimate wife. A patriarchal strategy divides and rules women through the institutions of marriage and patrilineal relationships. Moreover, the transformation of a bear into a woman carries the deep social meaning of womanhood epitomized by patience to endure suffering and ordeals.

In her critique on 탄군 - Tan'gun myth, Moon (1998) emphasizes that the myth indoctrinates that patriarchy has existed from the beginning of Korean history and even before - perhaps in heaven, too - and is a "natural" part of Korean culture. Therefore, it is implied that change on this particular form of patriarchal family embedded in gender hierarchy relations would reduce Korean-ness or even dissolve the order of Korean nation. Put in another way, the concepts of Korea, women and family are interlocked, so that the operation of any part is constituted and constrained by the other/s.

Along with establishing the antique origin for the Korean nation, this myth reinforces official Korean history of foreign invasions and Koreans' patriotic defense for nearly 5000 years, during which we have struggled hard to maintain our oneness
since the nation's founding by 단군- 
*Tan'gun* (Moon, 1998). Koreans have described
ourselves as a homogeneous people: 한민족- 
*Han min-jok*, one people/nation/race, 한 -
"han" meaning "one", homophonic with the 한 - "han" of 한국 - "hanguk," the
Korean nation (Kendall, 1998). In this rhetoric, Koreans belonging to one ethnic group
are assumed to constitute a unified identity, based on an unchangeable essence that is
transmitted through blood and homogeneous culture. At the same time, this notion
consolidates the Korean nation as a geographically and culturally fixed unit. However,
Cho (1998a) emphasizes that ethnic minorities do exist in Korea23 - although they are
numerically small. Those who define and identify as "Korean" do not find it necessary
to rationalize the exclusion of these people; they instead choose to ignore their
existence altogether (Kendall, 1998).

Lurking under this homogeneous single national identity is the ideology of
chastity that applies only to women particularly in relation to foreign power.

According to Choi (1998), the Korean term, 홀랑녀 - *hwanhyang nyoo*, the emblem of
promiscuity, which in its written form is composed of Chinese characters - the
language of Confucian male rulers - simply means "homecoming women." She
describes the etymology of the term which illuminates the position of Korean women
victimized by our own history of foreign dominations and homonational misogyny:

The "homecoming women" were initially sent to Qing China in the mid-
seventeen century as tribute items for Qing sovereignty over Korea. Some of
the mostly lower class women were returned home after their usefulness was
exhausted and their youth had withered. The returned women were stigmatized
as defiled women and labeled promiscuous. The "promiscuous" "homecoming

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23 Since the contemporary Korean ethnic group itself is a mixed ethnicity resulted from multiple
miscegenation in its 5000 years of history, I speculate the ethnic minorities Cho is referring to are those
discernable ethnic minority groups in Korea such as Chinese Korean (화교 - hwakyo) and Amerasian.
women" signified a nomenclature that constructs Korean men as the victims of the emasculation of the Korean nation. (p. 13)

This dichotomous ideology of promiscuity/chastity played a significant role in silencing the "Military Comfort Women" drafted by the Japanese military for sexual service who feared that they might be stigmatized as the emblem of promiscuity: 화냥녀 - hwanhyang nyo. Even when the testimonies of surviving "Military Comfort Women" came out, discourses about -not for - these women were played out at two opposing but cooperating ends. At the one end, the talk focusing on chastity reduced the issue to a personalized and moralized domain while it erased the historical significance and exempted Korean men of their self-appointed responsibility to defend the nation and women who are bearers of the nation's heirs. At the other end, the Korean nation became gendered and women's sexuality became nationalized. In other words, the nation was equated with the male subject position and women's sexuality was reified as the property of the masculine nation (Yang, 1998).

Nationalized women's sexuality continues to create another Korean term, 양궁주 - Yanggongju – literally translated as a Western princess - which refers to Korean women who engage in sexual labor for foreign soldiers. Hyun Sook Kim (1998) elucidates:

This epithet, "Yanggongju," relegates Korean women working in militarized prostitution with foreign men to the lowest status within the hierarchies of prostitutions. Since the end of Korean War, this category has been extended to include Korean women who marry American service men.... so that Korean women in interracial marriage are also viewed as "Yanggonju." (p. 178)
What this genealogical exploration informs us is that the ideology of chastity/promiscuity is not about virginity itself but about the proper place for female sexuality. Hyunah Yang (1998) states

A married woman's sexuality belongs to her husband, whether he is alive or dead; an unmarried woman's sexuality belongs to her future husband; and in general, Korean women's sexuality belongs to Korean men. (p. 131)

In this type of Korean cultural discourse of women and nation in relation to foreign power, infringement of foreign power occurs simultaneously to the nation and (its) women. Korean women are never simply Korean women but always our mother and sisters particularly in (sexualized) relationships with imperial men (see e.g. Kim & Choi, 1998). Consequently, in the nationalist Korean discourse, colonized Koreans refer to Korean men who have lost their rights to their women. Thus, "all Korean women, as the homogeneous single-nation mandates, are expected to be chaste and vigilant against foreign males and, by extension, masculine foreign powers" (Choi, 1998, p. 14).

The illusion of our homogeneous nationality that is possible through ignoring and excluding the Others in us works reciprocally with Confucian ideology which equates "loyalty to the state (祿 - Ch'ung)" to "filial piety to the parents (孝 - Hyo)." As a sanguine patriarchal familial community, Korean andro-centric cultural nation demands that individual differences, conflicts, and sufferings have to be subsumed for the stability of our own family and nation. Accordingly, a salient feature of Korean historiography emphasizes "foreign invasion and our patriotic defense" and our fabricated success in keeping our nation "pure," and reifies the interchangeability of the concepts of family and nation. In this hegemonic conceptualization, the only legitimate
position allowed for women is the mother, a bearer of heirs, who uses her womb to produce children – sons, to be precise.

Accordingly, Korean women have been allured and seduced to identify ourselves primarily as mothers in our families (Cho, 1997; Cho, 1998b; K. Kim, 1996; Ryang, 1998). Obviously, in most parts, this has been the happy coincidence between women’s desire to exert acceptable and respectable power within our inferior position in the social hierarchy and what is offered to women by dominant socio-cultural structures. The ingenious part of this arrangement is that we have to give up our only privilege as the mother to dismantle oppressive structures! Furthermore, the signified, valorized, and institutionalized mother position of Korean women with its distinctive power makes it very hard to declare that women are oppressed in this familialized nation and nationalized family. How dare we argue that family and oppression stay together. In addition, it is surely not motherly to feel that our suffering is due to oppression: it is even less so to complain about one's hardships and protest for one's own rights (Cho, 1998b). It must be love and sacrifice for our children - particularly sons. As many Korean feminists have attested, moreover, Korean women who have appropriated the principle of “filial piety” have been quite successful to rear our children as a source of emotional gratification and self-realization in response to our cultural frames in which women are severely suppressed on the one end and mothers are seemingly idealized on the other (Cho, 1997; Cho, 1998b; Yim, 1998). This may suggest why few Korean women consider the possibility of remaining single.

According to 1990 census in Korea, 95 percent of Korean women were married by age thirty (S. Kim, 1996). On the other hand, to achieve Korean womanhood, we are
expected to endure the ordeals and suffering as did the bear in the Tan'gun myth. Korean history, folklore, and literature are replete with variations on this basic scheme: girls and women who sacrifice their labor, lives, bodies and personal aspirations for the sake of their family and country are heroines, martyrs and patriots (Moon, 1998).

Many Third World feminists have attested that women in postcolonial states are subjugated to double binding in their gendered and sexualized constructions (Bulbeck, 1998; Choi, 1998; Collins, 2000; Kim & Choi, 1998; Koptiuch, 1996; Uma Narayan, 1997). Under colonial rules, the colonized is often represented as feminine to highlight the colonizer's superior masculine materiality and civilization. Colonized men then adopt the stance of the colonizer as a way of recuperating their masculinity. According to Choi (1998, p. 24), since the focus of the decolonization effort is to recuperate an infantilized and emasculated nation, any power that may threaten male authority is suspected of undermining national struggles. She argues “When that threat comes from women, these women are relegated to the status of ‘whores’” (p. 25). In this light, traveling korean women’s involvement with the U.S., even if it is not a sexualized one, is highly problematic in Korean cultural discourses. In-between space of transnational access, mobility and intimacy as a source of power, as a tainted status of promiscuity, and as an effect of imperial violence, this project will write the existence of traveling korean women in U.S. higher education.

Summary

This study utilizes the problematics and possibilities of the First and Third World paradigm to make an observation of our historicity. The shifting contours of the
First and Third World, in fact, reflect the complexities and heterogeneity of power relations that we as "traveling korean women" negotiate in our everyday choices, desires, values, and imagination. While I acknowledge and seriously take into account the hegemony of (white) global capitalism in the analysis, I treat it not only as an economic system but also a cultural structure that channels and molds the ways we make sense of our life and reality. In this way, I can approach the multiple operations of its logic in continuing unequal power relations of globalization between the Metropolitan/First World and the Colonized/Third World.

To specify and place the theoretical paradigm for the study in concrete terms, I surveyed four different overlapped literatures: international students in the U.S. higher education, history of migration between Korea and the U.S., the politics of Asian/Americans, and the construction of Korean women in Korean national discourse. Due to the superficial and inhibiting knowledge provided in the current international student literature, my review of this literature was presented more as an ideological critique and as suggestions for future studies. Critical theories such as feminism, critical race theories and Marxism have neglected this body of literature and this population. Secondly, the history of movements and encounters between Korea and the U.S. was narrated to provide how this study takes part in the unequal interactions between these two nations-states over last 100 years. This history inevitably and complexly has shaped and will continue to shape how koreans relate to the symbols of the U.S. at individual and institutional levels. The third section examined the politics of Asian Americans and immigrants in U.S. cultural discourses and practices. Through the multifaceted and well coordinated courses of perpetual exclusions, performative
citizenships, nativism, and Orientalism, the U.S. nation-state building project has legitimated a particular subject position for Asian Americans, which necessitates the erasing, severing, forgetting, and reinterpreting the violence of U.S. imperialism. The tensions and ruptures from this static prescriptive position of Asian Americans within U.S. nation-state cultural discourse will guide me to analyze the conflicts and contradictions enacted in our own narratives marked by this sign of “Asian American.” Lastly, I analyzed how Korean nationalist cultural discourse idealizes and shapes its national identity through the ideology of chastity by regulating and controlling women’s sexualities and desires as well as confining women within family/national spheres headed by Korean men. This part of the literature review illuminates the dangers and consequent punishments that mobile korean women have to negotiate when we step out of the given place.

By juxtaposing these four distinct but interacting literatures, I plot multiple routes that connect the different geographies, cultures, languages and politics in order to display how the name of traveling korean women in U.S. higher education became imaginable for the study. Now, I want to discuss how I will stage the narratives of these women in the imagined name – methods and procedures.
CHAPTER 3

THEORIZING/PRACTICING SCIENCE

Research "through imperial eyes" describes an approach which assumes that Western ideas about the most fundamental things are the only ideas possible to hold, certainly the only rational ideas, and the only idea which can make sense of the world, of reality, of social life and of human beings. It is an approach to indigenous peoples which still conveys a sense of innate superiority and an overabundance of desire to bring progress into the lives of indigenous peoples - spiritually, intellectually, socially, and economically. It is research which from indigenous perspectives "steals" knowledge from others and then uses it to benefit the people who "stole" it. Some indigenous and minority group research would call this approach simply racist. It is research which is imbued with an "attitude" and a "spirit" which assumes a certain ownership of the entire world, and which has established systems and forms of governance which embed that attitude in institutional practices. These practices determine what counts as legitimate research and who counts as legitimate researchers. (Smith, 1999, p. 56)

Decolonizing Methodologies

Patti Lather (1992) defines methodology as the theory of knowledge and the interpretive frame that guides the choice of methods and procedures for a study. Following this logic, I will delineate my philosophy of research before I discuss the procedural details of the study. My study is situated at the current postpositivist moment in U.S. institutionalized research tradition: the crisis of representation as well as a rejection of the assumptions of Enlightenment rationality and traditional Western
epistemology (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994; Lather, 1992; Lincoln & Denzin, 1994). At this location, supplemented through enmeshed critical discourses, calling into question the issues of race, gender, sexuality and class as well as requiring more a reflexive process of research, the way I frame “research” corresponds with Smith’s notion that “scientific research is implicated in the worst excess of colonialism...Research is not an innocent or distant academic exercise but an activity that has something at stake and that occurs in a set of political and social conditions” (1999, pp. 1-3). What this suggests is that I as a Third World researcher in the U.S. cannot and must not (pretend to) be an innocent inquirer who explains, interprets and determines truths without explicating my complicities with the imperialism of the U.S. research enterprise, no matter how sincerely and seriously I take an oppositional stance to research “through imperial eyes.”

As a foreign graduate student from Korea, whose modern history is bruised by Japanese colonization and U.S. neo-imperial domination, the routes I have been traveling to be a researcher - or to be educated “properly” to create (a particular) knowledge - entail few discussions on why certain ways of knowing in certain languages have been only or at least more legitimate and valid. In the course of self-examination as a tool of the research for the study, what I acknowledge is my “sanctioned ignorance” in Spivak’s words\(^1\) through Minh-ha’s confession (1989, p. 52): “The language(s) in which I perceive (quite a deception) myself cultur-ally, psychologic-ally, physic-ally, and spritu-ally (What haven’t they contaminated? Can you name it ?) - and become aware of my needs is permeated with their professional

\(^1\) Mary John (1989) writes well about the concept of sanctioned ignorance in relation to our position as a Third world woman intellectual in the U.S.
definitions.” How can I, who have been educated in Macaulay’s prophesy: “one taste / Of Western wisdom surpasses / All the books of the East” (Seth, 1994, cited in Gahndi, 1998, p. 13), not be compelled through their omnipresent speaking, writing, and discoursing of “What concerns me concerns you in the global village” (Minh-ha, 1989, p. 52).

Because of my particular location as a Third world woman researcher in U.S. academia in this era of globalization/neo-colonial world, which always invokes multiple power relations, examining the political contexts of research in U.S. academia provides a lens through which I can discuss the possibilities and limits configuring my methodology. Rey Chow (1993b) demands us to think of current trends in Western academia in which theorists "discover" objects of oppression for the construction of a guilt-tripping discourse along the lines of "Who speaks " and thus win for themselves a kind of moral and/or rhetoric victory. According to Chow, this is occurring partly through "the paradigm of violence" that expresses its dominance through a representation of the self as powerless. In this paradigm, intellectuals acquire power through a moral rectitude that is to become the flip side of Western imperialism's ruthlessness. Lying at the core of Anglo-American liberalism, this moral rectitude has accompanied many economic, intellectual and spiritual conquests both overseas and within its territory with a firm sense of social mission: “Make the heathen into a human so that he can be treated as an end in himself” in Spivak's term (1985, p. 802). In a similar vein, Lather (1997, 2001a, 2001b) also raises questions of “the authority of voice in contemporary regimes of disciplinary truhtelling.” She writes
Confessional tales, authorial self-revelation, multivoicedness, and personal narrative are all contemporary practices of representation designed to move ethnography away from scientificity and the appropriation of others. At risk is a romance of the speaking subject and a metaphysics of presence complicated by the identity and experience claims of insider/outsider tensions. (Lather, 2001a, p. 206)

“A romance of the speaking subject”: what makes this romance possible is that researchers in U.S. academia disregard that "speaking" itself belongs to an already well-defined structure and history of domination. To be subjects, as Chow notes, according to the governing logic, they must have certain powers of observation, classification, and definition in order to exist. They must speak “intelligently” to researchers. “Only certain kinds of subjects are really subjects,” says Nancy Armstrong (1990, cited in Chow, 1993b, p. 37). Then the question is “Can the subaltern speak?” (Spivak, 1988/1994). Spivak’s argument is not that they cannot speak but that they are not being heard; given “the untranslatability of ‘third world’ experiences into ‘first world’ imperialist discourse” (Chow, 1993b, p. 38). Declared is the incapacity of imperialist knowing. Thus, even when it sounds like researchers give the once identified oppressed people a voice, what we are doing is a subject-constitution firmly inscribed in Anglo-American liberal humanism, the other side of the process of “image-identification” in which we try to make the oppressed more like us by allowing them to speak (Chow, 1993b). If imperialism is a system that draws everything back into the center and then distributes materials and ideas outward through its own colonial logic and economy (Smith, 1999, p. 58), then this particular subject making process for Third World people, by drawing their experiences into U.S. research discourses and then distributing U.S. institutionalized knowledge of their
voices outward, works as another form of imperial practice. What happens in this imperial reproduction of academic writing is that Third World people’s stories become the means for Western intellectuals to extend their academic authority to transnational contexts (Ong, 1995, p. 353).

The point is that researchers will never replace the wrong representation of the Third World people with the correct or true one, despite meticulous contextualizing and counter-hegemonic efforts in reading our/their alien subjectivities. Since whenever the oppressed, the native, the subaltern, and so forth are used to represent the point of "authenticity" for First World academic critical discourse, they become at the same time the place of myth-making and an escape from the impure nature of political realities (Chow, 1993b). Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse (1989) write: "[The] idea of violence as representation…. implies that whenever we speak for someone else we are inscribing her with our own (implicitly masculine) idea of order" (cited in Chow, 1993b, p. 14). This is what Spivak states of the American university context: "the invocation of the pervasive oppression of Women in every class and race stratum, indeed in the lowest sub-cast, cannot help but justify the institutional interests of the (female) academic" (cited in Chow, 1993b, p. 68).

Where am I, then, as a Third World feminist researcher in the First World situated in this discourse? I speak of, speak to and speak at this disjuncture:

The privileged Third World informant crosses cultures within the network made possible by socialized capital, or from the point of view of the indigenous intellectual or professional elite in actual Third World countries. Among the latter, the desire to "cross" culture means accession, left or right, feminist or masculinist, into the elite culture of the metropolis. This is done by the commodification of the particular "Third World culture" to which they belong. Here entry into consumerism and entry into "Feminism" (the proper named
movement) have many things in common. (Naomi Schor, 1987 cited in Chow, 1993b, p. 69)

Accordingly, Chow (1993b) urges me to respond to her question: "How can we resist, as Michel Foucault said, the forms of power that transform us into its object and instrument in the sphere of 'knowledge,' 'truth,' 'consciousness,' and 'discourse'" (p. 16)? In other words, how can I struggle against a hegemony which already includes me and which can no longer be clearly demarcated into imperial/First World researcher and colonized/Third World researched spaces - when I perform as a Third World broker? In the same line, "Why will what I say be accepted here if what I am trying to do is really to displace and disown the proper?"

I might have been recruited as an instrument for articulation, to perform a certain role as postmodern automaton within the hegemony of U.S. research institutions. But, I am not staying where I am required to stay as the all knowing inquirer, authentic native informant, knowable researched and/or Third World broker. I reuse this space to make a move, which Lather (2001a) terms "economies of responsibility within noninnocent space, a 'within/against' location" (p. 204). Power is at once repulsive and intoxicating (Minh-ha, 1993, p. 165). Minh-ha elaborates this noninnocent space:

Oppositional practices which thrive on binary thinking have always worked at preserving the old dichotomy of oppressor and oppressed... When it is a question of desire and power, there are no possible short cuts in dealing with a system of rationality that imprisons the body politic and the people and regulates their relationship. There are, in other words, no 'innocent people', or subjects untouched by the play of power. Although repression cannot simply be denied, its always duplicative, never original sources cannot be merely pointed out from a safe articulatory position either. (pp. 165-166)
Here I am left with this corrupted, unsettling, inappropriate, and disappointing framework of research. Yet, again, I reuse this space, because, as a Third World researcher who has invested too much to learn to make up this voice, to speak, in the First World, I have little else left now to write ourselves into existence (see Kondo, 1996; Smith, 1999).

Paula Gunn Allen astutely points out “We are only perceived and authorized when we cast ourselves as marginal, subversive and dissident,” continuing:

To my Indian eyes, it is plain that subversion cannot be the purpose or goal for women of color who write, though it is likely a side effect of our creating… Subversion, dissidence, and acceptance of self as marginal are processes that maim our art and deflect us from our purpose. They are enterprises that support and maintain the master, feeding his household on our energy, our attention, and our strength. (cited in Hernandez, 1994, p. 6)

In this business, Dorinne Kondo’s (1996) rage and anger is pertinent that we are systematically erased from representation in mainstream discursive practice as we get more and more specifically situated - other than being the other. She states, “In very real ways, we do not exist. Either we are absent entirely or what is often worse, when we are depicted, it is only in the most stereotyped way, thus subjecting us to psychological violence rather than offering affirmation or recognition” (p. 110). What has been invisible/unhearable in such terrains of knowledge regime is the imperative to attend to our concerns, issues, and differences, rather than reading our "difference" in contrast to western "sameness"; this will disrupt as the side effect of the western imperialistic epistemology which sees the rest of the World as the other or minor. As Barbara Christian (1987, p. 337) indicates, many of us, represented as the other, have never conceived of ourselves only as somebody’s other. As Lila Abu-Lughod argues in
regard to what she calls “ethnographies of the particular,” by writing in terms of particular individuals and their changing relationships (citied in K. Narayan, 1997, p. 35), we would necessarily subvert the freezing moment of being ethno. In this way, we can practice what Spivak (1992) calls: “Different differentiation that will honor the differences between ethnic minorities in the First World and majority populations of the Third” (p. 191).

Incited by the danger, erasure, necessity and creativity, here I take the limits/possibilities of research as an opportunity to center our concerns and world views from our own perspectives and for our own purpose at our location (Smith, 1999, p. 39), yet with a strong effort to continue our dialogues with our own others. I let research be a legitimate site where I converse about us with each other to take up an active role to construct knowledge in an institutionalized U.S. research discipline where we rarely hear from or about us, except when we are defined simply as others. It is helpful to repeat Lather’s words (2001a).

Working both within and against disciplinary conventions, my sense of task is to explore methodological economies of responsibility and possibility that engage our will to know through concrete efforts both to produce different knowledge and to produce knowledge differently. (p. 200)

Working within/against western domination in knowledge re/production at the moment of the ruins of knowing (Lather, 2001b), I risk reinscribing the position of researcher as knowledge producer who has power to do “battle” about the status of truth -epistemology (Foucault, 1984). Yet only in this way, I can add another writing on the palimpsest of knowledge circulation.
Methods and Procedures

Auto/ethnography

Here method is resituated as a way into the messy doings of science via risky practices that both travel across contexts and are remade in each situated inquiry. (Lather, 2001a, p. 204)

This study is conceptualized as auto/ethnography which stands at the intersection of three genres of writing: (1) “native anthropology,” in which people who were formerly the subjects of ethnography become the authors of studies of their own group\(^2\); (2) “ethnic autobiography,” personal narratives written by numbers of ethnic minority groups; and (3) “autobiographical ethnography,” in which anthropologists interject personal experience into ethnographic writing (Reed-Danahay, 1997). This is an activity of a traveling korean woman’s re/searching and writing the stories of traveling korean women in the contexts of U.S. higher education.

With the above in mind, I call the study auto/ethnography although I am not able to demarcate the fields, did not have long periods of immersion in the actual everyday life of participants and used primarily an “interview method” to gather our narratives. My field experience with these women seemed inherently conflictual with the canon of scientific research stated by anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski: “Only laws and generalizations are scientific facts, and fieldwork consists only and exclusively in the preparation of the chaotic reality, in subordinating it to general rules” (cited in Minh-ha, 1993, p. 56). My fieldwork was an activity of a traveling korean woman’s re/searching traveling korean women but was not about submitting our

\(^2\) The concepts, complexities and problematics of native ethnography are elaborated in Kirin Narayan’s (1997) “How Native Is a ‘Native’ Anthropologist?”
experiences and lives to general rules, concepts and knowledge. My everyday life and field sites overlapped for this study, making it difficult, if not impossible, to define the boundary for the field. In addition, our historically constituted transnational journeys dispersed and complicated the fields of the study not only in a geographical sense but also in a temporal and cultural sense. I took information in from everywhere, at all times "to make words" (Reinharz, 1992, p. 55).

In the familiar portrait, field work involves travel away, preferably to a distant (foreign) locale where the ethnographer will immerse him/herself in personal face-to-face relationships with a variety of natives over an extended period of time (Amit, 2000, p. 2). In this frame, if an anthropologist had the legitimacy to represent a foreign culture by living full-time in the village, learning the language, and being a seriously involved participant-observer (Cliff's, 1997, p. 20), my traveling tale of the U.S. academic village should also establish ethnographic authority. However, I have never entered into nor exited the physical and geographical field in order to conduct this ethnographical project. No departing point, no arriving point and thus many times feeling lost within the traditional ethnographic paradigm. However, when I did not have the final destination and a place to return, how could I be lost? It was a new mode of being a researcher/researched who constantly drifts in and out until the borders are worn out. Sarah Pink (2000) points out that "If the field is simultaneously 'everywhere and nowhere', 'the research' may be defined in terms of the researcher's decision to engage in the act of producing anthropological knowledge; that is (re)classifying
interaction as research” even through the notion of ‘retrospective fieldwork’” (p. 99). In this way, the study necessarily disrupted the paradigm of scientific research which differentiates the researcher and the researched as well as the personal/everyday and the professional/scientific (Amit, 2000; K. Narayan, 1997; Okely, 1992; Pink, 2000; Reed-Danahay, 1997).

At this point, I need to emphasize different disruption this auto/ethnographical study creates. While I situated myself as a researcher and researched in this project, I minimized my personal narratives primarily since I read my stories in other women’s traveling tales. Consequently, the blurring between the researcher and the researched occurred not through the activities of writing about myself in the project but through identifying and finding myself in the narratives of the researched. Without inserting my particular and singular voice, I was able to incorporate my experiences as a traveling korean women through the stories other traveling korean women narrated. This is a study that makes up our singular and/or plural collective voice/s. In this way, this auto/ethnography does not follow the dominant model of auto/ethnography in U.S. research institutions, in which the researcher’s autobiographical writing is present with ethnographic writing on others.

The rhizomatic metaphor seems helpful to describe how I processed the research. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) explain, “A rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo. The tree is filiation, but the rhizome is alliance, uniquely alliance. The tree imposes the verb ‘to be’, but the

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3 According to Pink (2000), Okely (1996) uses the term “retrospective fieldwork” to refer to her anthropological writing about her autobiographical experiences about attending boarding-school as a teenager in “Own and Other Culture.”
fabric of the rhizome is the conjunction, ‘and..and.. and..’” (cited in Akindes, 1999, p. 122). In other words, at each meeting with a participant who brought various situated points of view and interests, I experienced change, shift, and transformation of the study which required different ways of collecting, analyzing and writing data stories in continuously changing fields. Conventional advice for writing a method section in one’s dissertation is to construct a thick description to the degree that other people can repeat the study by following the described procedures. I wonder if it is possible or even sensible for a study like this. In fact, I claim that this is an experimental ethnography that does not find any exact precedent in other work (e.g. Denzin, 1997).

Smith (2000, personal communication) explicates why we as Third/Fourth World researchers should transgress the established way of conducting research: “Because I see on-going disaster of most research under the ‘business as usual’ -‘through imperial eyes’ - I can not just follow the recipe (rules, ethics, and social practices) of (scientific) research tinkering a bit here or there.” She encourages me, “Don’t be afraid that there are no rules, (yet) there are principles, road signs along the way, use them.”

My intention was to work with rather than on traveling korean women and construct our discussions as the sites of the production of knowledge (i.e. Pink, 2000). This was never a researching down; representing or giving a voice to others. Minh-ha (1993, pp. 67-68) defines “imperial anthropology” as “gossip” - a conversation of them with them about us in which us is silenced. She (1989) warns us: “You try and keep on trying to unsay it, for if you don’t, they will not fail to fill in the blanks on your behalf, and you will be said” (p. 80). For us, research served as an opportunity to converse
about us among us and to learn from each other. This was not an act of comprehending otherness but of recognizing agency in others/us (Spivak, 1997).

However, this does not mean that I am blind to my authorial power as a researcher/writer. I am acutely aware that, though we speak, so to say “in our own name,” of ourselves and from our experiences, nevertheless who speaks, and the subject who is spoken of, are never identical, never exactly in the same place (Hall, 1990). Under our own name, what I learned is that the dialogue even among “us” became possible only when I as a researcher accepted that people often choose to conduct their lives separately from my particular vision of the future. In this sense, even if it sounds conflicting with my desire to write our own identities and communities of traveling korean women in this auto/ethnographical space, I also tried to unlearn the submission of these women and myself to this named category of “traveling women of Korean descent” as the ultimate signified in this study.

**Participants**

Described at various parts of writing, the name “traveling women of Korean descent” reflects both imagination and reality. It is a name that I created to make sense of my traveling journey and to write a story of those who share this possibility and predicament of transnational migration between Korea and the U.S. In fact, the name has changed from Korean traveling women to traveling women of Korean descent as the result of my interactions with the participants. And now I refer us as traveling korean women. It is not surprising then that sampling for the study was both purposeful and accidental.
At the initial stage of soliciting participation for the study, I utilized snow ball sampling combined with maximum variation and criterion sampling to select participants who would bring different perspectives of our permanent/temporary migration experiences at the location of U.S. higher education (Patton, 1990). I set three criteria to select participants: first, they had to have various links to U.S. higher education either a student, a faculty or a spouse/partner of same; secondly, they have lived in the U.S. for more than two years. My rationale for requiring a minimum 2 year living experience in the U.S. was that people usually need that much time to make sense of and reflect on their new geographical, cultural, social and linguistic environment. I wanted to have participants who had enough interactions with various discourses in the U.S. context. I anticipated that a minimum of two years of living in the U.S. would allow for that; thirdly, they identify themselves with the name of korean - traveling - women regardless of their legal status. I used personal and professional networks to have access to various possible participants in the U.S. Due to the limits of resources, I attempted to select participants who could be contacted within reasonable driving distance.

I eventually recruited 7 participants; Anna, April, Dr. Han, Kyung-mi, Dr. Kim, Mira, and Sarah. All of their names except one are pseudonyms. Mira asked me not to change her name because it is her story told with integrity under her name. Except for Mira, I also changed some of the demographic information of the participants to protect their privacy. While some of my participants were not locally situated, I selected them because of their particular experiences. I expected them to bring more complexities and tensions into our collective stories. All of these participants except for one were
more than willing to agree on their participation when I first contacted them. One person who initially refused to participate changed her decision on my second contact with her when I provided more detail about the purposes and nature of the study.

Dr. Han and Dr. Kim are working as faculty and researcher, respectively. April, Kyung-mi, Mira and Sarah are graduate students at various stages. Anna is a full-time housewife of a Korean male student. Anna, April, Dr. Han and Sarah are U.S. citizens, Kyung-mi is a permanent resident, Dr. Kim has applied for permanent residency status, and Mira has an international student visa. Anna, Kyung-mi and Dr. Kim are married and Kyung-mi is in an interracial marriage while April, Dr. Han and Sarah are in interracial relationships. April is a lesbian. April and Sarah were adopted to white families when they were very young. Anna and Dr. Han were born in the U.S., raised in Korea and came back to the U.S. - Dr. Han for her education, Anna for her husband’s graduate schooling. Kyung-mi, Mira and Dr. Kim came to the U.S. for their graduate schooling. These women’s living experiences in the U.S. range from 2 years to almost an entire lifetime while lived years in Korea range from 7 months to almost a lifetime. More detailed descriptions of each participant are included in Chapter 4, Narrating “Here” and “There”: Traveling Korean (Descendent) Women in U.S. Higher Education.

At this point, I want to include their responses to my question of “Why did you decide to participate in the study?” While some of their responses indicated their personal and political interests in this activity, others also told me that they just wanted to “help” me as a friend. These varieties of the responses instruct arbitrary boundaries
of personal and professional in the terrain of research as well as more complex dyadic
dynamics of a researcher and a researched in this auto/ethnography.⁴

Anna: 너 도와줄려구. 내가 생각해서 내 삶이 평범하다고 생각지 않아서 너의
case 에 들어가면 나쁠게 같지는 않았어

To help you. It wouldn't be bad to be included for your case (study) since I
thought my life isn't ordinary.

April: Uh - well it happens to go hand-in-hand with me being very interested in
learning about Korea and also it's a box unopened in my life. But something
more specific that I think might say something is there's this women of color
retreat. I don't know if you've heard of it. It's being headed by the women
studies department and it's a bunch of women - 15-20 women who are all of
color. Defined of as color, meaning African-American, Latino, Asian. They
asked me would you like to come to this retreat. That seemed a little more not
feeling good - why me Whereas with you it didn't feel why me. Like why -
because I'm just Korean whereas with them it's why, just because I'm Asian.
Like I suddenly have this voice in your group. Just because I'm an Asian
person doesn't mean I have anything to relate to you and it doesn't mean that
you have anything of interest for me. Whereas with you I think it's one thing
I'm personally interested - also I really like you. Okay. Like there's this time
when you can talk to somebody and you feel that you might learn something
about them or their experience or about yourself through them and I see that as
an opportunity. I see that as you. I know this sounds dumb also (weep) What I
was going to say -it's hard to say. It's actually a very stupid thing but (weep).
I'm just going to say it. There's this fact that you're a mom. That seems to be
very - (weep). That seems very important. The statement that was hard to say
the fact that you're a Korean mom and that you have a little girl made me more
interested versus like Mary (our mutual Asian/American friend) who doesn't
have a little girl or - it seems - I don't know why but there's something there.

⁴ After I compiled their responses, I wrote the following research journal entry about the disparity
between what is commonly taught in western researcher training and my field experience: “Some of
them didn't care about their representation. They knew too well this is my work even though I tried and
tried to convince them that this may bring up our stories in circulation of knowledge production which
may influence the way people think about us, themselves, and social construction. ‘Who says that we
have to protect every participant's privacy?’ Mira clearly says, ‘It is my story. What do you mean by
changing my identification?’ Authority of her story apparently belongs to her as a storyteller, not to me
as a researcher or writer. They told stories because they wanted to help me, not more, not less, helping
me to finish my dissertation as a friend, as a fellow, as a korean woman, and as a loving being. Who
benefits most by this work? Of course, a researcher. I am getting my degree out of the work which I
began in order to get my degree.”
Dr. Han: 일단은 정은씨가 공부하는 게 나의 interest랑 parallel 하는데 많았다고 봐요. 어쨌든 Korean/American women 들이고, 또 이런 literature 가 많이 있어야 됩니다 생각해요. 하는데 많이 없으니까. 근데 한다고 그랬으니까 나도 내 생각을 얘기 해서 이제 publish가 되가지고 사람들이 많이 우리 삶을 이해를 했으면 좋겠다는 생각에서 또 그런 얘기들을 했고 그래서 한다고 해요. 그리고 또 사실 그런 거 있잖아요. 나도 dissertation 쓰는 사람 입장에서 동료 의식도 있었어요. 그리고 또 그런 거 있어요. 분명히 한국여성에 관한 troubling 얘기가 하나가 분명히 나는 한국남자들에 대해 얘기할 기회가 있을거라고 알게 있었어요. 알고 있었는데 그냥 뒤에서 것치고 친구들이랑 한국남자들은 뒷keydown이 못했다. 이런 얘기하려면 아니라 내가 실제로 그냥 interviewee 입장에서 그 interviewer 한테 내 생각을 얘기하고 이 생각이 좀 더 이렇게 legitimate 되었어요. 이 생각이 좀 더 이렇게 해으로든 뭐로든 나와서 한국여성들이 갖고 있는 고충이나 분노를 some extent 이런것들을 다 이렇게 더 학자가 뭐서 나가서 사람들한테 나누어져야 된다고 생각을 해요. 그냥 수다.bold고 그냥 뒤에서 남자들에 대해서 품을 하는데 아니라 그런 욕하고 수다하느니가 끝나는거잖아요. 근데 이거는 내가 얘기할 해서 어쨌든 하나의 형태로 literature로 나올거 아니어서. 나올꺼니까 사람들이 그렇게 많이 읽게 되고 자각하게 되서 좀 bring about change 했으면 좋겠다는 생각도 해요. 사실은. 그래서 그런것도 있었어요.

First, what Jeong-eun studies parallels with my own interests in many regards. Anyway, we’re Korean/American women and I thought there must be more literature. Now since you’re trying to contribute to this scarce field, I wanted to put my thoughts through your study, that will come out as a form of publication, in order for people to understand our life. That’s why I said yes. I also feel this colleagueship as a person who went through the stages of writing a dissertation. And there’s one more. Since we were going to discuss Korean women’s troubling aspects, I knew that there would be a chance to talk about Korean men. I wanted to take an interviewee’s position to talk to an interviewer to make a legitimate point of my perspective about Korean men, not just gossiping or backbiting about Korean men among female friends. I wanted a scholar to make known our sufferings and anger of Korean women as the literature or whatever. Backbiting and gossiping about the men end as backbiting and gossiping. Yet, by participating in your study, my stories become a literature. Then more people will read it and raise more consciousness to bring about changes. That is another reason.

Dr. Kim: 인간성이 좋아서 (웃음). 어. 그냥 나는 논문 쓰는게 힘든 일인걸 아니까,그래가 바로 이렇게 끝나지 않아 안 됐을래니까. 논문 쓰는데 힘든데 도와줘야겠다는 생각이 제일 컸어요.

Because I’m a good person (laugh). Well, just because I knew how hard it is to write a dissertation. You asked me to participate not long after I finished my degree. So I mainly thought let me help her hard job of writing a dissertation.
**Kvang-mi:** 아 그냥 뭐야 그 이유. 첫 번째 이유는 요. 또 그 한 여자 그 한국여학생이 박사 반기 위해서 고생하는 거 생각하니까 도와주는 것도 나쁘지 않겠다고 생각했어요. 왜냐하면 나도 박사과정에 있는 학생이고, 이제 그게 얼마나 협동지 아니거래. 그래서 그게 첫 번째 이유였어요. 그걸 보고 동요동락, 그렇게 아는거죠. 자기가 그만큼 고생을 했으니까, 그래서 뭐 크게 시간을 빼기지 않는다면 하자. 그러랬죠. 그렇게 뭐 그렇다고 그래서 크게 나한테 뭐 내 인생에 크게 뭐 저기되는 것도 아니고, 그렇게 이유였어요.

Well, the first reason is that, it shouldn’t be bad to help another woman, another Korean woman student working hard for her Ph.D. degree. Because I am a doctoral student too and so I know how hard it is. I call this “sharing the pleasures and pains of life.” I know because I have undergone such hardships. So, if it doesn’t take up too much time, let me do it. Beside, I thought helping you wouldn’t affect my life much. That was the reason.

**Mira:** 도와주고 싶어서. 근데 사실 저 인터뷰라는 이런 형식을 가지고 하는거 되게 안 좋아해요. 그러니까 어떻게 보면 저 개인적으로는 그거는 뭐 제 삶이고 근데 뭐 그런거들... 남한에 이렇게 알린다는 그 자체에 대해서 별로 홍미가 없다고 그래야 되네. 그래야 되나 하는데 외국이고 여기 미국이고 그런건 잊지아요. 한국사람들은 서로 특별하고 저 사람이 나의 도움을 필요로 하는데 그렇게 뭐 그렇게 힘들지 않은 일이면 굽이 뭐 거절할 이유가 없다고...

Wanted to help you although I don’t like the format of interview. You know, this is my life. So, would I say I’m not interested in or would I say I’m reluctant to share my stories with others? But I felt in this foreign land, in the U.S., Koreans are special to each other and if any one needs my help, which doesn’t require a lot of work, I didn’t want to reject the request.

**Sarah:** I think - I thought it would be kind of cool to do something based on Korean identity because I had never done that before. To say that I’m participating in this because you’re studying Korean women kind of gave me the feeling like so maybe I am Korean. Or expanding the notion of Korean. I thought that was interesting. I thought if you're studying Korean women and you're including an adoptive perspective and that was kind of like broadening the scope of what Korean is. So I thought that was interesting.

**Data Collection**

“Creative interviewing” (Fontana & Frey, 1994) was used to collect - more precisely coauthor (Kvale, 1996) – traveling korean women’s narratives. The in-depth
interview was both semi-structured and informal to respond to my tentative conceptual research questions. My guiding questions included

1. How do you identify yourself? In relation to gender, class, race, ethnicity, nationality, culture, education etc.?

2. Has your identity been changed as you came to the U.S.? If so, how?

3. How and why did you/or your family member decide to pursue a graduate education in the U.S.?

4. Now, how do you feel about getting an education/being educated or living in the U.S. as a Korean woman?

5. How would you describe your typical day?

6. To what extent has your life been changed as you cross national borders?

7. Would you describe any special concerns, issues, dilemmas, and opportunities that you have experienced as you become a transnational?

8. Would you identify various communities that you feel a sense of belonging?

   How would you describe your relationships to those communities?

9. What does being a traveling korean woman mean to you?

10. What are you looking for in your future life?

Kvale (1996, p. 2) defines an interview as an inter view, an interchange between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest. Accordingly, these guiding questions were not asked in an identical way to every participant in one language. Both Korean and English were used to converse with participants depending on their preference. Our in depth talks always engendered a lot of impromptu questions from each other and we freely talked about issues at hand. While I did not intentionally go
to different settings to be a participant-observer of their everyday lives, I interacted with most of my participants in other settings beyond our interviews; for instance, except for one person, I had known the participants in various contexts before I initiated the formal interview. During the interview period, some of us had various occasions to meet, socialize, and talk about different issues with our mutual friends. After the completion of the interviews, I have been still in one way or the other in contact with everyone and I believe we will continue to keep our political/personal connections. I argue a different sense of prolonged engagement for the study.

For interviews, I met 2 - 4 times from 90 minutes to 4 hours with each participant from Jan 26, 2001 to June 4, 2001. An average total interview hours for each person was about 6 hours. Every interview was taped and transcribed. I also always listened to a previous interview tape to generate follow up questions before I met each participant. Each interview occurred in various places; at a participant’s house, my house, classroom, café or outdoors. Until the interviewee and I felt the saturation of our stories for this particular study, I continued data collection.

While an in-depth interview was the main method to gather narratives of these traveling women, I also took various forms of information though the strategies of bricolage to explore, examine and understand the forms, emotions, relations, gaps, silences and many other unspoken/unspeakable messages circulating around, between, and in our stories. For instance, since the inception of the study, I paid attention and, if possible, collected various genres of representation such as my participants’ dance performance, newspaper articles, movies and literature both in Korean and English whenever I saw a connection to my research interest. In addition, I as a traveling
korean woman wrote research notes, memos, and journals to record my experiences, reflections and critiques on various events. There have been numerous dialogues and conversations with other korean traveling women about different events and experiences in our lives. All of those helped me to grapple with this auto/ethnographic project of re/searching and writing traveling women of Korean descent.

**Data Analysis**

“Suppose you and I are walking on the road,” said Swamiji, the holyman whose storytelling I was researching in 1985. “You’ve gone to University. I haven’t studied anything. We’re walking. Some child has shit on the road. We both step in it. ‘That’s shit!’ I say. I scrap my foot; it’s gone. But educated people have doubts about everything. You say, ‘What’s this!’ and you rub your foot against the other.”..... “Then you reach down to feel what it could be.” A grin was breaking over his face. “Something sticky! You lift some up and sniff it. Then you say, “Oh, This is shit.”” The hand that had vigorously rubbed his nose was flung out in a gesture of disgust..... “See how many places it touched in the meantime,” Swamiji continued. “Educated people always doubt everything. They lie awake at night thinking, “What was that? Why did it happen?” What is the meaning and the cause of it?” Uneducated people pass judgment and walk on. They get a good night’s sleep.” (K. Narayan, 1997, p33)

I chose narrative as a major element of this auto/ethnography because narrative provides a form of social action that embodies the relation between narrator and culture (Burdell & Swadener, 1999; Chase, 1995). By focusing on each storyteller’s narrative, as Kirin.Narayan (1997, p. 36) argues, I tried to emphasize that it is people and not theoretical puppets who populate my text and that I let these people speak out from my writing. Susan E. Chase (1995) states, “Understanding general social process requires a focus on their embodiment in actual practices, that is, in actual narratives.” She continues
Life stories themselves embody what we need to study: the relation between this instance of social action (this particular life story) and the social world that the narrator shares with others; the way in which culture marks, shapes, and/or constrains this narrative; and the ways in which this narrator makes use of cultural resources and struggles with cultural constraints. By analyzing the complex process of narration in specific instances, we learn about the kinds of narratives that are possible for a certain group of people, and we learn about the cultural world that makes their particular narratives possible - and problematic - in certain ways. (p. 20)

Here narrative is understood not just as an individual exercise but as a process that always takes place within a social context (Casey, 1995-96). In other words, it becomes a constitutive and constituted discourse (Fairclough, 1995; Mills, 1997). By situating these women’s narratives in multiple webs of historical and cultural discourse, this approach allowed me to explore discourses that narrators re/produce, constraints that narrators struggle with at their particular locations, and the range of ways in which narrators relate to various discourses (Chase, 1995). In addition, since narratives are told for particular purposes, from particular points of view, they are incipiently analytical, and enacting theory (K. Narayan, 1997). By including the perspective of the social analyst along with narratives from or about people studied, I thus performed a hybrid theorizing at a contagious space of narratives and analysis.

For data analysis, I used an inductive procedure to examine data although I believe every inductive approach is enmeshed with the deductive bias of a researcher’s theoretical orientation. In one regard, I can argue that data analysis started when I constructed my guiding interview questions or even when I began to plan the research. Smith (1999) insists on a principle of reciprocity and feedback for decolonizing research. As researchers, she insists that we have a responsibility to share the theories and analyses which inform the ways knowledge and information are constructed and
represented in academia. Partly because of my participants’ familiarity with research practice and theoretical processes, throughout the interviews, it was easier to communicate with the participants to revisit and reframe our experiences through my theoretical lens. There were agreements, disputes, curiosity, rejection, enthusiasm, and doubts. They helped me not only in sharing their stories but also in analyzing and interpreting each other’s narratives. I frankly asked about each one’s perspective in order to clarify and make connections among our stories. Everyone heard parts of each others’ stories (with pseudonyms) through me and compared, contrasted and juxtaposed those with their own experiences during the interview. This process aided tremendously to identify salient themes, tensions and our concerns; What is being illuminated? How do the stories connect? What themes and patterns give shape to your data (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 132)?

I point out that the sharing of some of the perspectives and stories with each other at interview settings began by the participants’ requests; they wanted to know other women’s stories. These women asked numerous questions such as who participated in the study, what kinds of perspectives others were bringing into the study and how their experiences related to one another. Sometimes they asked specifically if anyone went through the similar situation they had experienced. Some of them expressed their interests to meet other participants while others were a little more reluctant to reveal their identity. However, for those who wanted to have a social gathering or group interview with other participants, geographical distance made this meeting implausible. As a way to respond to their interests, after a few interviews with some of these women, I asked each participant individually if I could share their stories
with other participants. Nobody was opposed to the idea. Therefore, I began to answer the questions each participant had about other participants’ experiences, and as indicated above these discussions provided me opportunities to engage with different analytical perspectives.

Once the interview was terminated, I structured the data via QSR NUD*IST 4.0, a software program designed to work with unstructured data. The program facilitates indexing components of data, searching texts and categories and theorizing through enabling the retrieval of indexed text segments, related memos, and test and index searches (Buston, 1997). At this stage, I followed Kvale's (1996) guide of “clarification of the material” (p. 190), making it amenable to analysis; for example, by eliminating superfluous material such as digression and repetition, distinguishing between the essential and non essential. This was processed through descriptive coding. Then, based on our analytic discussions that occurred during the interview, I sorted and thematized data. Throughout the process, numerous analytical notes were recorded in the memo section attached to each categorization. As I coded all my data into multiple layers, I reread all the coded texts to refine the coding system. Some of the texts were moved around, eliminated and clumped together. Then I went back to reread my original transcripts to check if my coding/analysis made sense of each individual’s specificities and connectedness with one other. For some of the interview sessions, I relistened to the tapes to include emotions, intensities and clarifications into the transcripts. Then I went back to form different narratives through overall themes structured in my coding systems as well as each individual’s uninterrupted interview transcripts. This going back and forth between themes across each individual and each
story of individuals was very helpful not to obliterate my participants’ idiosyncrasy in this process of forging our collective voice.

The Politics of Languages

As indicated before, since we utilized two different languages in our conversations, I want to comment on the practice and politics of translation in this project. Major parts of our interactions and some of the literature were in Korean. As an illegitimate language of U.S. academic institutions, Korean had to be translated into English in this space. Utilizing a post-structural three-tiered notion of language as rhetoric, logic and silence, Spivak (1992) instructs that translators must attempt to enter or direct the staging of the agent within language, as one directs a play and as an actor interprets a script. Her argument is that taking translation to be a matter of synonym, syntax and local color is only a quick, easy and slepash way, especially when it is translating a Third World language into imperial language in which neo/colonial construction of a non-western scene is afoot. Hence, she asserts:

The jagged relationship between rhetoric and logic, condition and effect of knowing, is a relationship by which a world is made for the agent, so that the agent can act in an ethical way, a political way, a day-to-day way; so that the agent can be alive, in a human way, in the world. Unless, one can at least construct a model of this for the other language, there is no real translation. (p. 179)

Here, I emphasize that I was not capable of translating these women’s play, solemnity, (ab)normality, strategies and silence in Korean into those in English. Playful and strategic switching and mixing between honorific expression and crude language, inserting ambiguous verbs and names that do not specifically refer to anything, and
constant and inconsistent designating of “I,” “we,” and an absent subject that comes to
a linguistic self are among many that troubled my attempt to translate these women’s
words. Furthermore, my limited command of English, which I acquired almost
exclusively in formal graduate school settings prohibited me to reproduce these
women’s flexible and stylish words in this “erotic/ethical job of translation” (Spivak,
1992, p. 181). It is partly why I decided to juxtapose my translation of their words with
the transcription of their original speaking. By displaying these two languages along
side each other, I believe some of our hybrid lingual subjectivites were put on the stage,
which, in turn, disrupted the assumptions of homology among the place, culture,
language and ethnicity.

Reflective Notes

I started this discussion of how I analyzed my data with a rather long quote
from Kirin Narayan’s “How Native is a “Native Anthropologist?” It became more
beneficial as I thought through Narayan’s epigraph with what Minh-Ha (1989) states:
“What they (researchers) value and look for - “discourse,” “law,” “order,”
“generalization,” or “consistency,” - is fortunately what they always only find” (p. 56).
As I wove my theoretical readings with participants’ narratives, I tried hard not to make
my theorizing as a researcher to be prescriptive for these women in terms of how they
interpreted their life: I resisted my academic authority that allowed me, as long as I
write and speak the right language, to have “God’s grasp of the totality” (Minh-ha,
1993). I worked to introduce their personal/analytic perspectives into rarefied realms
of theory-making partly since I strongly believed that “people of color have always

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theorized - but in forms quite different from the Western form of abstract logic” (Christian, 1987, p. 336). As an “educated” researcher, however, I often found myself jumping into the other women’s experiences to analyze “better” even when they/the researched were more and better educated than I. The process of conversing, reading and rewriting these women’s narratives, whose theorizing may make a difference in the way that researchers think about our lives in this academia, consequently involved the process of unlearning my civilized and legitimated ways of studying, knowing and owning the world. In short, writing korean traveling women as a practice of research was not an unconscious emission of each individuals’ truths including mine but a calculated resolve “to make up words” not under one linguistic system but in pluralized “tongues” (Kang, 1995). As Ong (1995) warns, my hope is that their own political interests as narrators of who they are were not betrayed in my writing, especially by my own as a researcher.

**Validity Concerns**

When research itself is theorized as a politics of knowing and being known where power is never absent, the issues of validity become more than epistemic criterion. For the present study, as the epigraph of this chapter suggests, validity needs to be addressed through a serious engagement with the imperial history and practice of scientific research that (still) privilege certain sets of texts, ways of acquiring knowledge and forms of selecting, arranging and presenting knowledge (Smith, 1999). Particularly as “academic Self-women of color Other” (Asher, 2001) or “colonizer/colonized ethnographer” (Villenas, 1996), my (dis)articulation of validating
this study never escapes the predicaments of working at the institutionalized research discipline: “Knowledge belongs to the one who succeeds in mastering a language, and standing closer to the civilized language is, as a matter of fact, coming nearer to equality” (Minh-Ha, 1989, p. 56). Should I mimic the rhetoric and mechanical coding of validity for the (imperial) science of research to establish the legitimacy, authority, credibility and trustworthiness of my study?

Aided by alternative approaches to validity within the contemporary field of qualitative research (Denzin, 1994; Lather, 1997; Richardson, 1993), I carefully listen. Particularly for those whose existences, experiences, knowledge and ways of knowing have been subjugated through the traditional science of research, to validate is to investigate, with risk and courage, through our commitment, responsibility and love (Sandoval, 2000; Smith, 1999). Lather (2001c) writes, “Validity is about much more than the limits of objectivity: it is the claims of scientificity itself that are put under theoretical pressure” (p. 243). For this study where the researcher, researched, product, process and procedure are blurred in the continuing history of “anonymous imperial violence” (Seheurich, 1996, p. 10), “theoretical pressure” is read also as ethical pressure, “to think morally in the way in which native indigenous peoples have been arguing for since the beginning of conquest and colonization” (Sandoval, 2000, p. 155).

In order to enact changes on the research domains dominated by unequal history, institutional practices, and particular paradigms and approaches to research held by communities of like-minded scholars, Smith (1999, p. 140) emphasizes the significance of engagements in all the activities of negotiating and transforming institutional practices, research frameworks and the carrying out of actual research programmes.
Utilizing her framework, I apply engagements as validity to check the validity of this study. First, this is a research/science that I have to live with the consequences of its processes. As the research field, distance between a researcher and a researched, and disciplinary boundary have been never clear, I do not intend to demarcate the beginning and the ending of the re/searching project. Relationships with the participants have continued. Some women are interested in reading my writing while others are not. This dissertation will not include a conventional member check process in this volume.

I argue the member check process for this dissertation was completed by our interviewing interactions in which we also dialogued our interpretations, analysis, questions and disagreements on each other’s stories. Although we worked though our interpretations together before the writing process, I will still provide the final writing to those participants who want to read and/or continue to work with me in the site of representation. Working with these women’s responses and feedback to “my writing” will be the next phase of this project of re/searching us. This promise of continuing the project (perhaps selfishly) serves my political and personal need to be connected with these traveling korean women. Since this is an auto/ethnography, to imagine, write and “build” our own identities and communities at a discursive site, this promise of continuing the project is in fact necessary. In its promised continuation of engagement, this study claims its validity.

Second, this is a research/science that partially responds to the participants’ need to know (including mine). We shared our uncertainties, contradictions and assurances to validate each other’s overlapped, slippery and shifting relationships with different institutions. In every interviewing session, I was asked to respond to as many
questions thrown by each participant as I had for them. All of us wanted to hear from
and about each other and the fact that the study provided an outlet, however limited, for
us to interact with and reflect on each other’s stories claims the validity for the study.
Our stories become the source of knowledge that quenches our thirst to know and
critically engage with the process of constructing knowledge by and about us.

If validity depends on the audience (Altheide & Johnson, 1994, p. 488), I hope
for my audience to read the validity of the study in my carrying out an actual political,
personal, and academic inquiry project to “find things out for ourselves and carry this
news from our worlds to this world” (Denzin, 1994, p. 515); in the process of
re:searching which finds “understanding and community” (Sandoval, 2000, p. 140) and
enables our survival and self-determination (Smith, 1999); and in the effect of the study
that is etching our existence upon the dominant discourse - through the unremarked
name of korean traveling women in U.S. higher education. If the audience can finally
agree with my claim that this research/science registers possible pathways toward
embodied-discursive solidarity among seemingly dis/connected women as a practice of
knowledge construction, the study is validated.
CHAPTER 4

NARRATING “HERE” AND “THERE”:

TRAVELING KOREAN (DESCENDENT) WOMEN
IN U.S. HIGHER EDUCATION

In other words, the black man should no longer be confronted by the dilemma, turn white or disappear; but he should be able to take cognizance of a possibility of existence. (Fanon, 1967, P. 100)

In this chapter, I retell the stories that seven traveling korean women shared with me. These stories are re/presented and fractured through my translation, my ways of telling a story, and/or gaps that cannot be filled due to different subject positions each woman and I occupy. Three different modes of story telling are utilized.

First, I let each participant introduce herself in her own words. In section two, I construct a collective narrative of our departures to un/ravel how we became traveling korean women in U.S. higher education. This section will trace our shared traveling trajectories between Korea and the U.S. implicated in the history of multiple encounters and mixing of these two signs. In the third section, I will attend to the particularities of each woman’s narratives in order to illuminate how different discourses shape, and are reconstituted by, each woman’s narratives in her current locations. I represent seven women’s stories independently with chains that bind them together.
Introduction of the Story Tellers.

This section includes the first statements of each woman’s response to my first question of “Would you introduce yourself?” Rather than profiling and summarizing these women’s demographical information through the usual categorization utilized in dominant research discourse, I let them introduce themselves here.

**Anna**: 나? 지금 당장의 나는 결혼해서 주부고, 유학생 부인이고, 한 아의 엄마고, 그 다음에 항상 생활에 백포로 만족하지 못하고, 항상 원가가 모자른거 같은.

Me? Currently I’m a full time housewife, a wife to a Korean international student, the mom of one child. And, always not 100 percent content with my life and always feel that there’s something lacking.

**Dr. Han**: 저는 여기서 태어났어요. 5살부터 대학교 졸업할 때까지 한국에서 formal education 받았고. 조금씩 조금씩 미국에 왔다갔다한 거는 5학년때 석달동안 미국에서, 겨울방학이 기니까 한국이, 엄마 아빠가 영어 있어버리지 말라고 온거 한 번이랑. 엄마가 학교에 계시니까 교환교수로 미국에 잠시 계실 때, 내가 고2였어요, 그때 일년 학교다니고, 그것 빼놓고는 한국에서 내내 자랐고. 그 다음에 대학을 졸업하고 Midwestern University 에 92년도 9월부터 학교를 다니기 시작해서 Master’s degree 했고. 그 당시에는 Health Physical Education & Recreation 에서 받았고, area 는 sports somatics studies. 받고 난 다음에는 곤장 Ph.D. 를 들여가서 sociology of sports, Ph.D.를 2000년도에 받고 나서, Eastern University 거기서 Dept. of Exercise Science & Sports Studies 에서 Sports Sociology Assistant Professor 하고 있어요 지금.

I was born here (in the U.S.). Between the time of age 5 and a half to my college years, I’d received my formal education in Korea. In between, my mom and dad sent me one time to the U.S. for three months during my 5th grade’s winter break, you know the winter break is quite long in Korea, not to lose my English proficiency. And since my mom worked in a university, she came to the U.S. as a visiting scholar when I was in 11th grade. And I accompanied her for that year and attended a high school in the U.S. Except these two occasions, I stayed in Korea for my entire life and graduated from the university there. On September 1992, I came to Midwestern University and did my master’s degree in Health Physical Education and Recreation, majoring in Sports Somatic Studies. Then I started my Ph.D program and received a Ph.D in 2000 from the.
sociology of sports. Now, I am an assistant professor in exercise and sport studies in Eastern University.

Sara: I was born in South Korea, and was adopted in 7 months and I grew up in suburbs in Massachusetts with my family and right now, I'm a graduate student. I identify myself as, well, when I teach students in my class I'm an Asian American heterosexual female. So I guess it would be how I describe myself.

April: I'll just start like a bio. I'm 24 years old. I was born in Korea. I lived with my biological mom and then I was put in an orphanage. At the age of 3, I was adopted by my current parents. I haven't fluctuated from family to family. Just one family. I was their first child. Since then they adopted 7 other - four other Koreans. Three others from other countries. I lived in California, which is a multicultural community so the idea of being a minority was not really an issue because everybody was a minority pretty much. My education was pretty much public school. At the age of 4, I started dancing and continued until now. I have never stopped that education.

Dr. Kim: 32 살이구요. 한국 대전에서 태어났구. 지금은 심리학박사였구. 심리학과에서 research 하고있고. 결혼해서 남편이 하나이고 (웃음).

32 years old, born in Daegu, Korea. Currently, a Ph.D in Psychology, and working as a researcher in Psychology Department and married so I have one husband (laugh)


My husband is an American. I am in a Ph.D program at Northern University. I came from Korea 9 years ago, and it’s been 3 years since I first met my husband. I originally came from Chonan city, and I was born in 1967.

Mira: 여기 나이로는 스포츠 여섯살이에요. 한국말로 하는 거 맞죠?

I: 무용전공하고구요?

Mira: 예, 어 학부는 장미여대 무용과 졸업했구요. 그 다음에, 여기 South University 에 대학원으로 오기전에 Canada Vancouver 입년 있었구요. 여기서는, 그니가, 라바 notation 전공하러 왔어요….. Korean 이고.

Mira: I'm 26 years old in American age. We'll speak in Korean, won't we?

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I: Majoring in Dance?

Mira: Yes, umm, I graduated from Jang-Mi Women's University (in Korea) and then I came to this South University for my graduate education. I stayed in Vancouver, Canada for one year just before coming to this school. I am here to study Lava Rotation... I am Korean.

Collective Narratives of Departures: We Came Because...........

This section includes the seven women's narratives of how and why they came to the U.S. Individually, each woman creates a distinct traveling tale that narrates private reasons and modes of traveling. However, their collective narratives of departures and arrivals between Korea and the U.S. reveal different points of convergence of Korea and the U.S., ruptures of voluntary and involuntary migration, and ambiguities of desire and discipline. Because of their different backgrounds especially in terms of their voluntary and involuntary migration, - although at some points the distinction becomes blurred in these women's experiences - I first situate the five women whose narratives constructed their departure and arrival stories through their conscious decision making process within the social and cultural contexts. Then, I provide the connections between these women's narratives and Sarah and April's adoption narratives.

Some of these women's narratives begin as familiar traveling stories of international students in the U.S. although there soon appear divergence, exceptions and ambiguities. Dr. Han, Dr. Kim, Kyngmee, and Mira came to the U.S. primarily for their graduate education in the 1990s. Three of the four women earned their master's degrees in U.S. graduate schools. All but Mira have continued their studying to obtain Ph.D. degrees. Anna is one of the numerous women accompanying male students as
wives; although the way she describes her coming to America as “coming back” would distance her from many other wives of Korean male students in the U.S. Like Dr. Han, Anna was born in the U.S. to a Korean student couple in the late 1960s and went to Korea at age 5. When she was 18, Anna gave up her Korean nationality for her American citizenship in Korea. Soon after marrying her husband, she accompanied him to the U.S. for his advanced study and planned to permanently stay in the U.S.

For those who came to the U.S. as students, their primary explanation of why they traveled to the U.S. mostly entails “imagined enchantments of U.S. academic life.” Expecting better education in U.S. graduate schools, they wanted to acquire advanced knowledge and skills as well as be competitive in the field they chose. Dr. Kim sums up why it was necessary to go to the U.S. for her advanced degree:

There is tremendous difference in resources. Look at the different numbers of faculty. I majored in industrial psychology. In Korea, I didn’t have a faculty member who majored in this specific discipline. People from social psychology worked in my field. But (in the U.S.) you expect to work with the experts who research only in the field of industrial psychology.

This awe of abundance, excess and expertise of the U.S. is not new. As knowledge pursuers, these women were enticed by the excellence, superiority and professional status of every discipline in U.S. academy. Desires to be educated in the U.S. were augmented as these women entered into the Korean college education, the foundation of which, in fact, was introduced by American missionaries in early 1900s. What have Korean college students encountered in their classrooms? All those translated
textbooks, constant English terminologies, continuously imported new theories with the
seal of ‘made in the U.S.’, (prominent) faculty genealogy around U.S. degrees, and
incessant and increasing flows of Korean elite students to U.S. graduate schools. In
addition, U.S. universities predominate in the ranking reports of the world best
universities in which Korean universities barely make their place. However valid the
ranking system is, in this world where almost everything can be ranked,
acquiring/accessing the best has significant meanings for Koreans whose postcolonial
nation-state needs transnational forms of power as a way to prove its excellence and/or
build self-pride in a world hierarchy. Individually, by getting into U.S. institutions,
these women believed that they would learn more and the better knowledge, and
possibly become “the Master/Expert.” At the level of nation-state discourse, the total
number of Koreans in world knowledge systems presents a sign of intellectual
superiority of Korean people, and so the Korean nation.

Accordingly, U.S. degrees mark distinct privilege in Korean educational
systems. Dr. Han says

그리고 나는 아침만나하게 닭돌웠죠. 뭐. 왜냐면 우려하교 채육과
출신중에서 외국에서 공부하고 박사를 한사람이 없었어요, 여자중에서.
그래서, 우려하교 채육과 출신 여성최초박사가 되고 싶었어요. 미국박사.
한국에선 이미 좀 박사가 있었고. 근데, 그런것도 좀 있었기 때문에
미국에 오고 싶었어요.

I was boldly ambitious. Because in my department, there had been no woman
with a foreign Ph.D. degree. I wanted to be the first women with the U.S.
degree from my sport studies department - an American doctor. There were
some women with Korean doctoral degrees though. Partly for that reason, I
wanted to come to the U.S.

She desired to be the first woman in her department to earn a U.S. degree. She
describes her desire as bold and ambitious suggesting the peculiar privilege and high
status of U.S. degree holders in Korean society as well as a discrepancy of gender in educational attainments. This also reveals how our culturally gendered subjectivity shapes our desire to accrue more power. Her counterparts against whom she evaluated her position were other highly educated Korean women - not men in her department. In this segregated and unequal realm of gender, narrating her desire to come to the U.S. for an advanced degree as the first woman in her program as boldly ambitious, makes sense.

The aspiration and ambition of Dr. Han and other participants in their departure and arrival narratives should be contextualized in relationship to these women's elite status, even among highly educated Korean women in Korean society. While the status of women in Korea has improved over the last several decades, the issues of gender inequality still remain. For instance, Korean women still lag behind men in their participation and completion of higher education, in addition to their inequality in civil, political, legal, and economic fields (Pak, 1999). According to 1999 UN report on “Women in the Republic of Korea,” about 50 percent of all males aged 18-21 years were enrolled in higher education institutions in 1985/1990, the corresponding female group had a low enrollment of 22 to 24 percent. Taking into consideration the ages of the participants of this project, most of them were in fact among those 20 percent of female college students in Korea. In addition, in 1996, the number of master’s degree holders per 10,000 population was 3.83 for women and 9.04 for men while the number of doctor’s degree holders per 10,000 population was 0.33 for women and 1.63 for men. Based on the exceptional education achievements of the seven women in this study, not only as women but also as members of Korean society, these women should have
expected their lives to be at the top notch of Korean society. However, their culturally
gendered position has affected the ways they imagine, expect and experience their
traveling to U.S. academic institutions.

Despite or due to their (possible) elite status and privileged position in Korea,
once they finished the official or educational version of why they came to the U.S.,
their narration became filled with the fantasies, excitements, and adventurous spirits
they nurtured in relation to a new foreign/U.S. culture, which are inflamed through
anger, frustration and resentment to the many injustice they were subjected to in
Korean society.

Kyungmi: 우리나라의 사고방식이 이 세상 다른 세계도 이렇게 생각하고
살지 않는다는 건 알았어. 어떻게 알았나면 그런 영화다든지 이런
간접적인 경험, 책을 본다든지, 이런 경험에 의해서 내가 엇갈에
 얘기했잖아. 그치요? 아 저런 나라에 가서 살고 싶다는 생각.
우리나라에서는 정말로, 아 너무 너무 답답하고. 그래서, 나는 줄어도
나가야겠다라는 생각이 너무 너무 강했어요. 어렸을때부터.
그래 갖고서는 이제, 어 ..., 운이 좋아가지구. 평창히 lucky 했죠.

Through indirect experiences such as movies and books, I knew that there are
people who think and live differently from the ways we live in Korea. I told
you before, right? So, I wished, ahh, I would want to live in such a country. It
was too suffocating to live in Korea. Ever since I was very young, thus I had
this strong desire to get out of this country, no matter what would happen. Then
I got lucky, so lucky (to come here).

She continues

그때 당시에 형부가 여기서 박사과정을 하고 있었는데, 형부때문이
아니더라도 미국 유학생들이 선망의 대상이 됐어요. 생각만해도
홍분되고 색다른 삶과 문화를 만나는게 굉장히 저한테는 attractive 하게
받아들여졌어요. 영화를 보거나 간접적인 경험을 하면서 그 사람들의
사고방식이 마음에 들고 직접가서 보고 싶었어요. 어렸을때부터요.

At that time, my brother-in-law was working on his Ph.D. degree in the U.S.
Not only his personal experience but studying in the U.S. were things I envied.
It was so exciting and attractive just to think about encountering different colors
of lives and cultures. I already liked their ways of thinking that I observed in movies or met through indirect experiences, and so I wanted to see it by myself, ever since I was young.

Kyungmi’s imagination and fantasy of the U.S. are imbued with her memories of unequal treatment she experienced as a daughter in her patriarchal family as well as social disrespect and disinterest she had to deal with as “not the best student” throughout her schooling. She recalls that the disrespect became exacerbated as she went to a second tier university in Korea. It is interesting to note that she survived her difficult times by cultivating the dream of running away from the Korean cultural and social system in which she found injustice, discrimination and limited opportunities, and traveling to a new, better world. This imagination of traveling had taken a great part of her localized lived experiences in Korea. In other words, her imagination of going to the U.S. and identifying herself with its culture, concretized and substantiated by various imaginative representation to which she has access in Korea, deterritorialized her local lived experiences and identity construction even before her actual geographical traveling to the U.S. (Appadurai, 1991).

While these voluntary migrant women had experienced and expressed different degrees of dissatisfaction toward Korean social, educational and cultural systems, they were unified in their expectation of something better in the U.S., regardless of whether it was school systems, learning outcomes, personal relationships or the excitement of everyday life. In this commonality of each one’s imagination, I observed the transnationally constructed boundaries of imagination through the discursive and representational conventions of the “better U.S.”: our imagination failed to question the betterness of the U.S.
Mira: 공부를 목적으로 했기 때문에 한국보다는 낫기다 라고 생각하고 왔는데, 만약에 여기가 마음에 안들면 항상 어디가에는 더 나은 삶이 있을 수 있고, 아니면, 다를 수 있다는 호기심도 있고. 아니면 기대도 있고 항상 그런 기대를 가지고 그런면에서 온 거 같아요. 그리고 뒤 미국 뒤 유학 오는거 뭐... 그리고 뒤 대학원 같은건 미리 생각했었고, 그런면에서 저는 아예 한국에서 더 이상 공부하고 싶지 않다는 거는 확실했었으니까.

Because I wanted to study more, I expected that it (the U.S.) should be better than Korea. And, if I don’t like my life here, then, I thought there must be a better or at least different life somewhere. So with that curiosity and expectation, I came to study in the U.S. I wanted to go to a graduate school and one thing I was sure was that I didn’t want to study in Korea any longer.

A major reason that Mira did not want to go to a graduate school in Korea was that she did not want to go though the politics of networking in her discipline, and she was curious about and/or expected possible, different, and better options in the U.S. Even as an undergraduate student, she saw that her career advancement would depend primarily on the kinds of networks she could build with a particular professor in her discipline.

Mira: 무용과에 있는 학생들은 거의 뭐 누구 밑에 소속되어있고. 뭐 무용과는 더하죠. 왜냐하면 좀업하고...그리고 대학교 교수님이라면, 교수님이 가르친다는 그 직접자체가 모든걸 다 가질 수 있어요. 만약에 이 사람이 무슨 대학의 교수다 그러면 그 사람이 company 도 가지고 있고, 그 사람이 또 어디에 chair 고, 한사람이 모두가 다 관할하는 시스템이니까, 이 사람이 권력을 받아면 모든 사람이 그쪽으로 몰려가서 그 밑에 있고 이 사람이 몰려가면 또 그동안 이루어졌던 모든건 그 누가 권력을 가지고 있느냐에 따라서 바뀌고, 그리고 뒤 그 안에 학생들이 정말 이렇게 그대로 못두는거 같아요. 안에서.

In the Dance department, students have to belong to a certain professor. I think it is much more serious in Dance discipline. Because...a college professor can have everything. S/he teaches, has a (dance) company, and has a chair position. It’s like one person controls the entire system. So, if one gets dominance, then everything comes under the control of that person and if s/he resigns, then everything changes depending on the successor. And in that system, students can’t do anything.
Dr. Han also points out her reason of coming to the U.S. through her refusal to participate in the networking politics of the Korean higher education system.

그다지 잘하지못하는데, 집안에 돈이 많아서 교수한테 갓다 바치고, 뛰 directly, indirectly, 예를 들어서, 모시고 나가서 근사한 French restaurant 에 가서 삼사십만짜리 식사 사주는 것도 사실 그것도 일종에 bribery 아니냐는 거죠. 나는 그런거 뛰, 그렇게 좀 심하고 두구나 사립학교였기 때문에 그렇게 굉장히 싶었던 거, 그런거 때문에도 한국에 있고 싶지 않았어요.

Even if you’re not academically excellent, if you come from an affluent family, you can succeed by directly and indirectly serving the faculty. For instance, you go out with faculty members and treat them with a 3 - 400,000 Won (around $300) meal in a fancy French restaurant. I think it’s a bribery. Because my alma master was a private school, the situation was worse and I didn’t want to go through that.

In most cases, networking with faculty is established in graduate schools. The dissent some of these women encountered when they asked for guidance from their faculty members to pursue study abroad suggests how difficult it is to get into a Korean academic system without personal networks. They were advised to acquire a master’s degree in Korean school system to create their space in a particular network such as a student of so and so faculty. Some of them were told that without this kind of networking, they would not be able to get a job even after finishing their doctoral degree in the U.S. In fact, this lack of networks in the Korean academic systems draws some of these women’s decision to stay in the U.S. These stories indicate that the resentment they held toward these aspects of Korean educational institutions was a prominent factor in their decision to pursue education in the U.S. Here the unspoken message communicated is that the U.S. academy would be a better place with more opportunities with no or, at least, fewer systemic and unfair barriers to success, based
on meritocracy. Interestingly, our narratives reproduce the U.S. nationalistic ideological basis of “the American dream.”

For some of us, this journey to the U.S. wasn’t an altogether unknown adventure. Our choice to study/live abroad was tailored, nurtured, and encouraged by our parents in many ways. For Anna, although she appeared to be a typical wife who accompanied her Korean student husband to the U.S. for his doctoral degree, her travel to the U.S. was a return to her birthplace. As indicated previously, Anna was born to a Korean international student family in late 1960s and grew up in the U.S. until the age of 5. As her father earned his Ph.D. in early 1970s, she moved to Korea with her family. Anna says

어렸을 때부터 그런애길 많이 들었으니까. 우리 엄마아빠가, 나는 어렸을 때 여기서 살았으니까 언젠가는 여기서 살겠다는 그런 생각은 들었어. 모르겠어. 사람들이 자꾸 주위에서 얘기를 해주고, 어렸을때만 해도 미국을 동경하고 그렇게 있었으니까. 그냥 난 언젠가는 거기서 살겠구나. 당연하게 내 인생은 언젠가는 미국에서 그렇게 되겠구나. 그런 생각을 했기 때문에, 그런걸 선택하고 그럼에도 뭐 고민하고 그런것도 않고, 그리고 한국서는 도리어 그렇게 얘기하잖아. 시민권을 돈주고라도 살 수 있으면 산다. 그렇게도 얘기하잖아. 그러니까, 난 행복이구나. 거기서 태어남으로써 나한테 주어졌으니까 얼마나 행복인가.

From very early in my life, my mom and dad constantly told me and I also thought that some day I would live in the U.S., because I lived here when I was very young. I don’t know. People have told me so, and... when I was a kid, I had some kinds of fantasies about the U.S. So I just thought that someday I would live there. Certainly, someday my life would take place in the U.S. Hence, I didn’t have any conflict when I chose the U.S. citizenship over Korean citizenship. Besides, in Korea, people say that they would even pay for the U.S. citizenship if they can buy it. So I thought I was lucky. Just by being born here, the citizenship was given to me, how lucky I am.

She never felt the U.S. was a foreign country even though she did not have a chance to visit the U.S. until she graduated from college. Her sense of belonging to the U.S. has
been cultivated by her parents as well as people around her through various discourses
of the U.S. as “a better place.” When you are entitled to the better, why would you
want to give up that entitlement?

I also acknowledge that my desire to come to the U.S. was heavily influenced
by my father’s nostalgically and mystically narrated experience that always started with
“When I was in the States,” and my mother’s ambivalent and hazy story of her
lost/broken dream to go to the U.S. for her education - she gave up her visa and
admission at the last minute as she met and married my father who just came back from
the U.S. with his degree. They never intentionally persuaded me to go to the U.S. for
my education but certainly glamorized my imagined construction of the U.S. as worthy
to desire.

Parental influence tailored not only our paths to the U.S. but also other realms
of our life journeys. Dr. Han even says that she was brainwashed to major in “Sports
science” by her mother who envied students’ experiences in the physical education
program while she pursued her home economic degree in the U.S. Dr. Han’s mother
convinced her that physical education is the best academic discipline and thus she
should study it. As she puts it,

내가 박사까지 오는거 크게 인제 given 이었어요. 박사를 하고, 체육과를
하고. 그리고 어렸을 때부터 그런말만 듣고 자라 갖고 그랬기 때문에
question 도 raise을 안했고.

Getting a Ph.D degree in sports science was a given in my life. Because I’ve
been only told to have this career ever since I was a kid, I didn’t even raise a
question (about different options).

For Anna, on the other hand, she says that she chose to be a housewife because
All the female members in my family live well as housewives without working outside. With the money husbands bring in, they live happily and they only raise their children.

The experiences, desires, and hopes that our parents’ generations held, whose lives were directly inflicted in Japanese annexation, the Korean War and the direct governance of the U.S. thereafter, were interwoven into the choices we chose in our life journey. Sometimes our choice was intentionally engineered, disciplined and monitored to live out our parents’ unrealized imagination and desires. Other times, we unconsciously followed footsteps that our parents made in their life to secure personal satisfaction and social privilege. In interconnection of lives between generations, the systematic reproduction of class division in socioeconomic structure became possible.

While our narratives of why we left our country are entangled with different points of excitement, ambition, and desire as well as resentment toward the various systems we belonged to at one time, all of us were convinced that we were leaving for the better. Except Anna, however, when we left Korea all of us also were convinced that we would return. As Dr. Kim, who has stayed in the U.S. for the past 6 years and is now in the last stage of application for her permanent resident status, says,

I had this thought that I want to experience a different life since we all live only 60 to 70 years of life. So, I came to the U.S. for that simple reason. And, of course, I thought that I could wrap up things in 4-5 years. Then I planned to go back as soon as I finished.
Our transnational traveling was supposed to be one time excursion filled with excitement, fantasy and a little bit of anxiety. Within our imaginations at the time of departure, we were not prepared at all for the consequences of transnational displacement and diaspora experiences as Third World migrant women of color in the U.S.

Not all of us voluntarily chose our travels to the U.S. For Sara and April, their migration to this country was differently implicated by the history of U.S. and Korea relationships. They were among 200,000 Korean children sent overseas for adoption during the past four decades (Song, 1999). Neither Sarah nor April had detailed information of how they were given up by their birth parents and adopted into their current families. While there may be an insurmountable differences between how these voluntary and involuntary migrant women constructed their departure stories from Korea, everyone’s exile was implicated in the webs of various desires, choices and imagination of her parent/s, unequal patriarchal social structures of Korea, and continuing domination of the U.S. in which many Koreans have been enticed by and thus desired to be included in its power and representation. Anna regarded the native/foreign U.S. as a place to return. Dr. Han’s academic career was closely disciplined by her U.S. educated parents. Kyungmi, Mira and Dr. Kim were allured to the fantasy and imagination of the U.S. including its higher educational systems. These women’s transnational journey between Korea and the U.S. are read as much the historical contingent as acts of their agency. In this complex nesting of historical genealogies of Korean migration, Sarah and April’s unnarrated departure tales intersect
with these five Korean women’s experiences as transnational travelers; our traveling began as a way out.

(In)separation and (Un)mixing between Korea and the U.S. : Gender, Race and Culture

In what follows, I describe dialogues with each individual to “re-present” and highlight her processes of un/mixing and in/separating with Korea and the U.S. My focus is on the different but systemic ways we are subsumed by and also how we appropriate and subvert the gendered and racialized constructions of Korean and American as we maneuver shifting social and cultural terrains of our everyday life materialized through the landscapes of U.S. higher education. In this way, I attempt to delineate our unsettling subjective positions, strategies and resistance, caught in as well as enacted in multivalent power relations, to produce our collective, yet not necessarily harmonious, narratives. As a way to represent these collective stories, I structure my telling of the stories by putting each woman’s narratives in a separate section with occasional juxtapositions and intersections with other women’s stories to delineate points of encounters among themselves.

In terms of legal status, Anna, April, Dr. Han and Sarah are American citizens; Kyungmi is a resident alien in the U.S. with Korean citizenship; Dr. Kim is in the process of residency application; and Mira is on her foreign student visa. However, their own senses of themselves around the signs of Korea and the U.S. do not always harmonize with their legally defined positions. The extent to which they can legitimately participate in cultural performance through knowledge about the systems,
language, food, and everyday routines, the social and professional networks they have, and the memory of shared past experience and the vision of shared future, are all woven to create different knots in the process of these women’s workings on the signs of Korea and the U.S. In addition, the dynamics between, within, and across Korean and American dominant discourses of gender, race, class, sexuality and culture have distinctly affected these women’s narratives of who they are and how they maneuver between their memberships in Korean and American cultures and/or nations/states in their particular geopolitical, historical and cultural junctures.

**Sarah: KoreabutIwasadopted.**

Sarah’s narrative of conflicting fragmented selves opens up a way to examine how the institutionalized discourses of race, culture, and citizenship are thrust upon our subjective formations. Sarah grew up in an “average” white suburban middle class family as an only family member of color. While she might have used the term ‘Asian American’ to check the box to profile her race, the name ‘Korean’ used to be a sign she did not (want to) look into examine. As Sarah wittily points out

> The magazine for Korean Americans, they have this whole issue on Korean adoptees and adoptee experiences, and one of, they had this cartoon and one of the 10 of the cartoons was, you know that you’re an adoptee if you’re … One of the things was you forget you’re Korean until you see yourself in the mirror.

She continues

> I have this, this really strange contradiction between how I think, and how I see myself and how I appear to the outside world.

Whenever her racially marked (Asian) body invoked a question of “Where are you from?” from (white) people, especially when she was younger, she remembers that she
managed to say “KoreabutIwasadopted” to distance herself from the sign of Korea as much as to assert that “I’m more like you than I seem to be. Don’t trust exterior.”

Insofar as she has lived in this burden of the gap - constructed, realized and separated through her geographical travel from Korea to the U.S. - between her being born in Korea and her born again white cultural self, she also feels lost in an irreconcilable split - forged, experienced, and persisting through her everyday journey to American social scenes - between her racially embodied self and a sense of belonging to white culture. Sarah says

The hardest part I have about my identity is the contradictions because although I was raised in white middle class America and have just absorbed that mentality, not of choice but that’s where my world view comes from. At the same time I know the experience of discrimination and prejudice and ethnic sexism. So it's kind of like I'm straddling two worlds.

Her ambiguities continue as she tries to make sense of her being an American. On one hand, being an American is like a skin to Sarah, so embedded in who she is and thus inseparable. The grounded experiences such as residing in the U.S., speaking the official language only, growing up in a “typical” family, and living with dominant cultural values and norms lead her to comfortably acknowledge and claim her American self. On the other hand, her differences which do not perfectly fit or correspond to the dominant constructions of an American within its national-cultural discourse creates an ambiguity against the legitimacy and authenticity of her identification. Sarah indicates

Even though I 'm a person of color, even though I 'm a woman, I know that I'm not the most, I’m not like the representative in American in terms of the mythical order of white male and everything, I don't know…. am I definitely American? Well, it’s like, I think it’s funny, like you internalize what
American means, and at the same time I assume I am an American and when I think American I think of white people.

While her sense of being an American is assumed and normalized along with her proper cultural performance and membership in white American culture in which she was raised, her racialized (Asian) body marks incongruence and incompatibility in her identification.

What Sarah’s inflicted relationships among her white cultural identity, racially embodied self, and itinerary history from Korea attest is the continuous reigning of race regime in U.S. social terrain, which insists homology between culture, race, and nationality. Within this regime, the politics of assimilation clandestinely mock the unassimilable body. Sara indicates, if she hasn’t been cursed and/or blessed to deal with the disparity between how she thinks, sees herself and appears to the outside world, she might have forgotten her Korean self a long a time ago.

**April: Not American Yet Asian American**

This strenuous route of being a woman of color born in another country to be an American is reiterated, in a different mode, by April who rejects being called an American. Growing up in a racially, nationally mixed large working class immigrant family in California, she sees herself conjured up at the intersection of multiple ethnic, cultural and racial flows, if her class and sexual identities can be placed aside for a moment.

Like my mom is from Holland so there's a very deep European kind of influence in my life. I'm Korean - not that I know that much Korean but relating to people because I'm Asian. Do you know Karate - do you know this and that. Oh you look so good in red. I can't believe you don't know how to
use chopsticks. I know how to use chopsticks. All these things. And then like living in California you need to know Spanish. There's four different influences that never really mix. They're very divided, very specific also and then also living in America.

April has maneuvered skillfully to situate herself amidst polyglot, multicultural/national communities, ironically due to her lack of mainstream connection. Knowing the power of positive and negative connotations that any word of identity brings to the subject, she would never just say, “I’m American.” That would not be something she would ever say. She would call herself an Asian American.

Because it’s that, it’s ambiguous and unspecific enough for me to contend with like being Asian because I look Asian. Like I’ve got Asian descent in me but yet my socialization, my education, and all that kind of stuff stems from being American.

The name, Asian American, then, becomes an intriguing battle site where her agency exerted through political dis/identification works within and against the disciplinary regime of U.S. nation-state, which constantly rejects and differentiates Asian immigrant subjects from a “native, authentic and real” American. Her refusal of being American ironically harmonizes with America’s refusal of Asian.

April says “Korean, I don’t say that because I don’t feel I have the groundedness in Korean culture to be able to say I’m Korean. Even though I’m interested in it.” It sounds more of self-perceived disqualification than denunciation.

Sarah also echoes

Because I feel like for me to claim a Korean identity I feel like I'd be an imposter. Like I'd be an imposter. That I would - to be ignorant about Korean culture, to not speak the language. To not know the history. To not know the cultural norms. To not know the ways in which people are supposed to interact. Even things like not using chopsticks properly or not knowing what the food is. Or not knowing how to cook the food. It's just not - I feel like to say not having
all that knowledge and then to say I'm Korean I feel like I would be an imposter or I would be unjustified in claiming that identity.

This familiar logic behind their (self-perceived) disqualification of being a Korean highlights post/colonial world history of making a nation-state project in which we are mesmerized to believe in a trinity of people, culture/language, and nation-state. Constrained by this existing discourse, what they have been deprived of is the legitimate historicity and explanatory power of their complex transnational experiences and cultures they have brought into a life as a Korean woman adopted in the U.S., which exceed both Korean and American nationalistic cultural discourses and institutions.

The contingent nature of our narratives delineates the same predicaments of transnational subjective position incarcerated within nation-state discourses through Anna and Dr Kim's narratives in which normalized cultural performance polices the boundary of 'authentic/legitimate' Korean and American between visibly marked Korean and U.S. nations-states. For Anna and Dr. Kim, their being Koreans is as natural as breathing and thus does not need to be examined. However, or therefore, the way they narrate their Korean self begins with the negation of their not being American.

**Anna: I Am and I Am Not Korean American.**

For Anna, her travel "back" to the U.S. is implicated in the fact that she was born in the U.S. Apparently, if the U.S. was not idealized and desired in Korean society, she might not have persevered for her U.S. citizenship and completed her travel back to the U.S. Contrasting her coming back to America without connection,
and leaving behind her parents as well as language, culture and social scenes in which she grew up, with Sarah and April’s current relations with the name of Korea, provides a way to delineate how these women are differently yet similarly inserted into global power relations. For instance Sarah states

Right. I don't like to admit it but I guess the images that I have of Asian cultures in general and Korean culture has been through less experience and more from representation, more from the media I guess internalizing those stereotypes of what Asian cultures are. But to me I still get the sense that there are certain standards or norms about femininity and masculinity that are just like the ones here. Men are supposed to be one way and women are supposed to be the other way and I just feel like it's more restrictive in the Korean culture. I don't know where I got that from. But I guess that's the impression that I have. Yeah. So part of me feels like even things like - I don't really understand how the Korean culture works because even things like domestic violence, rape, HIV which are all women's issues. How are Korean communities addressing those? I'm not sure. But I don't see the literature out on that. Or I don't see - I guess - hm. I guess I'm trying to think. I know - I don't want to sound like all Koreans have internalized this idea of sexism and femininity and there's no such a thing as a Korean feminist or a Korean-American feminist. I guess from a western perspective which is where I'm rooted in, it seems as if Korean culture and women in Korean culture are oppressed in a way that turns me off.

Even as Sarah admits her construction of Korean culture mainly coming from representation, stereotype and her internalization of ‘Othering’ practice in U.S. discourse, the impacts of constitutive discourse on her subjectivity as a western feminist loom large. After all, aren’t we all helpless self-conscious automatons? Furthermore, what benefits would she accrue by turning back into a heathen in a society where she is already treated as something different and so inferior? Surfacing is a volatile interplay between a mythical trinity of people, culture and nation-state, particularly undesirable Korean (primitive) patriarchy, and Sarah’s refusal and reluctance to be overwritten by this name, (oppressed) Korean (woman).
On the other hand, Anna’s or our desire toward the U.S. as a better place, has led her to settle in the U.S. However, Anna also disclaims an American self. While she has always felt that she is different from other Koreans due to her citizenship and entitlement to the U.S., Anna sees herself only as Korean not as Korean American or immigrant, even after raising her family in the U.S. for last eight years.

I think I am just Korean because I was raised there. My way of thinking is Korean. I think I am Korean. Probably my daughter isn’t since she is growing up here. I think I am Korean. Although legally American, my mind is Korean.

Anna’s sense of being a Korean is affirmed through the difference she perceives between herself and Americans. She says “미국 사람들 사이에 가면 일단 다르잖아, 생각 것도 다르고.” - “First, we are different from American people, we look different.”

In this process, her citizenship and nationality get separated from her cultural self. In one sense, she is exercising flexible citizenship to accumulate economic/symbolic capitals through a very wise calculation at this time of world politics (Ong, 1999). On the other hand, this is again an evidence of successful governance on and exclusion of Asian migrant subjects through the politics of assimilation in U.S. national/cultural discourse. Anna says

어, 그러니까 나는 누가 예를 들어서 뭐 교포 어째고 그러면은, 나는 아니야. 나는 교포 아니야. 한국서 보면 나는 교포, 난 교포 아니야. 나는 모르겠어. 뭐라고 얘기해야할지 모르겠어. 그러니까 이름을 붙이기PRESSION]가 이상한데, 내가 느끼는 나는 교포는 아닌거 같애. 한국에서도 한국 사는 사람... 어, 근데 그렇게 가망히 생각해보면 그 의미는 내가 그렇게 자꾸 나는 교포가 아니라는 생각이 왜 드나만, 사고방식은 난 그래도 한국적이라고 생각을 하니까. 교포라는거는 내가 생각하기에는,
내가 생각하는 교포의 의미는, 걸모습은 한국 사람이지만 사고 방식은 미국 사람들이, 그게 교포거리. 근데 나는 내가 생각할 때 사고방식이 미국쪽에 가깝냐, 한국쪽에 가깝냐, 그러면 그래도 아직은 한국쪽에 가깝다고 생각하니까, 그래서 나는 교포가 아닌 거 같애.

If someone asks me if I am an overseas Korean (read Korean immigrant or Korean/American in the U.S.), I am not. From people’s perspectives from Korea, I’m an overseas Korean. Yet, I’m not. I don’t know. It’s hard to explain and name me. The way I feel about me is that I am not an overseas Korean. I am a person from Korea living in the U.S. In my understanding, what it means to be an overseas Korean is that your appearance is Korean but your mentality is American. Then I ask myself whether my mindset is closer to U.S. culture or to Korean. I think I am still closer to a Korean cultural side, so I am not Korean immigrant/ American.

**Dr. Kim: Because I Am Not American, I Am Korean.**

The mode Dr. Kim utilizes to explain her position between Korea and the U.S. is affirmation through negation. Although Dr. Kim has not consciously thought of herself as a Korean, she came to the point to address that she is Korean because she has been constantly reminded that she is not American but a foreigner in her everyday American life. Her (self perceived) lack of English fluency and racialized body ascertains that she is not American. It has not occurred yet for her to relate her experiences and situations to other (Asian) immigrants or racial and cultural minority groups in the U.S., partly since she sees herself still sojourning in the U.S. and because she has not had many chances to meet immigrants of color.

계속 여기 있을 수도 있는거지만. 그리구 뭐 미국이나 Midwestern city 에서 여기서 늘어서 죽을때까지 살아가는데 그렇게 그럼이 잘 안그려져요. 그냥 편안하지 않은거 줍니다.

It’s possible that I continue to live here. Yet it’s hard to draw a picture of me aging here in Midwestern city or in the U.S. Meaning I don’t feel that I fit in here to that extent.

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In addition, she primarily speaks the Korean language, eats Korean food, and reads Korean newspapers. These are the routines she feels more comfortable performing. She plainly states “American 이 아니지, 거의 everything 이 아니지.” - “I’m not American, almost everything about me is not.” That she is not an American renders her to feel more Korean, although this does not mean that she comfortably wears Korean identity. Dr. Kim states

근데 항상 그렇게요. 내가 돌아가서는 잘 적응하고 살까? 이제 그렇게 있는거지. 그래도 trouble 한거지, 언제 크게 괴상히 unstable 한 상태겠어요. 내가 가면은 나는 계속 한국 사람들이 것 같은데 내가 과연 거기에 typical 하는 사람들하고 맞나?

I also constantly ask to myself if I go back, would I fit? It’s troubling. And this is such an unstable situation. I feel like I am Korean but can I fit in with those typical Koreans there?

In regards to majority (white) Americans, she is understandably Korean. Once she considers herself in relation to other “typical Koreans” in Korean society, she recognizes her difference to the extent that she becomes afraid to go back to Korea. The way she fluctuates between her claims of being a 100% Korean woman and her disqualification also attests to her ambivalent situation within Korean cultural discourse.

Dr. Kim says

지금 사실 한국 여자예요, 결혼한 여자가 그러는거는 결혼생활에서 그 셋스를 상당히 부합하게 산다는 거잖아요. 근데 안 그렇잖아요. 여기서 살면은 그리니까 난 한국여자라고 주장할만한 자격도 없지 뭐 나는. 그렇다고 뭐 아예 안하는 것도 아니지. 뭐, 따지고 보면. 한국 여자지 뭐. 시어머니 시아버지한테 괜찮다고 해도 하는건 없지만. 그래도, 한국 여자야. 그런거지 뭐. 그리고 남편여러 여기서 뭐 얼마나 잘난척 하구 살아도 나가면 그냥 조심조심하게 살구, 그러면 한국여자구.

When a married woman says that I am a Korean woman, it means that I perform the gender role required in Korean marriage life. Yet I don’t do that. Living here, I don’t have qualification to claim my Korean womanhood. Well, but it
doesn’t mean that I do nothing. If I take one by one, I am a Korean woman. You know I am submissive to my parents-in-law although I don’t do much for them in my everyday life. And no matter how I live in my own determination here with my husband parted from its culture, if I go back to Korea, I may roll back to a Korean women’s position. Then, I’m a Korean woman.

Her disagreements, differences and rejections to abide by Korean dominant cultural rules do not necessarily prevent her from associating with Korean identity, based on a certain degree of correspondence between the construction of what Korea/n is in dominant Korean cultural discourse and what she performs in her everyday life - or is it more or less her familiarity of being a disciplined and normalized Korean? However, the major misfit she conceives between her positions and experiences in the U.S. and the official construction and representation of American leads her to disown any legitimate space for herself in America. Dr. Kim’s voluntary dissociation unfortunately substantiates the effective effacement of her presence in U.S. national/cultural discourse. It becomes obliterated that she works at/for - or her labor re/produces - U.S. academic discipline and institution. It becomes negligible that she “interacts” everyday with local American cultural, social, legal and political discourses and institutions. It becomes irrelevant that she foresees and worries about her newborn daughter’s minority status in U.S. society. In her dissociation, these parts of her life remain without articulation and legitimacy with regard to the formation and history of the U.S.

**Dr. Han: Impure Korean Performing American.**

Dr. Han presents a more consciously fabricated transnational narrative which articulates how our strategic mobility refracts and yet reflects the multifaceted unequal
power relations of global/local discourses and social structures. Dr, Han, a
bicultral/bilingual academic, constructs an analogy for her cultural transition through
the changes of her intimate partners.

근데 참, 그건 가 내 cultural transition 인가 보면, 처음에 여기와서 사귄
사람은 교포였어요. 그러다가 미국남자를 사귀었어요. 백인, 그리고
지금 또 사귀는 사람이 미국남자에도. 그런데, 그게 내가 이제 나의 내면
세계의 변화라든가 나의 whole attitude 의 변화를 reflect 하는거같아요.
나는 전혀 미국 사람을 사귀려고는 생각을 안했어요. 진짜로. 그런데
여기와서 많이 변했어요. 그리고 어떻게 보면 connect 도 다 잘할 수
있었거 같아요. 한국 사람들하고 보다.

It reflects my cultural transition. My first partner was a Korean American and
then I became involved with an American, a white. Now my current partner is
another American. I think this reflects the changes of my inner world, my whole
attitudes. I never thought that I could become involved with an American. For
sure. Yet, I changed a lot. In some respects, I think I could connect with them
better than I did with Koreans.

Dr. Han who aspires to maintain her bilingual/bicultural competency - which, she
acknowledges, requires tremendous efforts and commitment. She repeatedly
emphasizes the importance of her achieved English fluency in expanding her cultural
and social terrains as well as constituting her flexible self.

여기와서, 언어가 fluent 해진거가 나한테 굉장히 power 를 주었다고
생각해요. 내가 만약 여기서 유학생들하고 계속 interact 하고 영어활
기회를 만들지 않았다면 내가 이렇게 comfortable 하지 않았을 거라고
생각해요. Definitely. 그리고 언어는 일종의 문화의 일부분이라고 생각을
하겨든요. 언어를 수용하니까 문화를 흡수하게 되는 것도 그만큼
뺄라졌다고 ...지금 생각한 건 그래요. 그러다보니까 그게 domino effect 류.
You know the language, therefore, you know the culture, one of the ways to
know the culture is to know the people, country, that happened to me, not only
with my friends, but also with my boy friend.

Becoming fluent in its language gave me a tremendous power. If I hadn’t made
occasions to practice English by confining my social activities with Korean
student groups only, I couldn’t have felt comfortable here. Definitely. I believe

\[\text{1 Dr. Han sometimes conversed with me in English.}\]
language is part of culture. So as I grasped the language, it became easier for me to absorb its culture. That’s how I think now. It’s domino effect. You know the language, therefore, you know the culture, one of the ways to know the culture is to know the people, country, that happened to me, not only with my friends, but also with my boy friend.

It reminds me of what Franz Fanon (1967) argues:

The Negro of the Antilles will be proportionally whiter - that is, he will come closer to being a real human being - in direct ration to his mastery of the French Language....A man who has a language consequently possesses the world expressed and implied by that language. What we are getting at becomes plain: Mastery of language affords remarkable power. (p. 18)

She suggests we can participate in a range of cultural performances through various relationships with “authentic” natives that are critical to open up more options for negotiating our identities of being a Korean, an American, a Korean/American and/or more. Putting aside the puzzling questions of “Does performing a certain behavior produce an identity?” or “Does the process of identification produce a particular form of performance?” what I read in her narrative is that our motivations, desire, and conscious choices embedded in our history and structural positionalities become integral part of this negotiation. Why has she been more actively engaged with a new territory than others? It is one thing that she is convinced of the value of symbolic capitals in being a bilingual/bicultural; she desired to have English in her possession, partly since she was in an advantageous position by having the language training from her childhood. Yet, her layered response also suggests that this bicultural mode of living provides a space where she can refuse a given, sexually subordinate position of Korean woman to Korean men, a strategy of impurity.

For her undergraduate degree in a highly prestigious university of Korea, Dr. Han majored in Physical Education with predominantly male classmates. With her
non-feminine mannerism/performance of aggressive and direct communication and swearing, she was treated as one of guys in her class and thus frequently invited to male locker/drinking talks. “It was too much information in terms of getting to know men’s culture, masculine culture,” says Dr. Han, however. It was repulsive to hear a man boasting about his visits to a prostitute so he could avoid sex with and keep his girl friend’s virginity until their sacred marriage. It was infuriating to see her female senior stigmatized and ostracized after her boyfriend bragged about their sexual intercourse to the class. She felt disgusted to listen to married men’s extramarital sexual adventures. It was unbearable to become knowledgeable about men’s violence against women: verbal, physical, sexual harassments and rapes. Her five years of living experience as an insider/outsider of Korean masculine world was sufficient enough to turn her into an enraged woman who cannot trust Korean men anymore. Her occasional interactions with Korean male students here in the U.S. have substantiated, rather than undermined her knowledge of Korean male culture. While it is not fair, she admits, to generalize the Korean masculine mentality she knows to all Korean men, she cannot and does not want to get intimately involved with Korean men. Nevertheless, her (liberal/westernized) single woman status puts her back into a (more) vulnerable position especially in relation to Korean men. One of whose intrinsic rights includes possessing Korean women’s sexuality in Korean nationalistic cultural discourse.
Just because I was drinking with them (Korean male students in the U.S.), they treated me like a whore. When the man sitting by me said "How about me tonight?" I wanted to kill him. Maybe that's too much. If I could, I was going to beat him to a jelly. I mean it. How dare he say that to me! How dare he think I would roll with him on the bed just because I was drinking!

Her resistance against this particularly sexually exploitative Korean woman's position reinforces her search for an alternative space.

한국에 남학생들, 한국문화에 관한 거부감이, resistance 있잖아요.
그런거가 내가 나를 Korean American woman, Asian American woman 이런 associate 하는데 있어서 comfortable 하게 만드는거 같아요. 나는 내가 불편하니까 같이 있고 싶지 않고 associate 하고 싶지 않고, 말만 많고 이러니까. 약간 이렇게 좀 거리감을 두다 보니까, 나는 내가 미국사람이다. Asian American woman 이다 이렇게 생각을 했었던거 같아요.

My antagonism, resistance toward Korean men and Korean culture made me feel comfortable to associate with (these identities of) Korean American woman, Asian American woman. Because I didn’t feel at ease and I didn’t want to associate with (Korean men and culture), and as I put this distance, I began to think I am American, I am an Asian American woman.

Mixing with prohibited dangerous elements of westernized self, culminated in her intimate/sexual partnership with a western (white) man, she gains heretical power to resist the relentless governance of Korean cultural discourse over her sexuality. She highlights her impurity, fluidity and mobility that disrupt Korean national/cultural discourse. Yet, every resistance brings about another fortified assailant. Ironically this heretical power simultaneously demotes her position to a promiscuous woman whose sexuality needs to be disciplined and controlled by Korean men. In this shaky juggling, she often finds herself becoming stiff and nervous in groups of Korean men. She sometimes tries passing as someone not Korean. Her uneasiness, aroused by the physical presence of Korean men, reinforces her hybriding acts as a gesture of distancing from a chastising Korean cultural regime.
Dr. Han, at the same time, suspects that she might desire security in U.S. society through her association with a white man.

Maybe a sort of security, American society is in fact a white society, isn’t it? I’m not sure but I think, indirectly, I am gaining power, I don’t often think I am a minority. For example, when my boy friend throws a party, sometimes I am the only Asian there. I am very comfortable in the setting without being conscious of my race. Then suddenly it hits me “Oh, I was the only Asian there. You know I just totally forgot about it.” I don’t know how to interpret that. But, in American society where white represent a dominant culture, I may have unconscious desire in some extents to be with a white guy who has power.

However, she also points out that analyzing her romantic relationships with her partner in structural/social terms can be convoluted when different markers are taken into accounts such as; she is more argumentative and dominating; she is 5 years older; she is a professor - he is a college student; she makes more money; and her parents disapprove their interracial relationships. She would rather focus on the fact that it is about romantic feelings between individuals as well as that she feels freer - empowered - in this transnational mode of living/relationships she chooses. In chaotic ruptures of personal/structural, Korean/American, gender/race and fixity/mobility, therefore, she paradoxically indulges herself with the pleasure of physically being smaller (read feminine) in relation to her well-built (white) partner as she scoffs at the short scrawny
stature of Korean men who demand women’s obsession with a thin body as a way to secure their masculinity, along with her indifferent acknowledgement, “개념들은 나를 보면 뜨보 아줌마 지나간다 그럴거라구.” - “They (Korean men) ’ll say to me, here comes a big fat maid.” However problematic her pleasure can be, that pleasure reflects where she is at in this transnational cultural moment.

She has dealt with and expects numerous bumps and hills in her everyday shuttling between Korea and the U.S. She shrewdly utters the structural limitations.

너는 한국이 좋니? 미국이 더 좋니? 그런 얘기가 많이 하는데, 그런데 뭐 엄마가 좋니? 아빠가 더 좋니? 그러니까 비슷한 느낌을 주는 질문인데 나는 언제나 한국이 좋은 점도 많고, 미국이 좋은 점도 많고. 한국이 나쁜 점도 많고, 미국이 나쁜 점도 많고. 그런데, 가장 critical 한거는, 한국에 살면은 gender 를 face 와야되고 미국에 살면은 race 를 face 하야 된다. 그래서 either way I’m gonna face major problems.

I’ve been asked many times “Do you like Korea or the U.S.?” It reminds me of a question “Do you like your mom or dad?” I always respond that both have their strengths and weakness. Yet the critical point is that I face gender in Korea while I face race in the U.S. So either way I’m gonna face major problems.

Despite the limitations, she stresses that moving around has been exciting and enriching experiences and thus hopes to continue to weave her traveling tales.

Let me not underplay how Dr. Han’s more or less easy takes on her bicultural position have been afforded by her class and educational privilege, which offers her material necessities and better/more access both in Korea and the U.S. social structures. Throughout the whole time of her traveling, she has been aware of other options available for her. Despite her abhorrence toward Korean patriarchy, there still exists a lot of good memories and relationships that she likes to maintain. Her dual
memberships in both societies have been achieved not only through her conscious investments but also shielded through her class and educational privileges.

**Kyungmi: From a Korean to ‘the Immigrant’ in the U.S.**

Kyungmi’s situation differs from Dr. Han. She vehemently criticizes the class-divided patriarchal Korean society in which she was fixed in an immobile inferior/invisible other position. For her, traveling to the U.S. was to tryout an alternative life, a geographical moving out from a socially stuck place. Kyungmi acutely knows what it means to live a second tier life in a highly competitive/hierarchal Korean society.

한국 사람들이 그 의식이 뭐냐하면 왜 이런 거야. 너는 가난하니까. 너는 뭐 일급이 못생겼으니까. 너는 저급아니까. 이런식으로 모든 것들이 전부 그러니까 하여튼 그런거에 의해서 기준을 전부 잡고 니가 아니라 아니다. 그야? 그러니까 너는 이제 뭐라그렇락, 너무 공부도 못하고, 뭐도 못하고, 뭐 한국에서 나는 공부도 별로 못하는건이었고, 그렇다고 이뿐인도 아니었고, 그러니까 나는 한국에서 살아남을수 없는 그런... 사실상 그런 아니죠.

Korean people have this attitude, like because you’re poor, you’re ugly, or you are stupid, you must be so and so. They have this standard and if you don’t measure up to that particular standard, then you are nobody. Right? Then, in Korea, I wasn’t the smartest in school, not good enough for this and that. Beside I wasn’t pretty enough. So, I wasn’t supposed to survive in Korea according to the societal standard. But... it’s not true.

In Korean society, she contends that once you are put into an inferior position, any time of your life, regardless of why, it becomes hard to move upward. She had received multiple messages of “you are doomed” there. She exemplifies how she was taught to stay in her inferior position of Korean social hierarchy.
In high school, students were assigned to either an advanced or a remedial class for Math and English, according to our test performance. For Math, I was never able to get into the advanced class. I was, always, a C student. I felt horrible. Then, one day, our teacher in the (remedial) class said “There are people born smart, inherently smart.” It meant that people like me couldn’t even dream to be smart because it’s a fate. Everyone is destined to live a given life. Do you see what that means? The philosophy of the fate. Because of that damn fate, our people (Koreans) can’t do anything, do not have the frontier’s spirits like people here (in the U.S.). So many people get discouraged all the time. All those people… Yet, it (the logic of fate) never goes away, anywhere you go, any place you go, in any relationship.

In leaving the prescribed position assigned to her in viciously hierarchized Korean society and distancing herself geographically and ideologically from suppressive Korean cultural norms and values, Kyungmi was determined to recompose herself in this allegedly fair society of the U.S. If possible, she wished to jettison every moment of her memories as she voyaged to the new land. In her graduate schooling, she has invested efforts, time, energy, and money to acquire necessary skills to suit her better in this new environment. She narrates her first year in the U.S.
I participated in every extra curriculum activity including various church clubs. This unintentionally had created a distance from Korean students. Then I started to hear people saying “Kyungmi doesn’t interact with Koreans because she is full of herself.” There were many people who disliked me.

Her immersion to this new social terrain was not received well by other Korean students groups. In a world where ways of getting access to power are tightly interconnected with a certain way of being such as whitening and/or Americanizing for culturally and racially others, her intensely focused engagement with local societies evidently has brought the familiar criticisms of sell-out. Yet, through the process, she narrates that she has positioned herself successfully within the U.S. social and cultural system, paying the price of estrangement from Korean students. During her doctoral program, she met her husband who has anchored her position within mainstream American societies. In these years, she transformed her “silenced invisible Korean woman” to “an American educated metropolitan professional woman.” As she says,

Here I could express what I wasn’t able to reveal in Korea. In our country, if you show off, you are scorned and become the target of criticism. Yet, here you can stretch out yourself in whatever way you want. I’ve been free to try things in my own way. Then I thought, I am not that bad, right I did. I was a bird caged in Korea but here I felt that I’ve been flying free.

Kyungmi’s new life styles and changed attitudes have brought her a reputation of that she is totally Americanized. With the power that a label of being Americanized
brings, she feels competent, confident and content in herself. The heroic quest, the
triumph over weakness, the promise of salvation, prosperity, and progress: this is the
American feeling, the style of life, the ethos and spirit of being (Lowe, 1996, p. 2).
Kyungmi’s transformation passes through this site of American (nationalistic) feeling.
She attributes her (new) success/achievement in the U.S. to America’s fair systems as
well as her personal characteristics of working hard and being adventurous, positive,
and independent, which she was able to foster though her American schooling and
living experience.

The glaring contrast between her metropolitan professional self and her
engraved memories of a subjugated Korean female self in this transnational site easily
justifies, validates and endorses the metropolitan western discourse which objectifies,
esentializes and inferiorizes Third world (primitive patriarchal) culture and societies.
Here, Sarah’s (white) feminist denunciation of Korea, Dr. Han’s flight from Korean
masculine domination, and many other Korean women’s multitudes of resistance
against our patriarchal culture and institutions all collapse with Kyungmi’s narrative
resulting in an impossible position of third world feminists in ruins. Espoused by
multifaceted forms of the U.S. metropolitan discourse including rationalism, liberalism,
professionalism, meritocracy, philanthropy, missionary Christianity and modernization,
Kyungmi with anger, resentment and pity fervently condemns every detail of Korean
history, culture, social structure, and people. Koreans are illogical, immature,
unprofessional, unforgiving, and uncivilized. They have been at the receiving end of
the world, without contributing to the world. She states Koreans are also very docile,
using her husband’s words; not strong, adventurous, and persistent enough to compete
with - conquer (my word) - the world, her interpretation. Their competitiveness is

good only in their own game. She particularly disparages Koreans international (male)
students, who are considered as the forerunners in Korean society - where she was


dispossessed of any excellence - but struggle to survive in U.S. educational systems -

where she thrives.

적당주의. 적당히 해서 그거만 넘어가면 된다는 거. 최선을 다하라는..
최선을 다해서 뭐하나? 내 몸이나 사리자, 아니면 뭐 다른거 하자.
이러식으로. 그러니까 이제 professional 정신이 너무 적하되어있는 거야. 이
사람한테. 그래서 이제 이렇게 맡 아기 하는거 들어보면, 아 그냥 여기서
적당히 빼지나 받아가지고 한국에 가서 연구소에서 적당히
살아가자. 적당주의야 완전히.

Mediocrity. Let’s just get over it with mediocrity. Why should I try the best
when I can finish the work without exhausting myself? That’s their attitudes.
They don’t have professionalism. What he says is let’s just get the diploma
with mediocrity and then go to any lab in Korea to live a mediocre life. Total
mediocrity.

She sees that most of these (male) students came to the U.S. only to get the degree to

advance their status in Korea. I also suspect that many Korean (male) students refuse
to situate themselves in U.S. institutions, first because they don’t necessarily see
themselves as members of U.S. institutions: reciprocally, I argue, it is in fact a message
that the U.S. higher education institutions convey to their international students.

Secondly situating themselves in U.S. institions could be painful due to the dramatic
loss of their power and prestige as a foreign student of color. Foreign, student, and
color, nothing provides any prestige to these men who are used to seeing themselves as
the privileged dominant (masculine) authorities in Korean society. Consequently,
many of them try to separate their everyday life from U.S. institutional culture and
cultural institution, which constantly infantilize and effeminate Asian men. Yet, they
maintain their distance and disengagement to the extent that it does not prevent them from achieving what they need, getting a degree in U.S. schools. For Korean male students, particularly those expecting (to return to) their privileged positions in Korea, my speculation, in accord with Kyungmi’s, is that they evaluate their interactions with local cultures/communities not beneficial enough to advance their status in Korea. They would want to build new connections or strengthen the networks they already have with other Korean international students and people in Korea, which consolidate their positions in Korea society. Since many male Korean students are the prestigious universities’ graduates and plan to return, they see more direct benefits in building new relationships or strengthening networks among each other for future use in Korea.

Motivations, positionalities, and possibilities were different for Kyungmi. This traveling was/is her way out. She wants a different life than the kind she had in Korea. She intends to test her (in)abilities. She desires to be included as an appreciated member this time. She also knows that it would still be difficult to escalate her position in Korea despite what she has achieved here in the U.S. The name of the college she graduated from and the lack of social connections in Korea will still block her access to various opportunities. In addition, the fact that she did not earn her master degree in Korea and she did not have a faculty network in Korea would definitely disadvantage her in obtaining an academic position. Within the circumstances, she aggressively absorbs the official narratives of American immigration which guarantee “better” equal start for every immigrant, most of whom (must) have suffered from “worse” inequalities in their first home countries. The comparison approach tends to result in
Kyungmi’s expressing a generous attitudes toward American society where her
metropolitan professional self is crafted.

It’s true that in U.S. history there has been a lot of barbaric violence and horrific
events including Native Americans and slave history of African Americans.
Yet I give a credit to white Americans’ changed attitudes. How much have they
changed so far? And their will to change. If they were like in their past, I
might have thought that they were useless. A small number of people, of course,
many people still are prejudiced but we need to look at their current, which is
going in the right direction. White people I know, I’ve met, they have been
really nice. Sure they have prejudices yet all of us have prejudices. How about
us? Korean’s prejudice is unmatched.

Who does not have prejudices? Which nation-state does not have violent and unjust
history? Which society does not have discrimination? We are all guilty of prejudice,
some are more than others though. Being carried in the current of multiculturalism,
therefore, she believes and expects the better opportunities in this country despite her
racial minority status. Not surprisingly, she contends that a way to survive in this
racially constituted society is to fiercely fight for your own space and people will
respect you. She says
The other day I went out for pizza with my husband to the town called the village of Italy. I think he was an Italian boy. Passing by, he said “Japanese are bad, Japanese bad people.” Probably he thought that I was Japanese. Probably all Asians would look alike to him. Then, my husband followed him and brought him into the corner. I don’t remember exactly what he said to him but he was very articulate. “Why do you wanna hurt, you know, other people’s life? You don’t wanna hurt anybody. Stop the behaviors that hurt other people.” After all, what the boy said was to hurt me. right? So finally he said to my husband “I’m very sorry.”

What if she were alone, what if the boy were a grown man, or what if her partner were a man of color, female or anyone except a white man, how would this incident generate a tale? What did she gain or lose here? What were her roles in this scene? Is this story about Kyungmi, her husband, or the Italian boy - a white knight rescues a yellow princess from infantile evil and even converts the evil? Her partnership/familial relationship with a white man here complicates her racial status and consciousness as in the cases of Dr. Han and Sarah, who indicate that they sometimes (feel like they) can pass as a person without race - white. For Kyungmi, her racial position in the U.S. is another barrier that she should overcome like the many other barriers that she has fought over, instead of a mark etched on her body that is subjected to hierarchal classification. She states
The key is that we shouldn’t make our own racial prejudice. As much as you argue for yourself, you need to respect what others are saying. You have to keep your own space. Whether it’s Korean, African, or whatever, diffidence comes from yourself not from others.

In this newly engaged site where she claims her rightful position as a Korean immigrant professional woman, what afflicts her most appears paradoxically to be the harsh memories of Korea in which she still cannot render to anyone, no matter how brutally her cosmopolitan, professional self negates Korean educational and cultural system. While her leaving Korean culture/society leads her to suitably sit in the U.S. official immigration narratives, her slurred remark that she may not go back to Korea until she is ‘invited’ discloses the misfortune of an immigrant subject whose unutterable desires include an acceptance and appreciation of her from the despising place she left. Therefore, her identification and disidentification with Korea occur simultaneously as her deliberate compositions of professional immigrant subjectivity, racially marked body, and partnership with a white man constitute the contemporary American cultural scenery.

**When Kyungmi’s Narrative Traverses Dr. Kim’s.**

When Kyungmi’s invested alignment as a self-made professional immigrant woman meets a differently transformed professional woman from Korea in the U.S., what collective voices would they produce? The limits and possibilities of our
traveling converge. Let’s start with how Dr. Kim narrates of the changes she went through living in the U.S.

나는 한국에서 상당히 내가 competitive 한 성격을 가졌다고 생각했어요. 굉장히 열심히 일하고 그녀가 일하는 거예요, 이렇게 adrenaline 이 솟고 또다음에, 그렇게 생각했는데, 여기에서 좋게 말하면 여유가 많아진 거고 negative 하게 얘기하면 계속진거죠. 근데 이제 그래 어떻게 생각하면 결혼은 거고, 어떻게 생각하면 미국이라는 문화가 사실은 그렇게 막경쟁적으로 물론 대학원 사회에서 그렇게지만 한국보다 훨씬 더 그렇게 될하잖아요. 그런거 보면 아 꼭 그렇게 생각할 필요가 없는 거였는데 여태까지 그렇게 자랐구나. 그런 생각을 한 것 같기도 하고, 둘째는 확실히 자신이 없어진거같어요. 그러니 한국에서는 어 내가 성격이 그렇게 뒤 외향적이거나 사람들은 그렇게 잘한다고 생각하지 않아도 fake 할 수 있었거든요. 그렇게 할 수있는데 여기선 그래 안되는 거야.

I thought I was very competitive in Korea. I worked hard, the harder I worked, the more energetic I became. After I came to the U.S., I became relaxed if I say from a positive perspective or lazy from a negative perspective. This might have something to do with my marriage in one sense. On the other, this is related with U.S. culture, which is less competitive than Korea although graduate school is an exception. By looking at how these people (Americans) live, I thought that I didn’t have to live a life in the way I had. And I apparently lost my self-esteem. I wasn’t extroverted or dominating in Korea either. Yet, I could fake it there. I could perform it if needed. Now, I am not able to do it here.

In Korean society, Dr. Kim considered herself very competitive and competent and viewed herself to be at the top of social hierarchy. As many other highly achieving women, she did not perceive gender hampering her professional aspiration and advancement. She attained both her bachelor and master degrees from a very prestigious university and worked at a prominent industrial setting for 2 years. Then, she left for the U.S. to work on her Ph.D. During her doctoral program, she met and married a Korean student. Then the couple’s infertility complicated her career path. About three years from the end of her doctoral program to the beginning of her first research position in a University lab, she underwent in vitro fertility treatment. The
process was exhausting, terrifying and frustrating. Dr. Kim still cannot explain how she became so obsessed with having a child after she found out that her husband and she had an infertility problem. In fact, before she was informed of her couple’s infertility, she did not care much of about having a child and was receptive to a childless family. She used the word “상실감 - the feelings of loss” to explain the period. She said, that was the best and the only way she could describe what had happened to her. Perhaps the end itself does not matter. Perhaps what we desire is consistent moments of assurance that we are making our own choices, however loaded they are of historical and cultural burdens. Perhaps what we cannot bear is that feeling of loss. In striking a balance between her motherhood and career path, Dr. Kim would choose her motherhood over professional advancement not only because she went through such a hardship to get pregnant but also because she lost confidence in her professional competence in U.S. social settings. She elaborates

Here, giving oneself airs is the way of doing self-presentation. It’s hard for us. So I became more and more silent. Then, I found out that I could live pretty well without raising my voice. While I am not the person who inherently likes to lead the group, these changes made me feel less confident in myself. I got this Ph.D, but what am I good at? Now, I reached the end point, then how come I don’t know where to go now? I was losing the pride and respect for myself. I think the stress of living in the U.S. has contributed to it a lot.
First, the language barrier unsettled her confidence in performing a professional role in U.S. cultural realms. Acquiring English fluency is a constant struggle and challenge a non-native speaker has to wage especially when she is an adult second language learner whose mother tongue operates in a quite different way. However, more importantly, the general stigmas, derogatory attitudes, and condescending reactions, non-native English speakers (of color) experience in the U.S. devastate their self-confidence and will to learn. Unless the connection between racism in the U.S. and the stigma of being a second language speaker is unravelled, it would not be explicable of native speakers’ different reactions to second language speakers with different accents/ethnicities/cultures; for instance, it is not uncommon to hear that some accents such as French, German, or Russian are cute and attractive while other accents such as Chinese or Korean interfere with their communication efficiency. Let me insert what Franz Fanon (1952/1967) wrote for illumination:

I meet a Russian or a German who speaks French badly. With gestures I try to give him the information that he requests, but at the same time I can hardly forget that he has a language of his own, a country, and that perhaps he is a lawyer or an engineer there. In any case, he is foreign to my group, and his standards must be different. When it comes to the case of the Negro, nothing of the kind. He has no culture, no civilization, no “long historical past.” (p. 34)

Dr. Kim resolves not to talk. As she loses her public voice, she gets to retrieve to a more comfortable space, her home. Amazingly, yet, she discovers that she can still enjoy her life as much without being at the spotlight in the public realm.

Arriving at the pinnacle of U.S. education where she was supposed to receive the world’s best academic training has also generated a new level of questioning of her self-esteem. Even after she received her Ph.D degree, she was not able to see herself,
notwithstanding being a master of the knowledge, as appropriately equipped to work in her professional field. She was convinced that she would not be competitive enough to be successful in the profession. However, this does not mean that she considers impossible her academic success in the U.S. Rather, she is overwhelmed by extra efforts she must expend to compete with mainstream Americans. It is not a level playing field for her because she knows that she lacks of cultural capital and symbolic power to compete with people from the mainstream. To compensate, she may have to sacrifice other aspects of her life such as motherhood or personal time with her partner. “Why should I?” asks Dr. Kim. Upon her graduation, therefore, she chose not to look for a faculty position. Instead, she accepted a non-tenured researcher position as a methodologist, her minor subject. The field of the measurement and evaluation appears to her to be more receptive of non-native speakers due to its heavy emphasis on numbers. Her employment, interestingly, goes along with a stereotypical image of Asians in the U.S., who are adept at numbers/mathematics.

As Dr. Kim says, if she were in Korea, she would probably have attempted to climb up the professional ladder without considering alternative ways of living. She emphasizes that she lives with a different pleasure of life now. She doesn’t have to be aggressive, competitive and always feeling pushed any more. She can enjoy being more relaxed and even lazy patterns of life. In this lifestyle, what she values the most is that “the feelings of relative poverty” are not there; she doesn’t have to compare herself constantly to others through Korean standards of success and worry about how others would evaluate her.
For both Kyungmi and Dr. Kim, Korean society is experienced as more competitive and rigid for different reasons. For Kyungmi, her lack of educational background and her patriarchal natal family prevented her to access to various opportunities. Korean society was competitive because institutionalized privileges were rarely available to her. For Dr. Kim, in Korean society, there was competition. She tasted the power and pleasure of social privileges partly through her educational qualifications and credentials. She was confident in the game of competition.

In the U.S., Kyungmi discovers that the fields and rules of the game people play here are somewhat different from Korea. What happened in the games of Korea does not count much. She invested her time and energy to learn the rules of the game. Some of her efforts have paid off because she sees that she is in the game. Through her personal and professional relationships with insiders, she gains more access to resources and opportunities. In addition, she observes how those so-called successful Korean men (and women) are granted inferior in this game. However, even at this time, she knows that with her current symbolic and economic power she would have a hard time competing in Korean society and that’s why she may want to stay in the U.S.

Dr. Kim attributes her new position in part to her lack of cultural capital in the U.S. She accepts her being somewhat disconnected and displaced as a foreigner of color in this society. It is too much to participate in the game of success in the U.S., because it is not a level field for her. She lags behind in this game. Her pregnancy complicated the situation worse/better. Now she sees a pleasure in low-key life. But she knows that she would join the competition game if she were to go back to Korea and that’s why she may want to stay in the U.S.
With my romantic lens, both of them narrate they feel freer in their newly created life. Having more options, being left to experiment without direct surveillance, and choosing a life unexpected by others provide these women a sense of freedom. But, again, in different modes with different complicities and resistance.

**Mira: A foreign Korean in the U.S.**

Mira does not agree with how I see her as a privileged woman who could afford her graduate education in the U.S. and who has not seriously thought of her position as a woman in Korean society. She refuses to register social science language such as class, gender and power in telling her stories. She has doubts about collective identities which always overwrite internal conflicts and discords. Thus, she prefers to express herself in individual terms, not in any relational terms. She identifies as being Korean through her recognition of connections with family, friends and repertories of memories, knowledge, and culture in Korea. Mira states that she is a native Korean yet it does not mean much for her.

Mira plans to work as a dancer in the U.S after her graduation in a few months. She intends to master and digest U.S. society and culture. She is willing to hybridize herself with what she would find positive and empowering sides of U.S. social and cultural logics. Her principle is she is open to ideas. She indicates that it is her “practicality” through which she focuses on the present, neither regretting her past nor worrying about her future. She feels more of herself through these changes she has made by living in the U.S. for last two years, which she doesn’t think was possible to acquire and maintain in Korean social/cultural environments.
Sometimes I wonder, why do I want to get a job in New York after graduation? Why do I keep trying to stay in the U.S. when no one is accepting me? I think I like myself better in the U.S. In dancing, I feel freer and I find more meaning. Besides, I have an unfond memory of Korea. If I were to encounter the same situation there... The longer I stay here, the more difficult it becomes to go back. Environment is such an important factor. I now feel like I can maintain my changes in this mindset even if I go back. Yet how long can I keep it? Then, I become uncertain about my will, with another recognition of how important culture is.

Nevertheless, it is still absurd for her to be asked if she can relate to any aspects of being American.

In fact, Mira sees her living experiences in the U.S. exciting precisely because she explores and experiments with the foreign territory as a Korean dancer. Mira’s narrative resembles a (western) cosmopolitan traveling tale. The seeming differences between Korean and the U.S. bring thrills for her. If she begins to see herself to settle down or feel at home in the U.S., she wonders if her adventurous spirits and excitement in a foreign cultural terrain would disappear. While the traveling is not always fun and enjoyable, because she likes to keep open options of where she would finally end up, she likes to position herself as a loner disconnected from any institutionalized communities.
Considering the distance Mira keeps as a foreigner with U.S. society along with April’s identity as a Korean mostly in Americanized ethnic term, the ways they connected with each other in a dance department where they first met seem contradictory. Regardless of April’s reluctance to claim Koreaness due to her lack of grounding experience, Mira perceived April as a Korean and related to her as a Korean.

Mira says

April 특별하다. 한국 사람이니까, Asian American 중에서도 특별한게 한국 사람이고, 그 특별한게 이 관계에 계시고, 그리고 그래서 둘 개 경우에는 좀 더 특별했다고 볼 수 있어요. 그리고 개를 보면서 괜찮히 미국 사람이 아니고 그 안에 원가 한국적인 감정적 이라고 할까? 그렇게 있어요. 자세한 건 저도 잘 모르겠어요… 개는 너무나 미국적이지만 내가 가지는 개한테 가지는 감정은 보통 미국애한테 가지는 것과는 전혀 들려요. 어 나는 개를 한국 사람으로 보니까

April is special since she is a Korean. Among Asian Americans, that she is a Korean was special and that she is in the field of dance was special too. She is really American yet she has a Korean sensibility. I don’t know how to elaborate. She is very American yet the feeling I have for her is a totally different one that I have with other ordinary Americans. I see her as a Korean.

How is this special bond possible when they do not share much in their experiences, cultural upbringing, and political positionalities? In spite of Mira’s indifferent stance to the name of Asian/Americans, she danced in a performance April choreographed, which featured a theme of Asian/American women’s representation. But, her performance in the stage still communicated she would pick up the word, foreign, to describe herself. I argue that the distance between Asian/American women and foreign has never been far apart.

April says

Something really interesting is to be able to identify with somebody else who says I’m Korean. I asked her why are you in my project and she goes - she has a
variety of answers but one of her answers is I feel - I don't think this is the word she said but this is the word I felt - I feel parental to you because you're Korean also. There's just like understanding. Oh, you're Korean. Hi, let's go out to dinner. There's a little more softness. I think that's what everybody likes. You find somebody you connect and then you're suddenly like hey, we know each other somehow. I don't know how but we do. I would like to have more of that and through her I've learned a lot. And in some ways we just say it's really funny. We have an opinion that's similar. Oh, that's because we're Korean. It's jokey. It's not true or anything but there's that sense of just experience - like living it has made me and probably will make me more comfortable.

Did Mira feel at home with April in her adventurous journey in the U.S.? What Korea did April encounter in Mira? Did Mira feel responsible for a Korean baby who was displaced in the U.S.? Did April find the trace of lost memory in Mira? How did Mira see Korean sensibility, whatever it is, in April who couldn't claim her Koreaness? What does this special bond through the name of Korean suggest when Korean doesn't mean much to Mira and when these women are lost in the multitudes of being Koreans? What myths are we making here? Or what gaps and fissures are we filling up?

Summary

In this space, seven different women, whose life experiences and circumstances rarely fall under the typical from the dominant perspectives of Korea and the U.S. nationalist cultural discourse and thus become under erasure, narrated their traveling tales through my writing. Individual reasons of initiating transnational traveling were distinctive but stemmed from the conditions of “the puzzling circulation of desire around the traumatic scene of oppression (Ghandi, 1998, p11).” “Better,” the adjective attached to the U.S. was the common denominator that pushed us away from Korea.
Utilizing this imagined site of traveling Korean women in U.S. higher education, we dialogued about how we occupy the in-between space between Korea and the U.S., yet not necessarily with the same address. In our indecisive and ambiguous positions, which both exceed and are bound by the limits and possibilities of national, racial and gendered discourse, our narratives questioned and challenged the controlling and disciplinary regimes such as essential identity politics, the myth of nation making for both the U.S. and Korea, and homology of people, culture, and nation. At the same time, in our comfortably normalized positions, we reside, make ourselves at home, and take our space for granted. We sometimes need a space to feel safe, secure and normal or we were oblivious to particular constraints that simultaneously provided institutional privileges for us. At different times, our subversion and defiance became more playful in our familiar and legitimate space; we knew the rules to bend. In other times, our uncertain and insecure subjective and material positions let our imagination succumb to the regulations and boundaries; to register our existence at least somewhere with existing available names. Yet there were also unruly times in which we messed around with our own efforts to trace where we were going.

What Said (1993, p. xiii) writes is pertinent to understand the significance of putting these women’s narratives on the pages: “[N]ations themselves are narrations. The power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging, is very important to culture and imperialism, and constitutes one of the main connections between them.” We - not as “them” - seized the site and mobilized to form our narratives through this heretically imagined name of traveling Korean women in U.S.
higher education. We all know too well how important this power to narrate is (e.g. Anderson, 1983/2000).
CHAPTER 5

TOWARD PROLIFERATION OF NOT UNIFIED COLLECTIVITIES

Faced with the fatal notion of a self-contained European culture and the absurd notion of an uncontaminated culture in a single country, T. S. Eliot writes, “We are therefore pressed to maintain the ideal of a world culture, while admitting it is something we cannot imagine. We can only conceive it as the logical term of the relations between cultures.” The fatality of thinking of “local” cultures as uncontaminated or self-contained forces us to conceive of “global” cultures, which itself remain unimaginable. What kind of logic is this? (Bhabha, 1996, pp. 53-54)

The moment the insider steps out from the inside she’s no longer a mere insider. She necessarily looks in from the outside while also looking out from the inside. Not quite the same, not quite the other, she stands in that undetermined threshold place where she constantly drifts in and out. Undercutting the inside/outside opposition, her intervention is necessarily that of both not quite an insider and not quite an outsider. She is, in other words, this inappropriate “other” or “same” who moves about with always at least two gestures: that of affirming “I am like you” while persisting in her difference and that of reminding “I am different” while unsettling every definition of otherness arrived at. (Minh-ha, 1997, p. 418)

This is a study of collective tales generated between the names that each traveling korean women utilizes to assert her subjectivities and the names that prescribe her subjective positions in-between the repertoires of Korea and the U.S. At this imagined and embodied site of traveling korean women in U.S. higher education, our narratives delineate multiple points of encounters of heterogeneities from both ends.
The study traces how we have been navigating multivalently narrated histories, cultural forms, and relations of Korea and the U.S. to make sense of our transnational localities in the context of U.S. higher education. Also, it examines how each of us has strategically and ambivalently explored, forged, altered and confirmed a traveling self through (un)intentional distancing, rejecting, merging and adopting the signs, practices and institutions of Korea and/or America, to free ourselves and to rework the worlds we are living in.

At some points in our journey, some of us have crossed each other while others have traveled parallel with the other without ever meeting each other but walked together. And our traveling still goes on. The stories produced in this project are completely incomplete and fractured ones. The last time I met April, she filled me with tales of her first revisit to Korea at Mira’s invitation. Mira now works as a professional dancer in the U.S. After the birth of her baby, Dr. Kim indicates that her “egalitarian” marriage is being tested almost for the first time. Sarah’s thesis project of re/searching other Korean adoptee experiences in the U.S. has led her to redefine what being a korean means to her. Anna plays with the idea of starting her career to compensate the seven years she spent in the supporting role and of her “widowhood” so that her husband could achieve his doctoral degree in the U.S. Kyung-mi, and Dr. Han thrive to advance their careers. I can never tell how these everyday life decisions, experiences and relationships will change the narratives of their travelings in the future. Through our partial narratives grounded in our experiences which may not be the truth but a reality, what this study demonstrates is that to plot only “places of birth” and degrees of nativeness is to blind oneself to the multiplicity of politics we engage in connected to
places through living in, remembering and imagining them (Malkki, 1992). Moreover, a place itself is not a homogeneous space. It needs to be remembered that our geographical movements were preceded by our cultural, academic and imaginative traveling inherited by a history of unequal relations between Korea and the U.S. - including implicated situatedness of our parent/s in it - while we still encounter and travel to Korea in the U.S. Therefore, our narratives contest and rupture the dominant logic of uncontaminated localities in which our experiences and theories are rendered too exceptional to include, if not illogical, to examine the politics, policy and practice of U.S. higher education.

In what follows, I summarize our collective tales in four themes to point to our interrelated itinerant histories and the politics we have lived: 1. Trajectories of migration between Korea and the U.S.; 2. Multiple forms and workings of patriarchy; 3. Traveling hybridity; and 4. Working inside and outside the axes of evil. I believe the first three subjects roughly correspond to my first research question while the last one addresses my second research question. I reiterate the research questions for the study:

1. How are traveling korean women based in U.S. higher education constituted through and constitute themselves at the junctures of local/ global and transnational discourses and practices?

2. In what ways have these women’s traveling practice affected the ways they negotiate multivalent power relations to which they are subject in their everyday life?
**Trajectories of Migration Between Korea and the U.S.**

We embarked on our transnational travels at different times and places with different options through different historical trajectories within history. Each woman’s different privileges and resources have distinctively twisted and shaped her choices and experiences. While the reasons and modes of our traveling must not be generalized even among ourselves - temporary migration, immigration, emigration, adopted, returning, fleeing, constant shuttling, and/or living in both - I emphasize the intertwining process of our migration between Korea and the U.S. Seriously acknowledging the privileges of having an option to enact geographical mobility for (ambiguous) betterness, I still highlight in our narratives the blurring between voluntary and involuntary migration to the U.S. As Ruth Frankenberg and Lata Mani (1996) assert, it must be taken into account in tracing our migrant trajectories that “U.S. imperialist foreign policy brings new immigrants who are ‘here because the United States was/is there,’ among them Central Americans, Koreans, Filipinos, Vietnamese, and Cambodians” (p. 274). For such cases, the constant and relentless traveling to the metropolis can be the only option; when it is the only option, it is not an option (Kondo, 1996). Whether it was for survival of a given up child, academic economic and professional aspiration, performing deviance, and/or desiring adventures, a way out for us was inevitably overlapped with a way into the U.S. This direction of movement must be critically thought through in the logic of power to examine the current global/local dynamics and complexities. For us, having no option to stay was compounded and complicated with our position of being a woman and born into and raised in certain class backgrounds.
Multiple Forms and Workings of Patriarchy

The ways we narrated our womanhoods with shifting class positions in relation to ethnic, racial, national, cultural, capitalist and/or imperial heterosexual patriarchy immensely vary and are conflicting. Sarah drifts between cultivated white middle class feminist self, lived experience of a woman of color and the mark of Korean adoptee. April desires to gain an articulate voice, that will be heard, to legitimize her not fitting self through connecting with other Korean/adopted/dyke/minority/dancers and questioning subjects that have not been dialogued with her identities constituted by U.S. dominant discourse. Anna resents the Korean patriarchal family structure as a married woman, and thus appreciates her geographical distance from Korean society and hopes for her daughter to marry a non-Korean man in motherly protection; Dr. Kim’s perspective is that everyone is making her own choices. Her point is that as much as we think it absurd that Americans want to teach their “better” ways of living for us, we should not denigrate those women’s choices in more or less traditional bound womanhoods. Dr. Han rages against sexual exploitation of Korean masculine culture in her ambivalent posture as a racialized - the meaning encompasses ‘sexualized’ - Asian/American woman in the U.S. Kyung-mi’s empowered professional self is still haunted by Korean chastity indoctrination that asexualizes female sexuality. Mira refuses to contemplate her life experience as a woman in a social structure without failing being sympathetic for those who articulate institutionalized inequality. Our heterogeneities and commonalities of anger, rage, defeat, love, hope and desire disclose multiply inscribed historical, cultural and ideological layers of regimes reigning in the site of Korean/Asian/American women that exceed the boundary of nation-state, gender
and culture. Since each of us has been living in a different, yet overlapping web of power relations, we have waged in different, yet overlapping fights grounded in our multiple localities. Consequently, even at our currently shared point of enunciation through the name of traveling korean women, each of us deals with different forms and workings of patriarchy.

**Traveling Hybridity**

In our interlocked and shifting positions caught in and moving across multivalent power relations, our subjectivities are in constant contact with and thus subject to various transnational discourses and practices of identities, gender, race, class, colonial/imperial history, and citizenship. Consequently, our traveling tales narrate how we have navigated multiple borders of everyday life, memories, imagination and desire - between subaltern and privileged, languages and cultures, racialized/sexualized body and performance, and geographical fixity and transnational connections. On these permeable borders, each of us has had different priorities and urgency to deal with different institutions in which our everyday life is structured. Despite our present convergence at the location of U.S. higher education as traveling korean women, thus, the ways in which we frame our traveling experiences and current location vastly vary. However, what binds our “traveling” narratives together is that all of us are “stuck” in-between the recalcitrant signs of Korea and the U.S. where we share the predicaments of racism, sexism, nationalism, imperialism and/or subordination (Kim & Choi, 1998).
This oxymoron space of stuck traveling utters our hybrid existences that exceed and rupture the categories of "Knowledge" in U.S. educational discourse. Mikhail Bakhtin (1981) elaborates:

The ... hybrid is not only double-voiced and double accented ... but is also double-language; for in it there are not only (and not even so much) two individual consciousness, two voices, two accents, as there are [doublings of] socio-linguistic, consciousness, two epochs ... that come together and consciously fight it out on the territory of the utterance ... It is the collision between differing points of view on the world that are embedded in these forms...such unconscious hybrids have been at the same time profoundly productive historically; they are pregnant with potential for new world views, with new "internal forms" for perceiving the world in words (Bhabha, 1996, p. 58).

At this site of collision, the hybridity, not devoid of its situated hegemonic construction, it becomes increasingly difficult to respond to a question of who is "the native" and who is "the other" as well as who is "Korean" and who is "American" (Kang, 1995). Again, since our hybrid experiences and subjectivities are results of a long history of confrontations between unequal cultures and forces, in which the stronger party struggles to control, remake, or eliminate the subordinate partner, each of us has experienced our displacement, marginalization, and reterritorialization differently even in our hybrid forms and under this current name of traveling women of Korean descent in the U.S. There is rather "a range of positioning of others" in relation to forces of domination (Lavie & Swedenburg, 1996b). As Kang (1995, P. 307) points out, "this is not a pure site of subversion, but an implicated citationality of other signs; there is no essential identity, but a necessary engagement with the contradictory array of possible identification." Through/for this study, Sarah and April succumbed and halted their once disidentification with being a korean and allowed me to force them to construct
their narratives in relation to a sign of korea, whether the process involved rejection, denial, reconstitution, or exploration of the official and/or stereotypic name. The effect is the production of their published/legitimized narratives in the name of korean. The similar effects have brought in with Anna, Mira and Dr.Kim’s narratives in relation to their non-citizen subjectivities in the U.S., Kyung-mi’s relation with her racialized position and Dr.Han’s gendered narrative under the weight of race in U.S. cultural scenes. They might have not used the vocabularies I chose in my academic language translated - processed - from their stories. Yet, their engagements, new and old, are now conversed in this multiple-voiced, multiple accented, and double languaged project. In this location, the question is not on what we are, but how we would deploy the partial cultural - temporally and spatially - from which we emerge to construct visions of community, and visions of historic memory, that give narrative form to the unremarked positions we occupy, where power is unequal (Bhabha, 1998).

Working Inside and Outside the Axes of Evil

This kind of engagement works through the possibilities of very radical forms of experience: our resistant acts (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997a). Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson (1997a, p. 20) write, “If one of the modes of operations of power is to attach identities to subjects, to tie subjects to their own identities through self-knowledge, then resistance serves to reshape subjects by untying or untidying that relationship.” Our traveling narratives express our self-conscious, willful in/separating and un/mixing gestures inside, outside and crossing the shifting axes of gender, race, class, sexuality and citizenship to make the best within the circumstances of our everyday experience.
Consequently, we as collective voices are not containable through a subjective position, which, nevertheless, are still regulated by the omnipresent disciplinary power of those differentiations.

By resisting korean patriarchy, social stratifications, authoritative structures, and academic politics, some of us renounce our memories and attachments to the (lovely) signs of Korea. By defying racism, orientalism, imperial patriarchy, heterosexism, and military domination of the U.S., some of us disown our legitimate (homely) space within the U.S. The price we pay is to become “국제미아 - gukjemia, a lost child between nations”: neither insider or outsider nor insider and outsider. Our strategies, resistance and transformation may be reinscribing and deepening certain kinds of dominant discourses such as Asian women fleeing from a wretched condition of life to a better and equal society of the U.S., the U.S. as the white America, and the danger of contacts with the foreign/colonizer for korean/colonized women (e.g. Fanon, 1967). Yet, at the same time, we fracture, interrupt, and intervene in those discourses. Our narratives acknowledge that within U.S. national borders, the chanting of “Chinese go home” includes us as korean women, politicizing and denaturalizing Asian/American collectivity. Simultaneously, some of us contest that nationalistic and nativist feminist/multicultural inclusion excludes us as traveling hybrid subjects who are not containable in a state imposed identity. If “the American nation is founded on myths of mobility that disavow the histories of both the immobility of ghettoization and the forced dislocations of Asian Americans” (Lowe, 1996, p. 82), then our in/voluntary mobility stuck to this nation fractures its national myth. In relation to Korean official discourse, we all are tainted, rootless (selfish) westernized women, yet we continue our
resistance against western domination in our commitment to being korean. When we
are also claimed as daughters/mothers of the Korean nation, some of us put forth our
connections through our “love” with women, not through the name of Korea. If the
Korean nation valorizes its geographical, cultural and ethnic fixity (Yang, 1998), then
our geopolitical and cultural mobility as well as interracially mixing relationships
obfuscate its national purity.

What must be articulated in our messy transgressing acts is that we have learned
to relate with each other, supposedly disconnected and dispersed, through our partially
shared experiences of a particular form of racism, neo/colonization, patriarchy, class-
exploitation and/or heterosexism, to fight back and survive together. Our collisions,
disagreements, and differences continue with our collective narratives under this
imaginative identity of traveling women of korea in the U.S. to unmask and
denaturalize global/local power relations each of us is dealing with in our everyday life.
The digression of our collective narratives enables us to connect with people whom we
did not know how to relate to as we realize how our worlds are inseparable through
tracing our interconnected yet diverged traveling trajectories. Let me include April’s
words here.

I notice I have to, I have a foot in so many different bowls that I can't say, and
I'm glad I can't say it, but when I was younger I definitely did say it. Oh I don't
like these people. I think these people are better. So because I'm connected to
all these different things in some way, I am in some way saying to myself
without knowing it and then going oh you're saying you don't like this part
about yourself and I'm like oh, no I like that about myself but you just said, so
there's a sense of like, for instance being a lesbian who likes to pack once in a
while and who likes to change my gender appearance. When my father died I
said I hate all men. I don't want to see a man in my life. Don't ever talk to me.
Somebody talked to me, like he's a guy. I'd be like don't talk to me and then
realizing, I was going through a variety of things but realizing also that I can't hate men. I like to look like a man once in a while. What does that mean?

Our mothers, fathers, asian/americans, people of color, koreans, lesbians (of color), migrants, professional women, wives of international students, working class, middle class white americans, neo/colonized people, disabled, women with infertility, korean prostitutes, third world feminists, advisors/mentors, students, adoptees, christians, jews, people of trinidad, biracial, AIDs infected, and korean/asian/american women; these were a few names we had to have to weave our collective narratives of traveling korean women in U.S. higher education.

Lowe's discussion of subaltern resistance (1996) is particularly useful. Based on Gramsci's concepts, she writes that subaltern classes are by definition "not unified."

She continues

[T]hat is, these groups are not a fixed, unified force of a single character. Rather the assertion of "integral autonomy" by "not unified" classes suggest a coordination of distinct, yet allied, positions, practices, and movements - class identified and not class-identified, in parties and not, race-based and gender-based - each in its own, not necessarily equivalent manner transforming, disrupting, and destructuring the apparatuses of a specific hegemony. The independent forms and locations of challenge -cultural, as well as economic and political - constitute what Gramsci calls a "new historical bloc," a new set of relationships that together embody a different hegemony and a different balance of power. (p. 70)

Our conflicting multitudes and hybridities in relationships, experiences, affiliations, and resistance do not weaken the strengths and connections we are building in this heretical site. To the contrary, differences represent great opportunities to imagine, invent and practice connections until all these differences become ever more destabilized from the continued displacement of names of differences, but without losing the sight of different meanings of historical and structural subordinations for
different individuals and groups (Afzal-Khan, 1996-7; Chow, 1993b; Christian, 1987; Lowe, 1996; U Narayan, 1997). Smadar Lavie and Ted Swedenburg (1996b) sum up:

One minority can form alliance with another, based on experiences its heterogeneous membership partially shares, each in his or her fragmented identity, without trying to force all fragments to cohere into a seamless narrative before approaching another minority. Having recognized that insisting on an all-or-nothing approach is counterproductive, many minorities are building bridges among themselves based on such overlapping fragments. They strategically suspend their unshared historical specificities, at a price, for the moment. (p. 10)

Implications for the Studies of U.S. Higher Education

Through our learning and schooling in U.S. higher education and living and working in the U.S., we have acquired the tastes and sample some of the benefits and privileges, of living with the metropolitan culture. Our elite status comes about through the alignment of our cultural and economic interests with those of the Emperor rather than with those of the subjugated (Smith, 1999). What Fanon (1967/1991) writes is poignant:

Professor D. Westermann, in The African Today (p. 331), says that the Negroes’ inferiority complex is particularly intensified among the most educated, who must struggle with it unceasingly. Their way of doing so, he adds, is frequently naïve: “The wearing of European clothes, whether rags or the most up-to-date style; using European furniture and European form of social intercourse; adorning the Native language with European expressions; using bombastic phrases in speaking or writing a European language; all these contribute to a feeling of equality with the European and his achievements.” (p. 25)

He (1967/1991, p. 69) continues, “The Negro is a savage, whereas the student is civilized. ‘You’re us,’ Coulanges tells him: and if anyone thinks you are a Negro he is mistaken, because you merely look like one.” Power is at once repulsive and intoxicating (Minh-Ha, 1989).

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Particularly the narratives produced by those of us who migrated to the U.S. (officially) for our education are inexorably implicated with the validation of satellite status of Third World educational systems and the subsequent move to a U.S. academic institution as the pursuit of excellence (John, 1989, p. 54). Then, how should we comprehend our current location in geopolitical U.S. higher education institutions when it is juxtaposed with Smith’s argument (1999) that the imperial global hunt for new knowledges, people, materials, and cure brings a new wave of exploration, discovery, exploitation, and appropriation? How should we as the privileged migrant academics work with the resentment that insists U.S. higher education prefers a more “qualified” middle class to the dispossessed, regardless of race, gender and citizenship (McCarthy, 2000)? How should we assert our traveling consciousness when it (unwittingly) buttresses commodified global multiculturalism in U.S. higher education, which eventually serves the capitalist/racist/patriarchal empire (Dirlik, 1997)? These are just a few questions we must engage in critical dialogues with various constituents of U.S. higher education.

Future studies are seriously called for to examine how the discourses and practices of U.S. higher education contribute to, and are shaped by, the contemporary power relations of globalization, particularly in regard to the continuing history of U.S. imperialism. This study shows how slippery rhetorics and practices of internationalization, globalization and/or multiculturalism of U.S. higher education leak in the narratives of traveling korean women. Transnational migrations, encounters and (dis)connections of people via U.S. higher education, which “disciplines” and “educates” its constituents and aspiring constituents to police and uphold its dominance,
will continue as they have been. In this space, the workings of gender, race, class, sexuality, culture, citizenship, and geography easily frustrate our learned desire for coherent, consistent and congruent narratives (e.g. Sagaria, 2000). Testimonies from and of particular histories and geography must continue to circulate to locate where U.S. higher education stands in the sustaining mechanics of imperialism both in the U.S. society and various Third World territories. In turn, articulating different groups’ relationships with U.S. higher education within and against legitimate categorizations constructed and working through the discourse of internationalization, globalization and multiculturalism will open up a space to ask and think differently about the responsibilities, roles, policies and practices of U.S. higher education at global/local societies. Can the name “U.S.” higher education be different from the “U.S.” empire?

Closing

Our ambiguous, transient and unsettling relationships explored through the imagined collective voices of traveling korean women in the U.S. reflect different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of our transnational traveling around the past, present and future (Hall, 1990). By moving across and engaging with the different sites in our traveling itineraries, what becomes important for us is to understand where we are with whom in order to make sense of who we are in a historical world. As we continue to meet various people, add a new world to our residence list, and struggle against the interlocking dominant organizations of life reigning in many worlds in very different forms, our identities are and will be constantly negotiated and transformed with the possibility of another (painful) subject

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transformations. As Stuart Hall (1990) writes, they are subject to the “play” of history, culture and power.

Having lived through the limitations inherent in the politics based on naturalized racial, ethnic, cultural or national identities, I assert in this project of re/searching and writing us the significance of having open “eye/I” (Kondo, 1990) for our living together. Collective narratives of heterogeneity are possible only when we are willing to see how our experiences, desire and future are connected to each other; perhaps that is more important than to have a (legitimate) identity. Consequently, in this location, we become able to learn and communicate how well we are doing in not clinging to an unquestionable ideal of who we are and rather using it as a base to create multivalent alliances with people with whom we live together in this world. In this project, our heterogeneities from multiple ends allow us to validate each other’s existence. As Chow (1993a) warns, our survival may depend on our ability to question continuously our clinging, which at certain moments becomes the source of oppression we want to survive.

While we are living in our “heterogeneity, hybridity and multiplicity” (Lowe, 1996), there are names waiting before we enter to the world/s, reflecting our defined positionalities in a particular institutionalized world. Most of us are acutely aware of the impossibility of ultimate transcendence over established categories of culture, nation-state, gender, sexuality, class, and race in our institutionalized everyday life (Kang, 1995). For instance, Lugones (1987) as a woman of color recognizes much of her traveling to hostile Anglo/white worlds as compulsory. Our hybridity have never been a leisurely choice. As much as we value our self-determined aspects of
transnational life trajectories as resistance, intervention and strategic mobility, it is also
important not to obliterate what we have lost and given up in our travelings, if we can
demarcate gain and loss in definite terms. I do not forget everyone’s heartrending
remarks at different points in different circumstances, “Had I known the consequences”
or “Had I had a choice” about her transnational traveling. We must not overlook why
our “certain” interests, imagination, desire and lived experiences are overwritten so that
our variant connections, relationships and experiences with the names that exclude us
in multiple ways still remain silent within the murky borderlines of rationalistic
cultural patriarchal discourses. In this way, we do not intoxicate ourselves through
narcissistic victory narratives.

In this fraught moment, Lugones (1987) still promotes that world traveling is a
skillful, creative, rich and enriching way of being and living in this world. The purpose
of co-constructing our traveling tales is neither to celebrate world travelers nor to
corporize our hybrid beings. As collective voices produced through this study, I hope
that we hear each other who are active creators and embodiments of border crossing
politics. In the volatile dynamics of the subject, identity and resistance, I see our
prolific acts of owning and disowning create a new possibility for others to “cross paths
with it or retrace it” in Foucault’s term (cited in Gupta & Ferguson, 1997b, p. 19). I
believe that the possibilities of re/searching and writing lie in this belief and practice
that we can write a shared history of neo/colonialism, racism, economic exploitation,
gender inequality, and injustice to form sufficient common ground for collective
practices in order to write a shared present. I reiterate Lugones' words (1987, p.
401): “Traveling to someone’s worlds leads us to understand even very dimly what it is

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to be them and what it is to be ourselves in their eyes. Only when we have traveled to
each other's worlds are we fully subjects to each other.” Therefore, traveling-in-
dwelling and dwelling-in-traveling is a commitment I take as an inauthentic alien
native to enunciate that the world contains more than "We" and "the Other" with a call
to invite more people to join our world traveling. Through the constant shuffling and
shuttling, we envision, we living -neither dying nor surviving - you living, and our
cohabiting and collaborating together through such a “weak universal of human
emancipation” (Ong, 1997).
APPENDIX A

TOTAL NUMBER OF KOREAN INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS
IN U.S. HIGHER EDUCATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Korean students</th>
<th>% Korean international student total</th>
<th>Rank</th>
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<tr>
<td>1954/5</td>
<td>1,197</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959/60</td>
<td>2,474</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964/5</td>
<td>2,604</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969/70</td>
<td>3,991</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980/1</td>
<td>6,150</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984/5</td>
<td>16,430</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989/90</td>
<td>21,710</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994/5</td>
<td>33,600</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996/7</td>
<td>37,130</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997/8</td>
<td>42890</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998/9</td>
<td>39,199</td>
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<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999/00</td>
<td>41,191</td>
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Table A.1: Total number of Korean international students enrolled in U.S. higher education degree programs in selected years.
## APPENDIX B

**TOTAL NUMBER OF KOREAN STUDENTS IN U.S. INTENSIVE ENGLISH PROGRAMS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Korean students</th>
<th>% Korean in IEP student total</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1980/1</td>
<td>420</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984/5</td>
<td>2,154</td>
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</tr>
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<tr>
<td>1996/7</td>
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<tr>
<td>1997/8</td>
<td>12,128</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998/9</td>
<td>5,488</td>
<td>12.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999/00</td>
<td>7,714</td>
<td>10.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000/01</td>
<td>12,722</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table B.1: Total number of Korean students enrolled in “Intensive English Programs (IEP)” in selected years.
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