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Being in the world : an existential inquiry of knowing one's self through a personal project : in the context of dissertation survival

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BEING IN THE WORLD: AN EXISTENTIAL INQUIRY OF KNOWING ONE'S
SELF THROUGH A PERSONAL PROJECT—IN THE CONTEXT OF
DISSERTATION SURVIVAL

An Abstract of a Dissertation
Submitted
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

Approved:

Dr. Robert M. Boody, Committee Chair

Dr. Michael J. Licari,
Dean of the Graduate College

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May 2012

ABSTRACT

This study—a philosophical exploration, partly in an autoethnographical account—provides an empirical demonstration that one’s personal project has a strong and positive impact on the dissertation process both for endurance to complete the process and for quality of the product. The concept of project is often explained as one’s pursuit of his or her most important philosophical issues. This dissertation originated in the very beginning of my doctoral education in summer 2000 when I first encountered the man behind the coffee shop counter. In his life story he expressed a strong question about the problem of knowledge and authentic living. How to overcome the nature of language to express sensitive human experience and awareness of existence which manifests in multiple layers of epistemological and ontological reality—the project of this person, and my own which I had acknowledged in my adolescence, have been shared since that summer.

In my dissertation, the notion of “Being in the world” derives from both the Zen Ten Ox Herding pictures as well as Martin Heidegger’s concept of human existence. In the Zen teaching, even after experiencing the light of the world, the most important thing is that one must still live his or her life among people. Heidegger’s Being-in-the-world connotes the life of human being living toward his or her life with the awareness of such ontological existence. During my long academic and mental stagnation, the sense of responsibility for my project sustained me through the difficulties. However, it was only after becoming an active doctoral student again that I regained my voice to stand up for my own questions to direct my research process.

Once we describe phenomenon, the reality that is pointed to and the description are not the same. And often our reality in the present time consists of the recollection of past memories, which appear in non-linear order. In order to challenge these issues of temporality and language, I have taken a form of narrative representation to help readers re-create their own dimension of reality.

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Dr. Robert M. Boody, Committee Chair

Dr. Deborah K. Deemer, Committee Member

Dr. Ripley E. Marston, Committee Member

Dr. James B. Robinson, Committee Member

Dr. Michael D. Waggoner, Committee Member

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May 2012

DEDICATION

To my parents, who have always given me their faith for completing what I cared for even though they would not get to know what I was really doing.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to begin to note my gratitude for my dissertation chair, Dr. Robert Boody, who has been patient with me all the way through this long dissertation process. You were the first professor who showed me the most sincere and seamless explanations about validity issues of both quantified and qualified representations of human experiences in the social sciences. The idea of having you as my dissertation chair was my backbone especially during my stagnated years. Since Fall 1999 until now, I had the privilege to attend and re-attend 12 semester courses of 7 graduate level subjects you taught (not including additional individual courses), and year after year there was always something I could newly learn from you. Especially since I began to apprentice to you in the later years, we have exchanged so many thoughts and ideas. I am very grateful that you have always accepted my challenge in our discussion to my heart's content. Over these years, you surely trained me to carry involved arguments. Still, when our debate got heated, I was too irritated or mad at you to hold my temper. Even two days before the committee meeting, we were still arguing over the structure and content of my dissertation. I must have been your headache. Well, everything seems peaceful now after all the storms. My head is sore, and so may be yours. I truly thank you, Dr. Boody, my dearest teacher, for being there.

Although he left my committee due to his retirement, still I would like to express how much I owe my education to Dr. John Smith. Without your qualitative course in the Summer 2000 semester, my dissertation on personal project would not have started. My heart still rushes fondly today when I recall the memory of my experiences during that

summer course. The hermeneutic approach you presented taught me how ethical it could be to be a knower facing the known. In a sense, I am glad you are no longer in my committee, because if I raved about your course so enthusiastically while you were there in the meeting, I can imagine how you would shake your head and roll your eyes showing your grouchy face. Thank you, Dr. Smith. You gave me a purpose for my doctoral experience here at UNI.

Speaking of faculty members in my dissertation committee, whom I have known for a long, the next member to note should be Prof. James Robinson, who has been part of my academic endeavor since my Masters. It's been many years since the Spring 1997 semester when I took your Eastern philosophy course, and then your Mysticism course the following year. I appreciated your deep and diverse knowledge of spirituality across the world both East and West. In a sense, what I learned from you has been the fountain of knowledge for my project as far as we refer to the notion of ultimate reality and Being that is indescribable in nature. I was connecting the heightened consciousness in leisure experiences with the notions of the mystical to guide my thesis of spirituality. Existential thoughts in my life and the goal of Zen really came together for me during the time I took your courses. Professor Robinson, thank you for being there and helping me work through my project to this day. I am happy when I imagine you will have my dissertation sitting besides my Masters project in your book shelf.

Another long-term committee member is Dr. Deb Deemer. She has always been supportive and caring for my emotional well-being as well as for the intellectual progress of my dissertation since 2004. When Dr. Smith initially suggested me I talk to you for

my dissertation committee, I was very thrilled. You might not remember but one day in the Spring 2001 semester, you came to Dr. Al-Mabuk's graduate level Human Development Theory course as a guest lecturer and spoke about Vygotsky's theory of social development relating to young adults. I was so fascinated by what you talked about that got my mind rushing very fast that day, for I could related your information to my adolescence experiences as well as to someone I was paying attention to. Though I put you on hold for long years in the committee, you welcomed me back open-heartedly when I returned to my dissertation. It meant a lot to me to find out I still had you. Thank you, Dr. Deemer for all your encouragement for me to strive for high expectations.

Now, I would like to show my gratitude to Dr. Rip Marston who joined my dissertation committee in spring 2010. We have actually known each other since I started my first job at the gym office in spring 1997. There were many things I had to learn in the unfamiliar work environment, but some PE faculty members were so supportive and helped me to get better at my job. Rip, you were one of those people. And you have been always kind and respectful to every worker in the office. When I was desperate to fill the empty seat in my committee right before a proposal defense, you gave me your immediate and unconditional support to agree to serve on my committee. On top of your moral support for my dissertation, your feedback on my drafts was always very thorough and helpful. Thank you very much, Rip. If my dissertation research has given you a new and useful experience, I am happy.

Now, last but not least in my dissertation committee, I would like to note my special thanks for Dr. Michael Waggoner whom I contacted after Dr. Smith retired.

Knowing about you as the editor of the Journal of Religion and Education, I was very happy and honored to have you in my committee. I was aware that ontological issues run through my dissertation, which may connect with religious and spiritual dimensions of knowing. Dr. Waggoner, thank you for your full support for my dissertation even from the ambiguous proposal stage. I often remember in the proposal defense you said “I trust her” pointing out the importance of the beginning story (initial version of the Prologue) in the proposal. Such encouragement for, and interest in, the potential of my dissertation helped me determine to shift the direction of my dissertation to focus on what I really needed to do for my dissertation. Although I am not certain whether I could successfully display any of my goals met in my dissertation, I am very grateful for how things turned out.

My academic growth and my writing skills cannot be separately described. I owe my writing skills today to Dr. Deanne Gute, the director of the UNI Writing Center. Thank you, Deanne, for coaching my writing during my Masters and the initial coursework period of my doctoral program. Almost weekly for five years I had the privilege to consult with you, one of the best writing specialists on campus, to go over my writing assignments. What a luxury I had in those days! Your method of coaching writing was imprinted somewhere in my head. Now, even without you, I can check my errors as if you were sitting with me and guiding me to find grammatical mistakes or unclear expressions on my own by reading my writing aloud. Thank you, Deanne. Without you, I might not have had the joy of writing as I do now.

Even though in an anonymous way, I would like to note my gratitude to the person whose way of being in the world was the origin of my dissertation. Thank you for being there and coming into my life to remind me of my project. I truly wish you the best for everything you will do.

Finally, I would like to note my dearest thanks to Brad, my love and my best friend for over the past 11 years. You always gave me the kind of strength to become a complete being. And it makes me want to be the kind of person who can do the same. Thank you for being patient and understanding as well. I am very happy that you can now see I accomplished something that I cared for very much.

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PROLOGUE

A STORY THAT CONNECTS PAST AND PRESENT

Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future,
And time future contained in time past.
If all time is eternally present
All time is unredeemable.
What might have been is an abstraction
Remaining a perpetual possibility
Only in a world of speculation.
What might have been and what has been
Point to one end, which is always present.
Footfalls echo in the memory
Down the passage which we did not take
Towards the door we never opened
Into the rose-garden. My words echo
Thus, in your mind. (Eliot, 1943/1971, p. 13)

Twelve summers have already passed since I met the person who prompted this dissertation in the back of the coffee shop counter. More precisely, the encounter with this coffee shop man that summer called back my past self and personal project which had been buried. Having being a doctoral student that whole time, 12 years, I would not pretend that all those academic years, now in the past, were lived fully in every moment. There were a number of things I should have done, and did not or could not do, as a doctoral student who sought after a certain personal project to be her dissertation. Inspiration and struggle exist together throughout the process of completing a dissertation. Time passes on and things change their appearances, which is very much reality I am facing right at this moment. The forms of the past in our memory slightly shift into something different each time they are recollected. And my story of the past may appear to me differently each time from what actually happened, as my reflection and search for

meaning continues. Even further, the audience views someone else's life through their own life experiences. Thinking of the nature of language, telling a story of my own past self could be a failing attempt. T. S. Eliot's poem above titled "Burnt Norton" in *Four Quartets* continues "But to what purpose/Disturbing the dust on a bowl of rose-leaves/I do not know" (Eliot, 1943/1971, p. 13). I do not know yet myself, either. Nevertheless, by opening this chapter, here is the beginning of a story I choose to experiment to write.

Other echoes

Inhabit the garden. Shall we follow?
Quick, said the bird, find them, find them,
Round the corner. Through the first gate,
Into our first world, shall we follow
The deception of the thrush? Into our first world. (Eliot, 1943/1971, pp. 13-14)

Meeting the Coffee Shop Man

Twelve summers ago, I met him in the coffee shop at the corner of the street in a small university neighborhood. He was a tall, slender, Caucasian man of 22-23 years with short blond hair. When I entered the coffee shop, he was always there smiling behind the counter. Stepping inside the coffee shop door, the first thing one sensed was the strong coffee aroma, then a slight sound of music in the back. Art works on the red-painted walls were lighted up. The customers, with their beverage reading or chatting, had their own worlds at their tables. There were many sounds in the shop—the music, the voices, the sound of dragged chairs, the hiss of the espresso machine, the coffee bean grinder, and so on. Strangely, all the elements of coffee shop seemed to fall silent once I sat at the table. Often after the day's work I stopped by and did some reading in this place. We did not talk much in the beginning of the first summer, although he always

gave me a kind acknowledgment and greeting. He was a part of the atmosphere of my favorite coffee shop. He always let every customer take time to select their beverages and served them pleasantly and carefully. I did not know exactly why, but something directed my attention to him as he served coffee at the counter.

One summer day, during the qualitative research class in my doctoral program, I was assigned to interview someone relating to my interest area. Back then, I was still planning to emphasize leisure in my doctoral studies, and to my eyes this coffee shop was serving meaningful leisure time for the college community. I thought of him as someone I should talk to. My heart palpitated with anxiety because I had not talked to this person about anything personal before. If I had not had this interview assignment for the summer class, I would never have made myself meet with him after such a short time period. Despite my sweaty hands and heavy heartbeats while asking him the favor, he smiled and bent down a little bit to listen to what I was going to tell him. Up till that moment, I had never imagined that he was not a student of the university just across the street. I said, "I'd like to interview you about college students and the meaning of the coffee shop," assuming that he was also a student. However, he told me that he was not a student anymore. He had quit college some years before. A moment of hesitation occurred, but I did not want to give up on interviewing him because of such a reason. I quickly changed my focus and told him that I wanted to talk to him as one who was serving other people's leisure time.

A week later, I finished writing a short descriptive paper about this coffee shop, the people there, and his work, using this three hour interview and my observations at the

site. It was just the beginning of knowing about him. At that time, I did not think that I would do any further writing about him after this interview assignment.

Words, Knowledge, and Problem Associated

It was a sunny afternoon, still in the early summer. We were sitting on the shaded sidewalk outside of the coffee shop, and he was listening while I read out my paper about his work place. In the meantime, our conversation naturally went to the topic of why he left college a few years before. Pointing to a tall tree behind the buildings across the street, he said, "The tree is not a tree." He explained to me how the knowledge poured into his head became a burden to him, as if it was a restriction from knowing and appreciating something as it truly is. He said that he preferred to appreciate the whole tree instead of thinking of its name or category. To him, busy memorization of such information to be tested on, especially, he said, in general education courses, was meaningless after a certain point. It was his senior year when he left college. During this conversation, I had a flashback of the dilemma I had had fifteen years previously.

Everything cognized through perception is left behind in the next moment, and what we try to capture in words is not the same as the reality – the realization of the nature of what we call knowledge was powerful and painful for the 18 year old prep school student who had never had a doubt about gaining knowledge to better know about the world in order to free herself to reach the wider world. As Korzybski (1933) put it, the word is not the same as what it refers to, and the map is not the territory. His General Semantics certainly makes sense when we stop and take it into deeper consideration.

However, how easily the word or the map can trick our mind into seeing what it refers to as the reality!

Speaking of the reality, there are different levels of epistemology, indeed, and the argument on what knowledge we are talking about in terms of truth is critical. After this overwhelming realization, it was unbearable for me to keep thinking of college education as the path for true knowledge. Knowing a lot of things would not mean that you know something deeply. All the knowledge of the world handed down to me would not become mine unless I experienced it for myself. Even my thought and action, which I believed to be under my free will, was through words, but I had never questioned about my knowing myself through such words. The conventional admiration of knowledge seemed a bitter irony to me then. I was ready to quit college.

Having parental pressure for education, however, I somehow remained on the college track. Nevertheless, I made a change in my selection of school from a university with a strong program in international politics to a national college located in the ancient capital city of Japan. It may not be necessary to major in international politics in order to become worldly wise, although I had been held strongly by this reasoning of my choosing this institution. In this change, however, I thought I could better experience cultural traditions and heritages of my own country before going to see the world. At the same time, I avoided conflict with my parents who had been so supportive about sending their child to a good college. After the series of life events in the following years I decided to go to graduate school in the U.S., and ultimately ending up in a doctoral program in education.

A story was unfolding in front of me. This time, my coffee shop man was trying to tell something important that changed his life. What we call the tree is not actually a “tree”—but it is how we describe to call it. We think we know something by its name, but actually the name would never be what the thing itself. In our education, what we learn as new knowledge is mostly things and condition of things labeled and categorized for further classifications of things. What we believed to know was just names but things as they are. I thought I could relate to what he meant from where I was coming from.

Living in the Moment

Back to the sidewalk that sunny afternoon, to my question of what he would want to do instead of going to college, he told me that he wanted to create music. I asked him if he had considered studying music composition in the university across the street. And his answer was “no.” Because of his strong belief that music creation is not about following codes and notes, but about something springing from the person who plays, he did not agree with the classical music education of theories and practicing for competition. To him, gaining more lifeless sets of labels and categories seemed rather a distraction to his creativity. Instead, he wished to learn how to make music by doing it. Everyday life working in the coffee shop, meeting people, and making music was according to him the way he could experience his own existence in the world. Some days later, I was the only customer in the shop when he was playing a tune on the piano. He looked back at me sitting at the corner of the shop, and said something about the music I just heard never being the same next time. Then, he started playing another piece. I felt like crying while listening—something was precious in the moment.

Our human life consists of constant development of information formed through our perceptions. We use language to represent what is perceived: language categorizes our reality, and information developed in such language influences our perceptions. However existence is more than what we can sense in our experience. A French existentialist and phenomenologist, Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962/2002) notes that "[t]he world is there before any possible analysis of mine" (p. x). Although there are things in the physical world that I cannot grasp precisely to relate to the context of my perceived world, Merleau-Ponty tells us that the sensation I have in the surrounding world actually happens because I am there in the moment. Then, what is the meaning of our being in the world in our interaction with such temporality?

People have tried to overcome the gap in this ontological dilemma—the impossible clarity of existence in which the world as it is presents to us but it is only through what language could represent, even in the most sensitive transcendental experience. I observe Jean-Paul Sartre's (1956/1992) existential thoughts emphasized the freedom of one's self that resulted from negating each moment which imprisoned human existence through one's perception and conception. As against the intellectual effort in negation, there is always also something newly experienced; thus, the struggle would never end in negation alone.

This dilemma of clarity can relate to the basis of human suffering in Buddhist traditions in the pursuit of nothingness, oneness, hence the Buddha mind. When my coffee shop man said, "the tree is not a tree," in fact it reminded me of Zen teaching, because it sounded like a question a Zen master might give to his disciples. What Zen

discipline and the existentialist's ongoing reflection share is their search for freedom toward Being: one has to live one's ongoing life, clarifying each moment in community, even after grasping the transcendence of existence. As Zen Master Joshu told his disciples, the one who goes beyond Buddha is anyone leading an ox and plowing the field (Green, 1998). In Zen teaching, the final goal is not attaining Enlightenment, but simply being in the world, living a life among people beyond such awareness.

His Project and My Project

Since that summer, our conversation and his music hung on in my mind. I was fascinated by noticing this person with such a personal 'project,' if I may borrow Sartre's notion picked out from Heidegger's *Being and Time* (1962), behind the coffee shop counter. Something substantial behind this conversation of the first summer made me wish to know more about him. Months and years were passing by, and I was still sipping coffee and reading there. Some regular customers finished school and moved away. Some old staff left the shop and some new staff started working. Meanwhile, the shop faced an ownership change which also caused its location to change to the building around the corner. The shop hours shortened, and the time I could spend in the shop became limited accordingly. In the new location, there was neither the piano nor the live music events as often as before. Many things changed around the coffee shop while he remained serving coffee and making music.

For the first couple years I was observing things at the coffee shop, and yet I could not decide whether I would be really able to write about this coffee shop man for my dissertation. Indeed, knowing about others is dialectic and self-reflexive in nature. I

had gone through a self-search in my range of questions: Why did I notice him? What made me find something interesting in him? Doesn't what I think I recognized about him actually mean what I wanted to see in him? Exposing my interest in this coffee shop man for the dissertation seemed to me revealing my very personal and emotional issues such as my ego, my assumptions, and the struggles of my daily life to the entire world.

If ten people wrote about him, there would be ten different stories. My understanding of a person's life at a time is one interpretation, and my description of my understanding will produce yet another interpretation in each reader. And what I can know or understand about someone is always partial, never being the whole of what the person actually is. Immersed myself in the literature of representation issues (Rorty, 1979) and of the validity of qualitative method for social science, especially ethnographical research (Hammersley, 1998), I was feeling a heavy responsibility to the individual I was going to write about. A falsely framed life story could be nothing but damage to the relationship between the participant and the researcher. Indeed, whatever the story I would write about him could only demonstrate what I understood out of part of his life. And my understanding of his partial life story is formed through my interpretation. And each moment of acknowledging something in one's life is more than what we could express in words, but such interpretation is still limited through the capacity of language, which is the central problem in expressing our inspiration.

My coffee shop man and I, both of us in our own ways, had been searching for how to express our way of being in the world that cannot be fully described. Finding the person whom I could share the most delicate issue of knowledge had made me even more

cautious. Although my fascination noticing him that first summer never faded, I had to clear some of my uneasiness about the possibility of doing right for this project, both ethically and academically.

Crashing against the Barrier of Scientific Research

Hearing my research topic in the dissertation seminar Spring 2002, the former Dean of the College of Education teased me by saying, “Do you want to marry this guy?” He responded as if I was joking about the idea of doing ethnographical research on the person working at the coffee shop, and apparently did not consider it worthy academic research. Well, my coffee shop man was not my love interest, a point of which I had to make sure to myself before engaging for ethical reasons in this project prospectus. Indeed, I had had a boyfriend for more than a year. Our conversation in the seminar seemed rather animated during my presentation of the knowledge claim that I raised with some themes I identified in the dialogue with him about his coffee shop work. There was a hint of Romanticism in his perspectives in the first interview—for example, his view of the coffee shop was so much on the role of people who come and go subtly creating positive energy of the place as a whole, and I considered it as the indication of interesting phenomenon as a study of life story.

I knew I risked looking naïve as a researcher. The life story approach I presented had no objective measurement, and only one subject. Time back then was still the early days for self-reflexive and autoethnographical studies appearing in the social sciences. In addition, this dean was an empiricist scholar who valued the modernist type of studies as “scientific research.” However, my study proposal I presented in this doctoral seminar

was not structured in the usual procedures—the selection of a specified topic, theoretical framework based on the previous research on the topic, and selection of the subjects who may best represent for the population investigated—which maintain objectivity to enable generalization. For those who appreciated only experimental research as the best form of science, there was no research value in a life story. Besides, the fact is, as I have to admit now, that my research idea was not clear enough to deliver and defend the underlying concept of my project, and I was not prepared to defend my project of life story against a vision of science rooted in positivism.

What is science, anyway? Since the ancient period of human existence, people have tried to understand and explain the phenomenon of the world in their own terms. In a broader sense, philosophy and science used to look at the same subjects – some natural phenomenon and some human phenomenon, and they still do. A couple years after the seminar, I came across Thomas Kuhn's (1962/1996) *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. His review of the history of science shed a light on the nature of science. What Kuhn calls a "paradigm" is a base of inquiry—such as people's experiences, observations and inspirations—which guides the early stages of scientific inquiry even without a tested theory. As an area of inquiry matures, it becomes "normal" science in which there is more testing and evaluation within its own system. However, when a new paradigm appears, there is no smooth connection between the old systems of ideas encapsulated in the former "normal science"—human knowledge forms incommensurably (Kuhn, 1962/1996).

More years passed by, and then I knew that I could have presented the former dean with a better argument that narrative projects such as life history are a form of academic research in social science, no matter how the empiricists criticize it. It should be noted there have long been descriptive and analytical traditions of life story in social sciences such as psychology (e.g., Freud), sociology (e.g., the Chicago School), and anthropology. Although the amount of narrative research in the social sciences has increased over the past decade, and more and more first-person narrative is encouraged (e.g., Polkinghorne, 1997), such a trend might not satisfactorily explain its validity as science to people with an opposed philosophy. Or, some people in the disciplines of humanistic inquiry might not want to consider their qualitative studies as science, either.

Another authority figure at the university cynically told me that this research trend of qualitative, narrative story writing is a fad, showing his disapproval of this type of research as real science. He continued, “it is only qualitative people who try to discuss ‘what is science?’ to defend themselves.” However, I realized he was not correct on that; John Dewey discussed his view of what called for scientific inquiry in his book, *How We Think* (Dewey, 1910/1991). There is also a literature in philosophy of science written by authors who were originally from the “hard sciences,” including physical chemistry (Polanyi, 1958), and physics (Feyerabend, 1975/1993; Kuhn, 1962/1996).

During my initial years, I was not yet prepared to defend a dissertation proposal. The original idea of a study on the coffee shop man seemed too complicated to explain because of the multiple layers of ontological and epistemological meanings in our encounter. What was it? Why did I notice him? Why am I writing this dissertation?

Because I was the one who sensed something important there. No matter what other people call it, instead of pretending it is their kind of science, it seems more truthful to present what I have as a story. Figuring out things around us in our own terms is, back to the original notion of inquiry, both science and philosophy. What can we do to capture the temporality and the essence of what is being experienced for our projects, such as his music creation and my writing dissertation? I have been hanging onto such questions for my dissertation, throughout my later academically-stagnated years.

Years Invisible in Darkness

The memory is bitter and sweet for the most instances when I look back in the past. I often call my stagnated years my Dark Age when talking about those days, but it was not that dark itself. It was just that I felt I was invisible to others and to myself academically and intellectually. “If you can get in the EdD program here, I have a job for you!”—it was the head of department of my Masters program who gave me a chance for a doctorate with a tuition scholarship and graduate assistantship. At the time, during the summer of 1999, I was almost giving up on a positive response from any of the four PhD programs that I had applied for. Faculty around me told that there would be not much difference between an EdD and a PhD, which is a somewhat controversial issue depending on how people view those differences (e.g., Osguthorpe & Wong, 1993; Young, 2006).

At first I felt hesitant to go for the educational doctorate, because my academic interest was not in education but in leisure studies regarding human development and philosophical issues of knowledge. Also, my professional goal was to become a social

science researcher, possibly obtaining a faculty position in an institute of higher education, while the EdD degree was also known as the practitioner's degree. "Could I fit in there?" Having slight unsure feelings, I asked this of myself. However, I came to think my interest area could be addressed within educational philosophy, which convinced me to feel it was reasonable to go on to the educational doctoral program of the university where I was very familiar.

When I first got in this EdD program after failing to enter all the PhD programs, I told the department head of my old Masters program, "I would like to make my education here as good as the one I could get in the University of Georgia!" Georgia was my first choice because it had a department of leisure studies with strong emphasis in social psychology of leisure where I wanted to pursue human developmental issues of leisure experience, especially spiritual development. Remaining in the familiar university where I did my Masters, I was designing my own education by adding in electives of my interests in the coursework, attending conferences, and auditing some elementary French courses for second foreign language learning.

In the spring 2000 semester, while being the only doctoral-level student with a leisure emphasis, and tied in with the old department, I started my first doctoral year with a lot of hope and pride. "You may be a guinea pig," said a faculty member developing the new doctoral program prospectus for the leisure and youth human services program. The actual department in which my doctoral program was housed across campus did not have enough funding, so employment at my old department with fringe benefit of tuition scholarship was necessary. It was not only financial benefit I found in my new doctoral

year. Dr. Boody and Dr. Smith introduced me to different perspectives of academic inquiry, such as hermeneutics in the early year of the program, which I consider the best gift the university could offer to me. For, the image I was holding as my developmental interest blended well with this ongoing and reflexive evaluation of phenomenon in our life. At the same year, as I mentioned earlier, I met someone who shared the dilemma of knowledge associated with language that was the origin of my long-term theme since I was in prep school. I was entering the second year of my doctoral program with a strong philosophical theme and possible research participant. There was no doubt that I was receiving high dosage of intellectual stimulation. The only aspect of doctoral student life missing for me was the opportunity to engage in any academic or professional work.

The head of my Masters department set up my doctoral funding for me to remain in my old job in the gym equipment room because the old storekeeper had just retired and the new personnel needed a lot of assistance to keep the place running smoothly. As an international student without a chance to get educational loans, having departmental funding was too important to miss. Although I was hoping eventually to get moved into research/teaching assistant work as a full-time doctoral student, the department head kept rejecting my request for other options for my doctoral graduate assistantship. I eventually gave up on the academic work option after a number of rejections. Though when I looked back on this time in later years I could see I should have left the job before getting too disturbed emotionally, at the time it was hard to give up job security. Coming from a working class family, I had pride that any labor should be respected and valuable when worked hard.

My coursework was almost finished as scheduled, and I had the plan of writing about the coffee shop man. A few more semesters were spent for the conceptual work of my dissertation to convince the professor I had in mind. By this time, my graduate assistantship period ended and I moved up to the departmental office as an office assistant. People knowing me from the wellness facility jokingly said, “You stepped up!” Well, only location-wise as it meant moving from the first floor to the second in the building. By end of the spring 2004 semester, I finally got my dissertation chair and committee; however, my dissertation became stagnated.

Lacking opportunities for me to grow academically and professionally as a doctoral student in the assigned work for my old department, and at the same time observing other international students newly brought in for the recently developed doctoral leisure program gaining experiences such as teaching and researching, I began to develop emotional difficulties. My disappointment and distrust toward academia grew even bigger with some disturbing incidents that occurred in the department. Had I been just a convenience for the department head to keep the equipment room running all those years? Maybe it was not my academic growth that he cared for.

While I had anger about the past going nowhere, it was my ego that I actually had to deal with. The underlying concept of knowledge I had for my dissertation was a very important matter to me. Though I continued reading for my dissertation and visiting the coffee shop for ethnographical observation, I did not have much energy and clarity to put ideas together any more. Blaming myself and shutting off from the academic community, I just kept working as an office assistant and tried looking cheerful while feeling heavily

depressed inside. A new doctoral student in the new doctoral leisure program at the time, used to tease me while working in the department office, “Hey, Tomoe, why is it taking you so long to finish your dissertation? Hurry up and finish, and get a real life!” It was annoying that she often picked on me like this. But, I remembered I had also often thought this way about my old friend who started the doctoral program three years earlier than I, then became inactive after her course work while I was still new and fresh. When I had just entered the program full of energy, there was anticipation for success while passing the coursework. Being a doctoral student during and after coursework are often very different. “You’ll understand what it’s like when you come to this point.” This was all that I could say. It was funny to see that she shut her bragging mouth after she got to her dissertation some years later. During the coursework we were rather talkative; once coursework was done, we remained silent.

Obtaining professional help, I started taking psychotherapeutic medications. Still having fun activities in the coffee shop community, I stopped struggling at the departmental office work. Letting a day go by was enough at this time instead of crying behind the filing cabinet for what went wrong with my academic career preparation. However, mental fuzziness and easing of pain may be two faces of the same pill. In the third year of the medication I hesitated to continue, for my thinking ability was so obviously declining. I no longer had the mental sharpness for thinking of complex concepts related to my dissertation, which caused a different kind of pain. I first reduced the dosage after consulting with my physician, and eventually stopped taking any. Still, the side effects continued a while.

Then, the day finally came to part from the coffee shop man. Six years had passed since I met him. Going through many changes in his personal life, he was ready to move to another state for something new. Unlike the initial years when we used to have heavy and lengthy philosophical exchanges with each other, friendship came forward later years instead. Although I kept reminding him that I was going to write on him, another interview on his project and music creation could only happen after finishing my homework—my dissertation proposal, which had been stagnated for years. How many years had he been my inspiration! And he still is. I had kept searching for what meaning was there in our encounter, which held me and my dissertation for so many years. Observing him and his surrounding people and events for several years, I at least knew it was not a mere college-dropout story of his youth, and my old self, who conflicted against certain way to knowledge.

In the early summer of 2008, I finally left my departmental job of 11 years. It was painful for me to feel like nobody in the university after walking away from my old identity. I did not like the politics of the department although I still loved many people in the department. Leisure held a strong value for me, which was the reason I wanted to make a career in it. But I just no longer wanted to see myself making copies or filing documents while being jealous of other doctoral students working on academic assignments. Until my dissertation chair told me to come in his office a year later, I did not know how to recover from this emptiness after leaving the department.

It only took a small thing in those days to affect me and shut off my mind. At the time of leaving my department job, I had written a long report I attached to an email to

my dissertation chair, which was an explanation of my emotional condition as well as my latest conceptual research progress. But there was no answer from him. Because of not visiting him in the past years, I was so afraid that I could not contact him to ask for his opinion on my report. No response came to me meant in my mind that my writing was not good enough for his standard. A year later this turned out to be a mistake; he had simply missed opening the mail as he explained. Without knowing this, however, I felt I had no direction to follow.

Once I left the department job, the following year for me was the most painful one ever. For the first the time in my life I confessed to my parents that I was failing myself. Over those years of my Dark Age, even at the mental screening session, I had never allowed myself to let any suicidal ideas take me over because I was thinking of my old parents back home. However, this time, my mental condition became much worse than those medicated days. Without having contact from my dissertation chair who might not be accepting my last writing portion, and without belonging anywhere in the university after leaving the departmental work, I felt I was lost in the middle of nowhere.

Although I am not sure whether it was fortunate or unfortunate, minimal registration could be done online to sustain my student status; therefore, I was totally invisible in the academic community those days. However, there was a change which forced into my life while another academic year end was around the corner. A sudden break-up proposal came from my long-term boyfriend who was then living 1900 miles away. I had been in a relationship with this boyfriend since the same year I met my coffee shop man. The truth was revealed to me that my weak negative mental condition

had been hurting someone important to me while I was selfishly focusing on my own emotions and pains. It was maybe not just to save the relationship; but I came to strongly wish to get better to change myself in order to really complete my project. Thanks to such a major wake-up call, I finally began making efforts to leave this dark and narcissistic mental condition I had held for many years, and saved the long-distance relationship for the time.

Even though something inside of me began changing, I still could not allow myself to visit my dissertation chair until I had made more progress in my proposal writing. When the 60 days grace period was approaching after another academic year ended, I finally made up my mind to contact my dissertation chair as I really could not wait any longer to renew my student status. If it passes 60 days without renewing international student status, it would be a huge immigration violation. Written approval of my chair for the extension was needed within a week. In his email reply, instead of assisting my status renewal as usual, this time my professor insisted I come to see him, although not mentioning my dissertation specifically. With much embarrassment inside about what I should have done, it was time for me just to show up in front of him.

We talked for about half an hour of small talk. My professor did not ask about my dissertation until the very end, and he made sure that I would come back in a week to bring whatever updated work I had. When I went back to his office next week, however, I ended up with sitting in the chair in front of his office door for hours because he did not come. This was not new to me; I remembered how forgetful the professor I chose would

be when I used to be in his classes a decade ago. Oh well, I had kept him waiting for me to visit him for five years, so I could wait for him in return.

Making a Return to the Dissertation Chair

Things began to change, and quickly, in the following academic year 2009, after I returned to the office of my dissertation chair. Reading the latest portion of my paper, he asked what I would want to do in my future. “If you want to be a college professor, you should start preparing yourself.” I responded to him by saying, “Well, if I could, I would like to teach research methods or something to help people do research. Just like what you do. I wanna be like you.” It was my weak voice. Becoming a professor in the university and doing research—it was the old dream I had ceased to have any longer during the years of my Dark Age. After my hesitant response, however, he suddenly left me in his office and returned a few minutes later. “You are going to teach the stat class with me next Spring. I already got my head’s permission. Your name will be on the schedule book.” I was in shock. As I was not even a student of the department my dissertation chair belonged to, it never occurred to me to think I could do this. He sat at his desk again, not turning to my side, while some tear rolled off my face.

Those days, I could not show my emotions and very personal feelings to my dissertation chair. The reason I initially chose him to be my dissertation chair was based on the connection I felt with him when one evening class period in the Fall 2000 semester I heard him hesitantly mentioning how language projects some things while it conceals other things at the same time. It was a very subtle and brief commentary for the night which supposedly was on phenomenological research that he avoided discussing in detail,

but enough for me to believe he also had a share in the ontological dilemma that I had held for years. Back then, he was known as a quantitative methodology/statistics/evaluation kind of guy among the doctoral students; on the other hand Dr. Smith was well known as the major qualitative professor in the doctoral program. When I noticed his sensitivity with the nature of language, however, I thought I had found him. In the Spring 2004 semester after looking at my initial stage of proposal draft, he pulled Heidegger's *What is Called Thinking?* from his book shelf and handed it to me. "You need to start reading his book." It actually took whole one year to read through this book, but I found Heidegger was giving me clear explanations of why language mattered to me in the issue of knowing and human existence. Heidegger was also one of us in this ontological dilemma. Because I knew someone understood the importance of my project, I had been able to keep my hope for my dissertation idea during my emotionally difficult years. Even with such strong belief in the professor whom I chose, and after those initial semesters of many visits and many re-writings to convince him to become my chair, I had not had a chance to get to know him well since he finally became my dissertation chair in the end of the spring 2004. The long silent years and emotional troubles made it difficult for me to know where to start with him.

"Please tell me what can I do to get you writing?" After many weeks of empty-handed meetings, my dissertation chair asked, holding his head in his hands shaking vigorously, and here I was sitting with a poker face in front of him. "Oh my dear teacher, if I knew what to do, I would already start writing. I just don't know how to form my ideas—something in my head that is important but difficult to describe—into a proposal,"

my mind said. I first tried to rework the study of my coffee shop man from some traditional educational perspectives such as college dropout, lifelong learning, and liberal education for which I had started doing literature research in my Dark Age. But I could not write along such links. I could not view my coffee shop man as a subject of college dropout because of his strong sense of purpose; instead, there was something fundamentally important I initially felt—something about our knowing, or the problem of our knowledge, which was why I needed to write about him in the first place. Something was blocking me to express, yet the process of reflexively uncovering how my previous understanding and experiences that affects the way I observe things was very important issue. Either study of my coffee shop man through my reflexivity, or study my own self—my chair asked me to decide on one of them as I was stuck and not moving. Then, my choice was to write about my own self but that still kept the fascination of the first summer meeting with my coffee shop man.

Only I became more actively involved as his teaching assistant that semester, I had regained some positive attitude about things around me in the university. However, I was not yet quite comfortable to discuss the heart of my question on epistemology and ontology because it directly touches the matter of existence that is something highly personal to me. Writing about my own issues and existence was obviously very different from writing about someone else's. Until developing more trust in my chair, I could not openly discuss and write such philosophical issues that even he seemed to stay away from discussing loudly in detail. Also, there was still a lot of anger inside, and memories of disappointment with my past university experiences.

Sitting in his cluttered and messy office, my professor would tell me some stories about things displayed there. The conversation piece might be the picture of a colonial building on the wall, a piece of antique Chinese porcelain, or things like that. Sometimes he would repeat himself on some items and their background stories when he ran out of what to talk about. Those days, he was the one who always talked first. Until I became comfortable with him and felt safe to speak whatever I had in mind, my professor kept entertaining me with stories. He asked me a lot about the Japanese culture for which I could give him some authentic answer to replace the stereotypical Japanese image in America. And every week we spent time discussing our statistics class teaching. There were unlimited numbers of topic in our conversation. I do not know what other faculty members passing by the office would think of us who probably did not look like we were doing the dissertation at all those days. Maybe I was recovering my strength mentally, academically, and intellectually under the support he tried to provide me. My dissertation chair and I began re-working together this way.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Hearing that the College of Education was reviewing the doctoral program curriculum, as well as seeing journal articles on doctoral student attrition and retention, it seemed to me that my return to the dissertation while being a student at-risk seemed to have something to offer within the framework of doctoral experience. Once I started thinking so, a few weeks later I finished writing up a dissertation proposal in spring 2010. However, after defending the proposal in the following June, I came to wonder whether the proposal showed what I really wanted to do. In the meantime, the Graduate College pointed out my graduate student status had exceeded the seven years timeline, and required me to retake nearly half of my coursework (30+ credit hours) regardless of my explanation. Focusing on the doctoral environment of which I have been part for the past number of years actually caused me to have more doubt of my mismatch with the program from the beginning, which did not open my story much further. The question—what have I really wanted to do in my dissertation—still remained.

While being busy with re-required credit courses and new professional experiences, my search for the real dissertation question continued. The truth I came to face eventually in the later spring 2011 was simple but heavy: what I wished to survive has been my ideas that originated from the sense of inquiry and personal project which my coffee shop man and I had shared in the first summer. What does project mean in this dissertation then? I will address what I mean by project later in this chapter.

Doctoral Dissertation and Survival

The idea of doctoral dissertation survival can be thought of in two distinctly different ways. One comes out of the discourse of psychology and institutional analysis, and addresses the variables associated with how doctoral students can sustain their efforts until completion of the doctoral degree. This direction often ties into the issues of attrition and intervention—issues that have been receiving more and more attentions in the recent decade from both organizational and developmental perspectives as well as psychological theories such as self-efficacy (e.g., Gardner, 2009; Varney, 2010). The other way is not so obviously conceptualized as degree-program survival. As one of the objectives of doctoral education, what it would take to create educational, supportive, and productive environment for doctoral research have been discussed over the decade. As Fernando and Hulse-Killacky (2006) state, the relationship between research environment and research productivity is strongly related with doctoral students' mentoring experiences. Researchers and university educators discuss over such doctoral students' transitions into their dissertation and further scholarship (e.g., Gardner, 2008; Lovitts, 2008; Walker, Golde, Jones, Bueschel, & Hutchings, 2008). Indeed, doctoral research experience is fostered through the doctoral program. Lovitts (2008, p. 297) questioned for this aspect of doctoral students' dissertation as follows:

Given doctoral education's emphasis on creative research and scholarship and the production of a dissertation that makes an original and significant contribution to knowledge, . . . what leads some students to produce distinguished research and scholarship, where distinguished is defined as high quality and original/creative/innovative?

In this regard of doctoral students surviving through dissertation process, the goal is not just finishing and getting out with a doctoral degree, but attaining values and meanings both academically and personally in their research.

This second discourse, therefore, could arise out of a less technical analysis, but more deeply human, sense that doctoral students who are driven by an important personal project strive to construct their dissertation research in order to make sense of their questions. This does indeed give them additional motivation and perseverance in completing their dissertation, but is not recognizable through the conventional approach. It is an outgrowth of existential meaning for the student, and thus must be approached with a different set of tools and lenses. This is my hope that the latter aspect of dissertation survival in educational research I described earlier—how doctoral students construct their dissertation research to its optimal level by making sense of their inquiry questions—may locate this dissertation in one meaningful and substantive framework in case readers need to comprehend it in this way.

On “Project”

The term, project, in philosophical writings is often used to indicate the most important issues or problems that a given philosopher attempts to answer in their philosophical arguments. I first picked up this word "project" from Jean-Paul Sartre's (1956/1992) *Being and Nothingness*. The notion of project he implied seemed to me useful for explaining and referring to the ontological dilemma of knowing I had cared for as the recurring issue since my prep-school year. In the text, Sartre closely discussed the ekstastic character of human reality and pre-reflective *cogito* under the chapter title

"Immediate Structures of the For-itself." Specifically, in the first section of this chapter called "Presence to Self," Sartre notes, "Heidegger endows human reality with a self-understanding which he defines as an 'ekstatic pro-ject' of its own possibilities" (p. 120). By the definition provided, the term, project, is "Both verb and noun. It refers to the For-itself's choice of its way of being and is expressed by action in the light of a future end" (Sartre, 1956/1992, p. 806). Accordingly, Sartre's notion of project originated from Heidegger's notion of project.

The project discussed here in this dissertation is highly personal. In the field of personality and developmental psychology, there is a series of research on personal project pursuit (see Little, Salmera-Aro, & Phillips, 2006). The notion of personal project Dr. Brian Little, the founder of Personal Project Analysis, applied was any type of one's meaningful everyday activities done to achieve well-being, accomplishment of a goal, and further self-actualization of one's life. In December 2002, I participated in Dr. Little's research methodology seminar on Personal Project Analysis, while I was still looking for a possible route to study my coffee shop man with his project. Although his attention to personal project as the action for well-being and self-actualization seemed to hold some commonalities with what I was interested in the life of coffee shop man, my attention to the project I saw in the coffee shop man and in myself did not rest there. Unless my inquiry I focused on was mere doctoral persistence as survival, I did not see benefit adapting this line of personal project pursuit research.

My project in this dissertation started long before my dissertation and may continue even after I finish writing the last sentence of this manuscript. Therefore, what I

mean as project here is to bring to life and examine the most important philosophical problem of an individual through one's being in the world.

Intention of Study

This study is a philosophical experiment on problems of knowledge along with my personal experiences of being in the world amongst various levels of epistemological beings and ontological Being. The process of my dissertation research, which started in the encounter with my coffee shop man, is to be first illustrated along with my personal narratives, secondly elaborated into different philosophical arguments, and lastly progressed to some extent toward their answers in my own term. I am focusing on myself as a subject while being the researcher in this autoethnographical and philosophical inquiry; the complexity of playing the role of observer of one's self is acknowledged. In his introduction of the lecture, Heidegger (1975/1988, p. 3) said, "phenomenology has been understood . . . as a science propaedeutic to philosophy." Although I would not call this study phenomenological research as the terms often used in many social science contexts, my intention is to seek after the methodological possibility of epistemological and ontological inquiry in social and human sciences. I feel rather overwhelmed to proceed with this sort of science given my limited experiences literally and academically; however, I must try this as I have chosen to do. While being methodological as a process of inquiry is illustrated throughout this dissertation, this philosophical research, partly in an autoethnographical account, will also present one's project assisting a dissertation survival.

CHAPTER 2

NARRATIVES OF THE SELF

After returning to my dissertation chair in the fall 2009, discussing over many things while working with him, I was gaining more comfort and confidence to express my thoughts. A year later, additionally required coursework and the academic jobs of teaching and research assistant began to occupy my days as a fulltime doctoral student. It took me time to feel open enough to share my very personal stories to others while knowing that it was a requirement for this project. In the meantime, I started recollecting pieces of experiences along with recovering old notes—the oldest one was written between my Masters and the beginning of doctoral schooling in the late 1990s. Whenever I found or remembered things, I sent an email to my chair. Memories, thought experiments, and reflections—such writings became my field notes.

Some memory work was more challenging than others, as a past event recalled as the past is already a part of the present. This process was, however, important for me to let go of the bitter emotions and from my past ego that blocked my voice. Without letting go of any stories inside of myself, I thought I could not get others, especially my professor and committee, as well as other audiences of this dissertation, to see the fundamental problem that was important to me. It seemed like I had dissimilated myself from what I had most cared for behind the convention of researchable topics until the very late stage of my dissertation process. But I should not hold it only in my mind any more. Although I was aware of the fact that any description I give will never clearly point out what the words try to refer to, I felt it needed to move from my head to paper.

The remainder of this chapter is a collection of narratives illustrating my path how my project originated, expanded, and survived through my dissertation process. They will be further discussed in the succeeding chapters.

Prep-School Year: Problem of Language and Knowledge

My obsessions with the problem of language and knowledge cannot be separated from my childhood and prep-school experiences. When my coffee shop man, in the very first summer, told me that he decided not to finish college in his senior year because of his strong resistance against the kind of knowledge poured into his head with language. It seemed to me as if I was looking at my old self, then a prep-school student, who was also coming to a realization about the problem of expressing knowledge through language that would never match exactly knowledge of the thing in itself. The problem was devastating enough at that former moment that I nearly decided not to remain on the college track. The following is on language and knowledge, and my upbringing written in June, 2010:

When I was younger, I always had desire to capture the moment of awe that is something very personal and difficult to explain to others, but important enough not to let go. Looking at the vast flower field, for example, you may have a feel of yourself being a part of it. Coming so excited in the great sense of being there, you want to capture what you have in front in the moment by something you can record the wonder, let's say a photograph. But once cut off as a photo shot, it is very different from what you actually felt in the moment. Not only the visual construct of the scene, but also the emotion you had will not be in the snapshot. Language does the same thing. What we really want to refer is sometimes beyond what the words can capture.

I was always looking for my freedom. In a way I was the kind of reserved child, but there were a lot to say inside. My curly hair made me know clearly that I was different from other straight hair girls. The norm of Japanese society often was appreciation of the sameness and unity, so I started my life differently there already. I played imaginary things. I would just sit by the window looking

outside long enough while the sun moves and shined on the pond or something far away changing its reflection. I think my childhood was ordinary happy one, although my father was temperamental. I had some kind of belief in the mystery of the world. Things changed gradually around my sixth grade years. My father brought more anger from his work and it was like walking on egg shells when he was around. The AAA meeting did not change his alcohol habit, and I longed to have a mind strength as well as spiritual freedom. He was a good person but weak. My mother often stayed quiet patiently while the storm of his anger went off, and later she would tell me to study hard for better life where I would not complain about my job like my father. Hard work in school meant to be a way to get out from family problem to me. Later time after I turned my 40s, I sometimes wonder why I had dropped the idea of becoming a fashion designer or pastry chef. Going to college to leave parents' house became the priority at the time.

In my adolescence, I often dreamed to be a wanderer. Wanted to see the world myself, to be connected to the world freely. At the same time, I was influenced by my father's perspectives and given ideas about things in the world. Not only from my father, but from any information outside influenced me. The concept of a thing and the thing itself could not be separated in my logic. Instead of thinking what it is, I was good at memorizing the concept of the thing as it is. Everything was supposed to be explanatory, and the explanation was something on the book or what authority figures said. However, living on what is already decided and known seemed to me a pain. My world was more and more limited. Feeling the heavy boundary I was maybe creating by myself while conceptualizing everything as if I know of world, I was not free at all. I could not feel enjoyment in the condition. I still had an image of light and mystery of the world from childhood, but the immediate reality of my world was all in the box I built myself. It was a suffering to live a life where I knew I was so boring and dull with the bondage invisible to me but exactly existing there.

On June 22, 2010, in the continuation for the piece of writing above, I wrote my professor about my prep-school year experience from April 1985 to March 1986:

Because I failed to enter the college of my only choice, I became a student of the preparatory school in the neighboring prefecture three hours away by train ride. It was a boarding all-day school for which I received the scholarship for the tuition and the room and board cost. I was still in my shell of hardworking student there, blindly memorizing the information to get better test scores. Those days living in the same dorm with other selected female students had a huge impact on me who was somewhat missing personal excitement and idea how to enjoy her, because I soon had a realization that all other students including the smartest students just like Harvard candidate level if in the U.S., were playing freely and enjoying their free time on the weekend. Maybe I was only the one studying on the first

weekend when the school started. I questioned something was wrong about me or other girls. And I knew it must be my own habit limiting myself that was getting in the way of fully enjoying life, as well as my own learning experiences.

One day, my attention was instantly grabbed by the words of the English instructor in the prep school who freely expressed his opinions. His comment toward me was “Although you study this hard, you hardly know anything, don’t you? What you believe you know is all what someone else has said or written, isn’t it?” Time was just passing for daily commute between the dorm and the prep school, while I was feeling uneasy about myself who cannot be free from my own frame of mind. Still, all I hoped was getting in the university where new environment would help me to open up my perspectives. My high school mathematics teacher used to say that the ultimate purpose to get college education was the pursuit of Truth, although he was saying rather jokingly. Once I get in the college, I thought, something might happen. However, the English instructor’s words completely crushed such hope I was holding onto those days.

A couple months later, in the three days weekend, I was in the English teacher’s residence where he told me there would be a seminar on the language, so-called Self Image Seminar. He said, “It might be helpful for your clearer thinking.” I did not know any details of the meeting in advance, but I wanted to find out why he seemed always free. I was desperately looking for my freedom. I left the dorm telling the residence coordinator that I was going to visit my sister for two nights. There were seven or eight people, mainly in their 30s or 40s middle aged adults except one young person who said he used to be a student of the same prep school in the previous year. The coordinator person told me that the seminar was somehow about Self along the role of language, that later on I figured out the original source about “language” was mainly from General Semantics.

I remember the coordinator person asked me, “So... what is your ‘self’?” pointing the cup of tea on the table I just had some sip out of it, “Is the cup you?” I was panicked by such a strange question I had never heard. I had some of tea from the cup. Tea went through my throat and now inside me. Does the tea become my ‘self’? How about the air, once I inhale some air, it is inside of me. When I exhale, it is outside. When does this portion of the air become part of me? But this is different ‘self’ from the one observing the whole thing like consciousness... When I mentioned ‘consciousness,’ someone in the seminar asked me, “So, how do you see if your consciousness would be there?”

“What do you mean by that?” This question frequently came out from people’s mouth in the seminar. I was planning to major in International Relation in my dream university, and when I talked about it, here they were, I was asked a number of layers of questions. It was rather annoying after a while, but I was frustrated by the fact that I could not answer to such questions about what I was

planning to do once getting in the university. I thought I had known my motive and goals very well, but I was failing to answer once the level of abstraction went lower and lower.

The coordinator brought out some Escher's illusion pictures, and we were trying to find what we could see and what we could not see. Many pictures which had a slightly difference each other, and we were finding where the mistake hidden. Our perception is easily influenced by what we have seen before. It was as if we automatically started looking for what familiar to us. There were many activities like that in the seminar, which was similar to what so called Gestalt therapeutic method used that I came to know many years later. Two night three days, it seemed to me weird discussion and activities we played with words and strange pictures of illusion. Everyone else seemed having fun, but I was having such a tension having headache because of thinking all the time.

I did not get it during the seminar, but at least I knew that all the knowledge I thought I was gaining was not the true knowledge. It was so painful that I did not feel like going on the college track. The kind of knowledge and strength for freedom I wanted to gain seemed to be in the freedom in the relationship between our Self and language. Since the weekend seminar, day and night, I struggled with the concept and nature of language. The drama of my declaration of quitting college track instead wanting to get in a private research institute of language without credential from Board of Education happened in a week, and it involved so many people including my high school guidance teacher who traveled to see me to convince about college. My mother came to visit me and told me that my change caused my father losing his temper completely that was why she cannot go back without convincing me to go to college. I thought my college going was my own decision for long time, but in fact, it was not really my own. After the couple days of resistance and rebellion on my college track, I went back in the college track again. But, something was changing inside. Trying to see what meant by the words regardless of its appearance was becoming my habit. And one day, I had an experience of light and joy beyond any expression on the way coming back from the school, which put everything together. Such direct joy occurred only once, but enjoyment means a lot to me since then.

On July 1, 2010, I wrote to my professor more on my experience of personal connection with existence:

There were some things I tried not to put into words in order to protect from the judgments of others. You might have this, too: once put into words, something changes from its original, but you cannot help desiring to recreate what it is. When I met coffee shop man creating music as the device to express what he had

in somewhere deep in his mind, I thought that this may be the reason many people become desperate to just 'create'. He was (maybe) one of them, and so was I.

"Messiah, Messiah, the one who hadn't a fear of God, tried to make a crown with gold." I got this riddle in the middle of night at age 13 when I was a middle school student. My sister was in the school choir singing Halleluiah chorus back then, so the word Messiah might be somewhere in the song and had stuck to my head somewhere. Or, couple years of the Sunday school experience in the neighbor Lutheran church I had in my childhood before moving to the new town might have lingered unknowingly. I was not a Christian, but I knew somehow there is God beyond different outputs of religious language. In Japanese, we call *Kami*. There was someone who was trying to act like God with a wrong method – this was the way understood in the message in those days. I did not tell about what I heard for many years. I told my sister after a few years passed, and now I am writing about it. It might be just a silly combination of words to some people. But I took it as something I should keep it in a safe place. Once I mention it, it would attract wrong meanings, which was how I was thinking. I still do not know whether I should keep this part of writing accessible to the eyes of others.

When I had an intense hallucinated feeling on the way going back to the dormitory after the day in the prep school, there was so direct experience that I could not describe what I had at the time. The day, I had a conference with my guidance teacher in the prep school. In the meeting, I declared which school I newly chose to apply for and my plan how I was going to manage my life after prep school on my own. No more tied up with parental restriction or my own long-term belief of what I should do in order to become so and so, I left the school with very lightened feelings. The distance between the prep school and the female dormitory was about half a mile. It was sunny afternoon, and nobody was walking on the street. It was residential area with a small kindergarten in the corner. Turning around the corner, I was now walking in front of the kindergarten property. I just looked at the play yard as I walked, then something happened suddenly. The view changed into the particles of the light, while I could still see the kindergarten. I could not hear a thing, at the same time I could hear everything. Everything was shining around me.

The senses changed suddenly, so I did not feel my own body. It was like blended into the light and there was no borderline between my Self and the surroundings. It was like I connected to the whole world from the location I stood. It was just enormous joy. I was laughing and crying at the same time, and still walking on the street. I was walking the street in front of the kindergarten leading to the door of dormitory, but it was like walking on clouds, something soft and bouncy. Nobody was around on the way home fortunately. I would look a mad girl if someone saw me at that moment. When I walked in the dorm, I went to the pay telephone and called the home number of Mr. Katsuura's, the English teacher who

took me in the learning seminar. He picked up my call, and all what I was telling on and on while crying was *Ureshii no*, “I’m in joy” in Japanese. The trembling from the experience lasted until the evening and faded. I later on became wanting to figure out what it was. The experience of the sunny afternoon with light and sense of direct connection with the world was something unforgettable. When I run into the 46th Psalm, “Be still (Have leisure), and know” in the literature of Leisure Studies in my Masters period, I first connected what I experienced was the knowledge of God in the moment.

Since that day when being in the seamless and bright light in which everything else and I was blended as a whole, I kept thinking about I had experienced near the front gate of the kindergarten. Through my childhood and adolescence, I often had had a weird sense of time in which I lost my sense of self and time while I was very into certain activities such as knitting and reading. But that was just a feeling of altered time. But this experience of light was rather something what I saw and felt through my body by standing there. If I call my old time-losing moments a mere anticipation of timeless existence, in this case it was certain that I had just grasped the truth that everything namelessly exists in the seamless world that has no end.

During my prep-school year, I did not know what others would call this experience, as it was before I started reading religious or philosophical books. However, that experience heightened my awareness toward the type of being beyond words and language. Before finishing the school year, I attended another seminar with almost the same members of participants. In the seminar, I did not provide too many details, but some people acknowledged what happened to me as “the experience” without any further description. It seemed like people who had experienced it could identify that someone else had it also through their description. I noted in the following year at the university bookstore when I picked up a book called *LSD: My Problem Child*, by Albert Hoffmann

(1983). Though I had no interest in trying illicit drugs which is a heavy felony in Japan, I was immediately drawn to the opening description of his own childhood experience long before he accidentally invented his famous chemical byproduct. He had “the experience” as well. I will introduce Hoffman’s quote in a later section.

My Religious Heritage

During the Fall 2001 semester, I took a course in the counseling department called Counseling and Spirituality. Here is part of the material on my path and religious heritage I wrote for this course. With some brief corrections being applied, as my current writing skill is much better than ten years back, this is what I originally submitted to Dr. Wanpen Murgatroyd on October 8, 2001:

Jodo Shinshu—one of the Pure Land sects in Buddhism, is supposed to be the religion in our family. But this is more likely for my family to worship our ancestors who were associated with this sect of Buddhism. And family religion is not necessarily the synonym for individual religious beliefs in my country where Shintoism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism are rooted and blended as the philosophical background. Usually my parents do not have any daily Buddhism practice, such as going to temple to pray or chant in front of the alter, simply because my father was the third son who did not inherit the traditional family alter, thus no responsibility for any traditional Buddhist service for the ancestors. While family religion is supposed to be Buddhism as the formality, many households including my parents’ house set up the Shinto alter in the house. As my mother's morning routine, she offers the first water of the day to these alters. Besides water, there were always fresh green brunches arranged, and candles were lit for special occasions.

Shinto is the Japanese traditional nature religion, but for me, it is sometimes difficult to consider as one of the religious faiths out there, because Shintoism is not the matter of faith but the presence in the land of Japan. The Japanese mythology tells the story of how our land and people were created. It is often said that the land of Japan has eight-million gods and deities dispersed even in the bathroom. This means the manifestation of God is countless everywhere invisibly with us.

Whenever we got new fruit of the season or special food, my mother told me to take some to the Shinto alters and grandfather who passed away long time ago and we have his picture displayed in the shelf as if he sits there. As my grandfather liked sake -- rice wine, we offered a glass when a new bottle was opened. After the grandmother passed away as well as maternal side grandparents, all four pictures sit side by side, and we still offer occasional food to each of them.

When I was in the second grade, our neighbor had a new family moved in the nearby Protestant church. As one of their children was the same age my neighbor friends and I started going to church events such as Sunday school. My parents let us go to the church activities without any objection. Mainly their opinion about my going to church was that church going is somehow good thing for me to learn something ethical and good. We listened to the stories of God and Jesus in the church service. I liked the Bible stories and church service. For the three years until our family moved out, I went back to the Sunday school every weekend. It was one of places I went and played with other friends, while being able to listen to a good story and feel something precious in the name of God. Luckily, having such opportunities to expose myself to Christian church, the essence of something invisible in Shinto shrine, Buddhist temple, and Christian church -- the idea of sacred and holy became very diverse and accord from the early time in my spiritual life. I think that this freedom to pursue my own meaning was a gift from my parents those days.

When I was still in elementary school, my mother and father used to take my sister and me to clean the public space such as park or attendant-free train station in the neighborhood on the weekend. As self-consciously caring how others would see us, I did not like it sometimes. But anyway I was taken and told to get the work done. Once in a while, some neighbor people saw us cleaning and expressed some kind of appreciation or consolidation for our labor; however, most of the time, without being seen by other people, most of work was done. My father emphasized that cleaning places would do something good for others and our minds. Now I can see what my parents were trying to teach me through such labor. No matter who cleans, the place is to be maintained nicely. If nobody is available, it can be me who take care of the job. It is not a possessive mind. Anybody can do it, and so can I. I do not mind to pick up someone else's trash.

Where did we come from? And where are we going? Thinking of these questions in the religious sense, the most tangible fact I can appreciate for me existing in this life is the blessing of all the ancestral continuation that brought me to this world, and at the same

time such continuation is traceable to the oldest ancestor of people, the source going back to even the mythological gods of male and female, and even to further the original form of the life in Nature. And this original form existed long before being named or classified.

Japan, with over two-thousand and five-hundred years tradition of nature worship, does not impose on people to believe something specific. The stories of gods and nature, including human and the other creatures, exist there regardless of our conviction. In my college years, I visited many different religious groups to try to find my spiritual place, and no place out there was my answer. Wandering through my college town, Nara City—the ancient city that was once the capital of the nation during the 8th century, I could see how the people of those days went to the continent to learn something to bring back to Japan. Young scholars were sent from Japan to China and learned the Buddhism which originated in India. Many cultural heritages connect to those who enthusiastically went out and learned something meaningful. Without the European traders who happened to drift to a rural part of our nation with guns and other unfamiliar and exotic goods, the local ruler of the port town would not have paid much attention to the missionaries in the middle of 16th century. With curiosity for the unknown, missionaries were welcomed with their Christianity as a side benefit of trade in the special region opened for foreign affairs. My country, Japan, was a small isolated country that had been closed for many hundreds of years until 1868, but also stayed curious and accepting of something different from other cultures. Through this practice of external enrichment from foreign cultures, the worship of nature and ancestors existed without conflicting

with the newcomers. To me, there is not much conflict having Shinto mythological gods and Buddha, as well as Jesus and Mohammed all together, while focusing on the existence of God throughout different expressions of religious traditions.

People might see of my religious views as pantheistic. But it is not that simple. The reality is that I just do not have my faith in one named religion; it is a monotheistic world to see through the polytheistic reality. I sometimes use the line, “Oh, I’m Shinto,” but mainly to repel home-visiting missionaries peacefully. I observe many cultural events in Shinto, because it is in my skin as I grew up in its mythology of godly representative deities of nature; however, this does not narrow the way to God in the world. My mother particularly showed her discomfort with some religious people who ill-regard other religions in order to accentuate their special missions in the world for God. And there are some aspects of organized religion I also have a problem with. How certainly can a particular organized religion claim what they call God is the absolute and others are not? Weren’t many dogmatic teachings added for the convenience of organizing the congregation for maximizing the organizational benefit and growth while regulating the obedience of people?

God cannot really be apart from what we refer to as God—the notion of God must be free from its expression in language; thus, it is beyond what we call religion. In this multi-cultural world, if one religious group leader claims their form of faith and its rules are the only way to God to save the rest of the world, I cannot help questioning the intention of such teaching. The old riddle, or I could call it voice, that appeared one evening in my youth—“Messiah, Messiah, the one who did not fear God tried to make a

crown with gold”—was strange, but still has something to tell about the features of a false leader. Though I would not dare to call it anything more than what it was, this was the only time I experienced something attached with obvious religious language—God—about 30 years ago. I know, along with the prep-school time experience of light, which was indescribable, that people would have thrown me in a confined room if I was in a different period of history.

By the end of my college years, I no longer had an interest in finding a place for my spirituality, for the final picture of Ten Ox Herding in the Zen teaching made sense to me; living among other people. I focused on being who I am from where I stand. I kept myself just being busy by living my life; earning my living in various jobs, and fulfilling course credits that I had failed in the first two academic years. Professors in the department of Geography where I majored (I was a wanderer wannabe) might not think I was going to graduate in four years with other fellow students. Until the last day of the semester, I was working on term papers for general education courses, unlike other senior-year students. After graduating, I moved back to the city where I had spent my prep-school year; however, I stayed away from any self-development type of gathering. I worked as an English teacher and later became a curriculum coordinator in a private language institution.

Leisure and Spirituality

There was a reason I decided to study leisure in the U.S. While I was teaching children in the range from pre-Kindergarten to 8th grade, providing an enjoyable learning environment was the motto of the language institution. As I climbed the ladder of

seniority, I had the privilege of taking several students to Hawaii as a special summer trip. When the local recreation coordinator arranged for our students and the local students of the same age to play together in the park, I was amazed by how much fun our students with limited English skills had while playing with those American children. The knowledge and skill in creating enjoyable moments exhibited by those recreation leaders seemed to me just amazing. In my adolescent years, it used to be so difficult for me to have fun that I had to intentionally force myself to loosen my mind and acquire the habit of free will in my prep-school year. This joyful moment was not forgotten. And, I wanted to know more about the field of leisure and recreation in the U.S., where the study of leisure existed as an academic subject.

“Have leisure and know that I am God. -- Psalm lxv, 11”—it was my first year in the Masters program of Leisure Studies when I saw this verse quoted in the beginning page of *Leisure: The Basis of Culture* (Pieper, 1963, p. 19). A Catholic theologian Joseph Pieper brought out this quote translated from the Septuagint, the oldest translation from Hebrew into Greek. The most commonly known translation of this verse is the King James version of Psalm 46:10, “Be still, and know that I am God.” Pieper stated that the highest virtue for the ancient Greeks was pursued in the contemplative and spiritual attitude, thus in leisure. Stillness in contemplation and our leisure today’s world is at glance not easily connectable if we consider leisure only as recreational activity or relaxation, because leisure is often associated with one’s action—doing something, or even doing nothing.

Doing my first semester in the leisure program, while every classmates was describing their Masters research topics, without knowing much about leisure but as activities, I told the class that what I would be interested in was heightened moments in activities such as running, reading, or knitting—whatever lets us experience time-forgetful enjoyment. It was the very first week of the semester, so I was lucky to have Dr. Debora Jordan who told me that my interest was related to the topic of spirituality in the academic field of leisure. I came to learn that there is the variety of concepts of leisure: (a) non-work, (b) some kinds of activities, (c) time free from obligation or free to do something, and (d) state of mind regardless of the type of activities (Goodale & Godbey, 1989). A time forgetting sense of enjoyment could happen in mind-focused activities, such as reading and knitting, when the degree of challenge in the activity and the degree of one's skill meet (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). When I first read on the state of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; 1990), I felt shivers on my spine connecting such transcendental moments in leisure—the academic subject I came to the U.S. for and the joy of oneness I had experienced myself in the brightening light in my prep-school year. Abraham Maslow, who developed the well-known hierarchy of basic needs and human motivation, had already initiated the topic of optimal experience in the field of humanistic psychology (Maslow, 1964). He described such heights of mind experience as a peak experience that he claimed could happen in different intensities. Contemplating this with the line of the Psalm: “Have leisure and know that I am God,” I wondered if what I had experienced in the light was the moment of knowing God. More than ten years had

passed since the prep-school year; by this time I finally made some sense to myself of the ultimate existence which I experienced in the light that people would know as God.

I was greatly excited with the potential to make a connection between the classic concept of leisure and the current notion of leisure experiences. The first page of my Master's research paper I submitted in 1999 started like this:

Beyond the difference in the expressions of faith, the notion of God (or the absolute) may contain a universal nature. The work of William James (1902/1985), *A Variety of Religious Experience*, implies the concept of spiritual experiences as the grasp of relation between self and the greater being.

While working on this topic I never questioned the assumption that the notion of God has universal nature; however, later on I came to learn there are variations in people's understanding, for the expression of God itself is not fully representing what the word try to refer to in the religious contexts. While connecting spirituality and such heightened experience in the paper, it was difficult to overcome the word God as it is most frequently used as an exclusive expression within religious organizations. Hick (1989) wrote that religion consists of various forms of "human response to a transcendent reality, realities—the gods, or God, or Brahman, or the Dharmakaya, or the Tao, and so on" (p. 1). The differences of religious language and expression as metaphor may be a problem preventing some people who are too attached to their faith from seeing the concept of God is commonly shared in the concept of transcendental reality.

Piper implies more than just a connection between leisure and spirituality, when he described the Greek virtue and Christianity; what he referred to as contemplation as the highest virtue was regarded as "super-human." Thus, it was meant as if "few desire and fewer achieve," as De Grazia (1962, p. 5) put it.

There is a certain type of experience incomprehensible at the experiencing moment, yet unforgettable for which the rest of one's life could be spent for its perpetual search for the meaning. Albert Hoffmann, the father of LSD, described his childhood experience of light like this:

There are experiences that most of us are hesitant to speak about, because they do not conform to everyday reality and defy rational explanation. There are not particular external occurrences, but rather events of our inner lives, which are generally dismissed as figments of the imagination and barred from our memory. Suddenly the familiar view of our surroundings is transformed in a strange, delightful, or alarming way: it appears to us in a new light, takes on a special meaning. . . .

As I strolled through the freshly greened woods filled with bird song and lit up by the morning sun, all at once everything appeared in an uncommonly clear light. Was I suddenly discovering the spring forest as it actually looked? It shone with the most beautiful radiance, speaking to the heart, as though it wanted to encompass me in its majesty. I was filled with an indescribable sensation of joy, oneness, and blissful security. (Hoffmann, 1983, p. ix-x)

My connection of bodily experience with knowing God, or something hidden in the ordinary realm, came from my personal experience. Self-absorbed experiences of temporal dislocation a small degree in leisure activities could give us a hint of such assumption of existence, even if the experience of massive light has not occurred yet. However, is achieving the higher state of consciousness really the goal of spirituality as the scholars in humanistic psychology claim? I do not think so. The experience gives a grip on the existence of wholeness or oneness; however, it is not the goal. In Zen practice, attaining enlightenment is only a process, and ultimately the person actualizes his or her life among other people. Even after knowing or experiencing something hidden from our normal reality we continue living our lives. How we maintain our clarity of knowing maybe important to live well.

On June 22, 2010, I wrote my professor how leisure became my academic theme:

Since the middle of prep school year, I somehow started letting myself loose intentionally. Recreation and enjoyment came together in this way. Later on, in the first year of my Master's in Leisure Studies, I noticed the description of optimal leisure experience, such as flow experience, shared similar nature of my direct experience of light and joy. The word, leisure, in Japan is often highly recreational, fun and relaxation seeking activity-oriented attitude, because of which this notion of leisure in the Western society struck me rather unexpectedly. Moreover, the classic Greek concept of leisure came from the contemplation and spiritual attitude. The 46th Psalm in Septuagint, the first translation of the Old Testament into Greek says "Have leisure and know." Not the particular religious experiences with words and expressed concepts, but the concept of spiritual experiences as the grasp of relation between self and the greater being as William James implied in his work, is what excited me and pushed me to pursue a doctoral degree on Leisure. I am still figuring out what I could do with my first motivation, although things shift and my interest in education expanded more than the first intention.

At the time of introducing him into the leisure aspect of my project, my professor seemed puzzled why this theme would connect to my dissertation. Higher learning, or contemplation in the spiritual sense, was part of ancient Greece. The Academy may yet have a part to play even in modern education—this is my take on it. The nameless and wordless nature of existence acknowledged through stillness in the heightened moment, and our knowing it; in between these two functions it requires our meaning-making process that moves from perception to interpretation. The rare experience of such a height stays in one's memory, and we reflect on its meaning from time to time. One needs to continue clarifying his or her understanding in everyday life living among people. My Masters project ended here, and the issue of language remained. In this dissertation, as in my doctoral education I learned the hermeneutic approach to knowing, the connection was necessary to me.

Doctorate Program and Hermeneutics of Knowing

If someone were to ask what the most valuable learning experience in my doctoral education, I would immediately answer that I had two great professors of research methodology who took me to the depth of epistemological understanding with the concept of empirical research and hermeneutics. Going beyond the conventional objectivity that pretends with a non-biased seeking attitude, the question Dr. Boody asked, what researchers actually do in their empirical research, was first of all genuine. Also grasping its role in our process of knowing, the guidance Dr. Smith provided in his lectures and numerous published literature regarding the concept of hermeneutics—clarification of what we understand by accessing our prepositions, or where our thinking comes from historically—was truly necessary to prepare me for the ongoing process of interpretation and understanding of the world. Such an epistemological realization was a wonderful event to help me grow intellectually and academically; however, it could also result in violent cognitive shifts for students as overwhelming and disturbing experience (Lesko, Simmons, Quarshie, & Newton, 2008).

Officially I started my EdD in the spring of 2000, but I was able to take three courses as prerequisites in the previous semester. I first encountered hermeneutics in the Masters level Educational Research course Dr. Boody was teaching. It was only the second week of the semester. He gave us a copy of a book chapter written by Dr. Smith (1990) about the alternative research paradigms available at the decrease of positivism in social and educational research. Overlooking this article, Dr. Boody explained the term, hermeneutics first etymologically describing the word's origin, and then historically

pointing out the traditional usage of the term that was the religious and scriptural text interpretation before describing it philosophically. As it was such a complex article; I recalled he did not require the students to go in depth of the discussion, instead he mainly went through four paradigms; (a) empiricism, (b) post-empiricism, (c) constructivism (also known as interpretivism in the methodological literature), and (d) critical theory. Coming out of a rather empiricist and post-empiricist tradition, such a topic and approach to knowledge understanding was new and never easy. Though I had completed my Masters research on a type of transcendental knowledge in conjunction with the concepts of leisure, I had never really read literature on knowledge claims in scientific research and its theoretical background. I honestly do not think I got a lot of understanding from Dr. Smith's writing in this first educational research course. Recently, opening the copy of this book chapter from 12+ years ago, however, I found an old 2x2 post-it note on the last part of chapter saying, "I think that I like the argument of knowledge and epistemological limitations." As a part of the final exam, I wrote a page length overall reflection to express what the most important thing which we learned about research in the semester, and why it was so important. I submitted mine on December 16, 1999 and saved a copy, which is as follows:

The most important point I have come up with this semester is the position of a researcher that manipulates the information to influence others' thoughts. My understanding about this idea is that the act of research already starts when the researcher gets interested in a thing and gains the motivation to inquire it. And in the mind process, the researcher has a motivation to get the problem clarified at least for him/her. And the human nature cannot keep exciting finding from others. So, as a result of sharing the finding, the researcher is manipulating the information and it eventually influence on others in various degree. From this point of view, it is evident that what I as a researcher perceive the phenomenon of the world exists because here I am. I think, this is a big personal responsibility.

To tell the truth, at first I did not agree with this idea especially when Dr. Boody mentioned that “every kind of research” has this nature (including Einstein’s research). The reason may be that I had been thinking that the act of research would be basically to know things better, and in order to do so, a researcher must have unbiased points of view as much as possible. The ideal may be this way, but it is not quite possible because any researcher, even the one who is the most strict scientific research field, has to involve his/her own perception that cannot allow the researcher to see things purely free from any bias. Additionally, I had also kept the thought that the conduct of research is for the sake of finding more about the phenomenon, and later on, findings are discussed to draw any further implication with the intention of convincing the importance of its finding to other people. However, the interest in and motivation of the inquiry of things are certainly associated with the belief in the research values. Having this realization now I am certain that my position as a researcher is to manipulate the knowledge that comes from the series of my research performance.

Now I look back to what Dr. Boody meant to tell by manipulation; he probably meant the human factor of scientist’s work, such as decision making for the measurement and interpretation of the result.

In the summer of 2000, during an introduction to qualitative inquiry course taught by Dr. Smith, I finally got a strong grip on the concept of hermeneutics, at least briefly at the time. Dr. Smith emphasizes the importance for social scientific researchers to be aware of their understanding, as they were often influenced by what was taken for granted before looking into the issues. Looking into how our preconceptions or assumptions allow or prevent us from viewing things in certain ways, or checking what past experiences impact the current approach to understand the things, seemed to me highly related to the thought process I acquired in the prep-school time seminar. It surely shared with my past experience the ongoing attempt to be free from our own bondage of perception and language in order to see things in the world clearly. In the qualitative

inquiry course, the role of researcher in relation to the world appeared again and again.

My learning experience in this qualitative course can be illustrated as follows.

Qualitative research in this course (currently listed as Advanced Qualitative Methods) was ultimately ethnographic study based on observation and our interpretation through a hermeneutic process, which is the process of self-knowledge after all— my wording may not be exactly right, but this is how Dr. Smith spoke to us in the summer of 2000. Precisely, according to my notebook, he made a distinction between a positivist view and an interpretative view of social science research due to their clear ideological differences. Sending us to the local breakfast place or pushing us to take a public bus service, he gave assignments of field observation to write down everything we noticed and we thought. We were to practice our reflexive knowing and hermeneutical process. What we instantly notice may come from who we are with our presumptions and prejudices. And such understanding of things should be under scrutiny in order to really understand the things by reflecting how our understanding or interpretation of such things actually arrived. During the course, Dr. Smith encouraged us to expand our point of view on what research is about. Reflection on observation of a past event was encouraged as a valid form of social science research, for which we had some opportunities to actually practice this way of research through course assignments.

It was interesting that I was very used to the public transportation in this area as I did not have a car, but the rest of my classmates owned cars. Not having any clue on city bus riding in this Midwestern car-dominated environment, one female Caucasian classmate asked me to catch the bus together for her first time. People who looked

mentally challenged or looked poorly dressed sat in the same bus. Some passengers, holding grocery shop bags, got on the bus in front of the supermarket. Men and women in the bus, including me and my classmate, were all human beings sharing a public transportation. I was feeling awe of the togetherness of such a variety of people from different background and life situations; at the same time, my classmate was expressing that it was awkward for her to feel different sitting among those people. It could be said that this difference between the two of us would lead our fieldwork toward obviously very different directions, from setting up research questions and analyzing the result of observation, even if we used the same social theory as framework. I was feeling the importance of the researcher's role observing and engaging in the lives of others through fieldwork and write-up, as long as who I am transfers the meanings of such experience and interpretation into the findings.

Through Dr. Smith's approach to ethnography, I was realizing the final paper I had written on the street youth in Hawaii for the previous semester's Youth Program Development course was probably my first ethnographic experience in a natural setting as a participant observer. Although more than three years had passed since I moved to Iowa, one scene from the life in Hawaii came back to my memory, when one of the young children visiting the university's student union mischievously came to my table to ask for a dollar for a soda or something. It used to be a quarter that I was asked for. Going to the beach for surfing was my daily routine, in the morning before class, and often all day on the weekend. A hidden hierarchy of wave riding is often created in and outside of the water. You have to have certain skills, but on top of that, you have to be

known by people there. As a new comer, therefore, it was important to observe the others and study who they were in order to let them accept me. I started writing about them, reflecting what it was like to be with them from an adult perspective. Sitting on the bench at the beach and joining other local people telling stories and playing music was part of the drill. It took nearly a year before I felt like I was becoming one of them. Once you get acquainted with the older youth, you get a position to stay among them for your turn at a wave, and younger youth would not mess you up. What I was finding through writing about being there was that I had held my personal need of relating with others as much as those youth gathering at the particular spot those days. At the same time, I was caring for those young people who were taking the path I once came through hesitantly on the way growing into adulthood (Kitajima, 2004).

As we try to understand the phenomenon we decide to research, various layers of thought processes happen, and we get to know more about ourselves in such reflective practice. As I wrote in the reflection for Dr. Boody's course final exam, before taking his course, scientific research meant to me to know better about things out there objectively without bias. However, such a way of knowing without considering how we come to know is rather shorthanded. Self-knowledge is then a part of understanding the world in social science. Along the line of such thoughts, I have to ask—is the direction of our knowing only toward our selves after all? At the time of writing this section, I opened the old file of Dr. Boody and Dr. Smith's courses to review materials. Reading the book chapter 12+ years later gave me many new understandings as I have grown over these years with additional opportunities to experience the field and literature. I could

convince myself to some extent that I understood the book chapter written by Dr. Smith much better than the last time with more ways I could think of for application of the discussion of research paradigms. The material was the same, but the amount of information and logics in the argument throughout the writing I could retrieve is much greater than ever before. What could I draw a conclusion here, then? Our way of knowing keeps expanding as long as we continue interpreting our interpretation of the thing.

Ethnographic Observation and Coffee Shop Man

In the first summer 12 years ago, ever since the new owner opened the coffee shop on the college neighborhood, every staff member who worked there made my ice tea differently, rather weakly brewed. I was relatively quiet to these service people at the shop; however, there was an exception. A few days in a week, there was my coffee shop man whose welcoming smile was always bright and happy. One day his friendly manner happened to encouraged me to request him my ice tea to be made in a certain way I liked. At that time, he was obviously new in the shop and new to making ice tea. He carefully listened to me and followed all the procedures of making a glass of ice tea using loose mint tea leaves. He was fulfilling my leisure. And because I valued the way he took care of his customers, I came to interview this coffee shop man for my qualitative research paper assignment this summer. Without this interview, I would not have known him the way I have. Here is the excerpt from my first summer interview paper for qualitative method course submitted to Dr. John Smith on July 17, 2000:

I asked him about the most fun part and the strangest part of his job at the coffee shop. While he was thinking, the jazz band student came along and asked him to

make a “three dollars mystery drink.” This may mean that the student wanted the coffee shop man to fix whatever he recommended. I was looking at the people playing corner chess from my table. The oldest one, maybe around 40, looked at me and smiled. Two girls had already slipped out from the coffee shop while I did not notice it. Soon, the jazz band student left with a paper cup. Before he came back from the counter, he was chatting with the people playing chess, and sat down on the chair again. He in front of me apologized about the distraction, and wanted me to remind him what the question was. To me, the way he responded to any situation during his work time was something about him in the coffee shop. So, I told him that I would not mind any waiting at all. Then, he started describing about the fun part of his job. He expressed that he hardly gets bored in his work time for many reasons. He enjoys his coworkers, and friends coming along during his working hours. He has a great freedom to listen to music whatever he feels like. As the most fun part of his work, he pointed out the interaction and conversation with various people. Surely, his witty interaction helped me venture to ask him to make my kind of ice tea. Relating to the interaction with others, he pointed out one strange thing he sees in the man who comes to drink coffee every day but never changes his facial expression all the time. He seemed even enjoying the challenge of understanding this person and getting in his witty pace. When I added a question, “what is the romantic thing for you in your job?” I needed to explain my concept of romantic—something brightening up our mind. As paraphrased his response, it is romantic for him to see many people of different types coming to the coffee shop, appreciating the atmosphere, coffee house idea, art, music, and creativity by which people are stimulated to get positive energy.

I was looking at the abstract paintings on one side of the wall while he was talking about his romantic idea about the people in the coffee shop. In front of this wall, there was a wood cabinet in which colorful accessories and jewelries were displayed and lightened up. Suddenly one young man who also works at the coffee shop in the different shift came to the counter and soon left with a cup of drink in his hand. One girl who came along with the other man approached to the coffee shop man in front of me, and gave him a hug. Without even getting anything particular to drink, some people were coming in and out. Then, I remembered what he told me, that more familiar faces would come to the coffee shop in the late evening after 8:30. It was about eight o’clock. Since I came in this shop at 5:40 PM, more than two hours had passed without noticing.

As a consequence of the conversation, I brought another question to him, “what is the difference between regular and new people for you?” This question did not make a clear point to him, because he has tried to treat everyone fairly. It took me a while to rephrase this question such as “when is the point to feel familiar with someone who used to be a totally new to you?” I wanted to ask him when he starts noticing people in his job setting. This question happened to become the

hardest one. He said, “Wow, I need to sleep on this question.” “It may be various reasons. . . . Could be someone who looks like my friend, something extremely unique, some clothes I recognize, someone I find attractive, or even someone who has a big mole on his neck. . . . It could be many reasons.” In the meantime, those chess players two tables away from ours were ending their game. He looked at them, looked at the wall behind, and looked back at me. “I think I like to pick up the distinctiveness in people. . . . So many people, so many qualities.” I realized that the question I gave him was rather profound. And it might be because of his quality of taking time in each person and each drink seeing something special in others, I have been enchanted by a glass of Moroccan mint ice tea each time he makes for me. He added, “if there is positive energy people feel, they’ll come back to the place.”

Is it a venture to say that the intention of a person in a place creates whole a lot of impact on others through the atmosphere of the place? Since the atmosphere has dialectic nature that requires the interaction between individual persons and every surrounding, the experience of a coffee shop has a lot of meanings. Therefore, people and place have been always inseparable from my leisure.

Because of this summer interview assignment, I felt more comfort with my coffee shop man and later on began talking to him with a little more personal questioning, which led us to figure out that we were sharing a fundamental issue—the tree which is not a tree—to use his word. Pointing at a tall tree behind a building that we could see from the sidewalk where we were chatting, he said that he wanted to appreciate the whole tree instead of thinking any name or words about it. It was necessary for him to have personal contact with real things beyond words before learning in detail how things are identified with certain terms. Information simply given to him was something that kept him from experiencing anything for real.

On June 29, 2010, a note I wrote:

The tree is not a tree. This phrase actually can be divided up into multi meanings. Semantically what the word, tree, refers to is the tree across from the street, but the tree itself does not exist with that name from the beginning. We use the name for our convention. Once named, we tend to forget how the individual existence differs from each other; instead, we tend to regard the thing collectively. The tree

is a tree in this sense, but we are not paying our attentions to the true element of the thing we call a tree. The phenomena around us are originally unknown and nameless, but we are so accustomed with having everything named in advance. The wonder and surprise of the nature is more than what the conventional names can deliver. Our attention to something new is often keen and fresh, and to something known is rather dull. The wonder and appreciation toward the existence of phenomenon is what my coffee man wanted to retain for his creativity.

This may not be of any importance for many other people; for them, the tree is always a tree. But it was for both of us the most important aspect of human limitation in directly experiencing the world. We all might face it at some point in our lifetime. At least, I did, and so did my coffee shop man. Such a realization was too serious to ignore. Without any awareness, we may not really know things beyond the level of language; even with our awareness, we still keep failing to touch the true sense of reality of the world whenever we try to express such an image. Modern education, regardless of the society in the East or the West, inherited Aristotelian science of naming and categorizing every possible thing in the world. After fifteen years, for the first time, I had met someone who went down the path I had gone. Finding such a person behind the coffee shop counter seemed to me unusual. Noticing a significant value in someone in your terms does not happen very often while the person is right there. It is like finding a beauty in the busy everyday life. It resembles to what happened in the experiment introduced in the Washington Post (Weingarten, 2007). One winter morning, Joshua Bell, internationally-recognized violinist played classical tunes on an old looking violin at the corner of a busy metropolitan subway station in Washington, DC. While he played several classical tunes in the 40 some minutes, only one person at the end recognized him after more than 1000 people had hurried by.

In the midst of this realization that things around us, our notion of things, and even the concept we gain from such notions of things were all simply words and what someone else named, he said, he rejected the religious teaching and faith with which he grew up in his family and in the years he spent in religious private school. “All stories were lies”—at the time of our conversation on the sidewalk in the first summer he told me so with a slightly angry facial expression. It is hard not to cause some misconception when we talk about what we call God; however, in my opinion, the teaching of God in religious organizations and from their leaders is not as big as what the word and concepts try to refer to. Some of this may be because of organizational manipulations which often relate to the politics of the time, and some may be because of the nature of language that does not exactly refer to what something is called. I was just listening to him without interfering. This is something each person has to deal with. In a later talk, he mentioned that while he was in college, a philosophy course—Existentialism—took a significant role in his liberation. He was dealing with the conflict, both intellectually and spiritually, in the glimpsed nature of language and his image of true existence as it is.

His losing any interest in formal education during his senior year did not take much longer, especially after he failed one general education course—personal wellness that is not even an academic course. He said he lost motivation to complete the assignments until the last minute and so failed the course. There was no reason for him to struggle to rescue the failed course, for receiving a BA degree from his business major, even with only one more semester to go, seemed pointless to him. When he started to make music a few years back, he told me, such meaningless information of mere words

crammed into his head was destroying his creativity. He wanted to spend his energy and time to create his music, to reach out to the indescribable world instead of fooling himself with something in which he did not see any meaning. Although I eventually remained on the college track, at one point during my prep-school year, I felt the same intensity in which I could not allow myself to keep pretending to do something that I could not value within my idea of truth. Who in the world would imagine someone behind the coffee shop counter would hold a silent resistance to contemporary education, society, and their way of knowing, and be working on his project to connect himself with the world? I began observing my coffee shop man since the summer of 2000. At the time my focus of dissertation was possibly his thoughts and what was in his mind in his everyday life, I needed to experience time with him in the coffee shop environment.

Labor That is Spiritual

When I met my coffee shop man in the first summer, he had two jobs: one was at the coffee shop and another was at the cornfield. He talked about detasseling work as spiritual experience and being healthier by working outside in the summer time. I became curious about the job, so he tried to explain how corn rows look like by drawing a picture. I could not understand that time in the first summer. Later on, asking around the local people, I found out that it was such a labor of hard work many young people do to make relatively good money during the summer break. I was looking to experience this 'detasseling' work myself. After some more summers passed by, I finally got a chance to ask someone who manages a detasseling team. What is like standing in the cornfield? Wet and burn. He never missed any work in the consecutive 15 summers

except one morning he had a car trouble. Vast field, and there was a sense of being there by myself. He felt that such physical labor and so-called intelligent business work may be equally important.

His attitude toward labor was always sincere to my eyes. Even in the coffee shop, during his shift, everything was clean and put in order. Mopping the floor, washing dishes, or taking time to make a cup of drink for the customer— across the different tasks he truly focused on what was at hand. This reminded me of the daily work of a Zen monk. While observing and listening to him working in the coffee shop, I saw a monk of immense spiritual depth in this person living among people.

Still Life behind the Counter

As the coffee shop was originally located in the corner of the college property, I saw college students in and out of the shop socializing or studying there. During the initial years of my ethnographic observation, a number of friends of my coffee shop man were still in college. One day in the very beginning of the new semester the coffee shop had a live music show played by faculty and students from the school of music. I was in the audience, watching him at the shop counter looking at the music show. I wondered why he looked somewhat emotionless, which was unusual for him, when one of those professors introduced to the audience their music students who were going to play the following weekend. What was he thinking at the moment? After the show, while many customers were leaving, his best friend who was also one of the shop workers with a different time shift, approached the owner to tell him that he would take his friend out to the neighboring bar for a break, which was, as far as I had seen, not common routine.

It was a night in which there was a contrast between the formal music students who appeared in the light with applause and expectation from others, and my coffee shop man, young and eager for his truth, who denied the formal music methods of college education. A few days later, when I came back in the coffee shop, I saw him sitting quietly behind the counter. In those days, there was no internet available computer at the counter. He was just listening to the music. As he was pouring my coffee, I asked him about schooling for his music making while mentioning the music show of the previous week. He said that he might go back to school to study music at somewhere else in the future, only if any opportunity would come across letting him learn the way he valued music training—learning by doing, such as apprenticeship for further creative work. It sounded as if he was not really looking around for a college option any more, but was enjoying his music creation without concern for the future.

Everyday Life of Others and Researcher's Eyes

“Not many people can keep thinking of one person for a long time . . . but many people often want to be in other person's thought.” This remark came from a young researcher from Milan I met in a shared hostel room in Boston on December 5, 2002. After discovering that both of us were working on the doctorate though in different fields, it was rather natural to start sharing our research topics with each other. I was visiting the country's oldest university first time for a research seminar, while she had been staying in this hostel over a month researching the architectural library archives at MIT. As she asked about my dissertation, I was enthusiastically describing my research idea on my coffee shop man whom I had found three summers previously and how I had kept my

eyes on this person almost every day at his work. It could be because she was missing her home in Milan where many people would stay outside socializing in the public area day and night, or her comment earlier might be a result of her staying alone without having anybody familiar around in the cold and icy Massachusetts winter. Her words seemed to pertain to some truths. I might have wanted to be in the thoughts of others as much as I have been thinking of my coffee shop man and his project. As more years passed by, one summer night in 2004 after a music show held at the coffee shop, I finally gathered my courage to reveal my research interest in my coffee shop man to ask his permission to my writing about him and his music project. Since that night, it became evident to him that I wanted to know about him. My coffee shop man started to share with me his music recording and schedules of his band concert since then.

I was no longer just sitting afar to watch him. However, things did not go as a plan. My attention to and my association with the coffee shop man began shifting in the circumstances around us which was also changing. Especially after the fall 2004 started, contrasting the growing energy of the department I worked for due to their new doctoral program, I began to sink into my own depression. Each day after work, I still visited the coffee shop to be there. Without pondering a philosophical issue, our day could go by. Even without discussing over it, I felt my needs for staying in the same environment to share some time with him, which actually helped me stay thinking of his and my project.

Topics of Research and Life of a Person in Front

On 2/26/11, I wrote my professor:

When I entered EdD program, becoming a social science researcher was my career goal. Thanks to my first advising professor in leisure services program

pushing us to find a research topic in our daily situation, I followed her teaching and constantly looked for research topics for potential study. When the Gallagher-Bluedorn Performance Arts Center opened, for example, it was natural to outline a few research ideas for studies of community's cultural impacts and university facility. Sketching new research studies by modeling existing research was also interesting thing to do. I was enlightened with research designing those days.

Once exposed to hermeneutics and interpretive research concept which seemed very similar to my long-held theme in the problems of language (General Semantics) and cognitive knowledge, my focus shifted to more of the studies of life. World Trade Center was bombed in my second year of doctorate. I was watching the NYC on TV, and wondering in such a disaster there will be the needs of study to assist people to cope with post-traumatic stress disorder for resilience, while feeling uncomfortable by thinking that way. When people are dying on the other side of the country, why am I thinking of a research potential out of such disaster? This time, I didn't outline any study idea though. It was somewhat of an embarrassing moment. Somehow, first three doctoral years were passing by with many of research interests and ideas.

Far more years passing, and those days I was so worn down from my daily department office work that I couldn't afford my energy to be creative. My antidepressant medicine kept me fuzzy, which meant no more playing with research ideas and designs. In the book store and coffee place where my coffee shop guy worked, I just hung out, talked stories with people, and read books. Although seeing so many faculty and staff in the department office, my mind was tightly shut instead. But once coming to the coffee shop, it was like my refuge where I could relate myself to the outside world. I was originally observing my coffee shop guy for my ethnography; later on, it was like I was healing my pain by relating myself at least something I find intellectual and precious inside of my coffee shop guy and his relation to his surroundings.

It was the beginning of one winter in my Dark Age, I started seeing a familiar girl walking around in the black coat and skirt. Looking out the window from the couch I sat in, I could observe her carrying a big black garbage-bag filled with empty bottles, mumbling and cussing something in the mouth. I knew her more than her face; we took the same philosophy class and then two ballet classes several years previously. She was an undergraduate when we first met, and in my memory, she went on a graduate program later on. While she was in her masters, I often saw her studying in the Union where I also lived almost every day. After such many years of her time and my time passing in a flash, here she came walking on the street like a homeless woman. It was sad to see how she changed. She used to be such a beautiful, bright, and intelligent young woman. Her face was almost covered by her untamed dark hair, and now she had a very tired look in the old black outfits. Once or twice, I had a chance to say hi

to her on the street.

One day, she finally opened the glass door to the coffee space. As I was sitting in a couch near the window, I noticed her and waved to her. Inside of shop is warm and cozy. She came in and sat next to me. Then we started talking. I asked her how she had been after graduate school. She told me she didn't finish her thesis and left school. Occasionally she was spitting small and sharp cuss words facing nowhere. She had changed from whom I knew long before. As I asked where she was from, she started talking about her hometown. She gave me a name of nearby small town. She continued telling me her story on how such small town was sickly, she was a child sexually abused by her parent, how nobody tried to believe or help her but covering up, even the church pastor didn't believe her. She said there were such things in a small town. Everything is a lie... Her face was getting scary with rage and anger. While listening to her story, I wondered if telling her old story could be a therapeutic mean for her. Next moment, I was asking her, "would talking about your pain help you in any way?" "If so, would you consider writing your story. . . possibly for your thesis that you haven't finish?" She didn't respond to my question, but facing elsewhere she just kept cussing in small voice. I felt very sad for her with such memory of life experience which caused so much pain and anger in her later life in which she could not remain sane. At the same time, I was feeling awkwardness for my automatic reaction thinking of a research study. What to know, why do I want to know, and how further to know—once facing a life of person, things are too heavy to know about. It seems a matter of ethics of a researcher how (or how not) we treat the case as a research topic. Later on, I found out one of my coffee shop friends provided her a place to sleep for a while until she caused a trouble with money and left. I have not seen her around since the year. To this day, I still wonder about her for whom I couldn't do much help.

Depressed Researcher and Consultation of Mind

While he was making coffee for me at the coffee counter, I would ask him a few questions around our daily life. It could be on American custom, popular culture, people's habits of thinking, etc. Or, I lightly consulted him with my issues occasionally. Often times, without even telling him everything, he gave me some insight on what I concerned about. In looking back at those days especially during my Dark Age, he was like my counselor who was actually much better than other counselors of mental health department. Without pointing out the exact matter with language, in our mutual

understanding on the nature of language, there was a comfort that there was already the possibility of misunderstanding. Even if people believe themselves talking about the same topic with others, it is not actually so. Even though we look at the same wall picture, each of us may have different point of focus. Instead of such pretentious conversation, while talking to my coffee shop man, I had no disappointment for his misunderstanding. I could talk about variety of topics with him. The following memo was written on September 23, 2004:

After work, I stopped by the coffee shop. It was Jen who made me a cup of coffee, while my coffee shop man was talking with his friend at the other corner of the shop. While waiting for the coffee being made, I was facing other side showing my back to him. For a while I didn't talk to him, but eventually we greeted. He asked me if I listened to the CD he gave me a week ago. Yes, I did very often. I started talking to him how I'm behind with my project, how I'm depressed, how I envy with other people who came newly and got all the job I dreamed about, how I had no reason to wake up in the morning. He asked me if my project is still the sand before a sand castle. I said, it is like I already put my first scoop of sand in a bucket and know which location I'm going to put. What I need to do right now is why I need to make the sand castle on the exact location, and why with the exact bucket, etc.—reasoning for my project. I told him I hope that he was patient enough to wait for me getting over this depression to talk to him about his project.

He asked me if the university is making the wave/tide to wipe my sand. I said that it's like the tide is there and I'm putting on bank, which cause the current move more rapidly and violently. I wanted to think I'm the one who created this mood as I compared myself with others more privileged. He asked if my project is joy or not. I answered that knowing the joy in my project, not getting to my project for some reason is pain. Then, my coffee shop man told "People need some validation from others, but at least you know that you like the project you are doing." True. I think I forgot that I liked my project no matter why others would say. I think I was too busy with other feeling to remember this. He said everything is absurd, talking about the bushy hair of his friend. "A cup can be moved a little bit." (Did he mean a cup wouldn't move by itself?) He also said that although others have great ideas and information, it will go through the filter to make sense. I shouldn't be discouraged by taking time.

One day, I was finding out that one of my favorite faculty members and friends was leaving the university. Confirming what I noticed in the copy room in the previous semester with this faculty, I was extremely upset. After the day's work, I came up to the coffee shop man, and asked him, "What would you do if someone stole your music concept and made a music CD without giving you any credit?" He asked, "Is anyone stealing your idea from you?" No, it was not about mine. It was about the professor who first asked us in the youth service course what it meant to be human. I was explaining I saw some in-print manuscript full of reference material from the faculty's course, which I had taken four years previously. And the faculty member whose material was used by others is now leaving. "It's not fair!" I was almost crying with my anger. There was no other customer. The owner of the coffee shop—who was a retired professor—was passing by the counter with his curious face while I was loudly complaining about the power struggle the faculty had to go through. My coffee shop man asked, "Is there any method to prove that this professor had the original idea?" This was usually how he would clarify my thoughts in a calm manner. As far as I talked to the professor over the email, he told me the university officials did not take it as a case. I regret badly why I had never stepped forward when I noticed something was wrong with the manuscript getting its draft printing at the copy room? It would be only me who could have proved something about it. The faculty told me that the only consolation was they did it badly. As I thought about all these correspondence with the faculty, I told him, "Well, as the original idea that I learned from the professor may be better, if I write the book review or something in the future, I can point out how badly the material was used for their

argument.” My coffee shop man smiled at me and said, “Here you go, Tomoe!” He always led me to my own solution in this way. How often could I help him in return?

Friendship, Participant Observation, and Ethics of Being There

Without much progress in my proposal writing yet, it was still a fruitful time in the following two years (2005-2006) in a sense of relating with others in the coffee shop community to experience and understand the dynamics of it. I made friends with people in a sort of “coffee shop community” where I was no longer a total outsider but rather a part of it. It was helpful to me to do ethnographic participation by observing and experiencing activities with many types of people. It became more than just sitting in the coffee shop watching people. We shared many occasions doing things together: talking, cooking, partying, and just sitting together in the coffee shop and its neighborhood. I think I had many opportunities for deeper understanding of my coffee shop man. Numbers of opportunities to visit the music shows he played with his band in local settings were also interesting experiences. Some of such occasions were rather underground settings. Before this project, I had never had experience entering a bar or any evening entertainment establishment alone, except a coffee shop. Now, getting there alone was not a problem whether it is a bar or someone’s garage for a music show. I would not be alone for such music show, because I would run into someone I knew there.

Being friends with people around the coffee shop man made me feel great about observing more depth of the life of my coffee shop man; at the same time I felt a little bit uneasy in the situation, because I was not purely making friends with these people as long as my project was in mind. Those days, my coffee shop man and I never spent a lot of

time talking alone when we were in the circle of friends. Some of our long-term friends might notice I favored him though. Other friends working in the shop were very inclusive—for example, one friend invited me to his martial arts class which I joined for a while; another friend started a weekly dinner social and invited me regularly. Being a part of the community opened up a lot of me as a person who was more than a researcher with an agenda. I think it was helpful that most of our close friends there knew that I already had a steady boyfriend even though he was living out of town. So, I managed not to be a topic of others' gossip around the coffee shop community.

“Tomoe, I'm tired of being poor.” When I was alone with him, only one time he mentioned like that. He had been working in the coffee shop setting plus corn field job each summer over five years at that time. I was also living on minimum budget barely enough to pay rent and food. It had been long for me living like this way as a graduate student. I asked him, “Would you like to look for a full-time job somewhere else?” He made his face as if thinking for a moment. “Nah, I don't need to own too much stuff yet.” Neither do I; it was not time yet. We laughed weakly.

The coffee shop man of my project was apparently not telling others that I was writing about him. I, of course, kept silent about the detail of my project to whomever in the community to maintain his privacy in my research. It was small community. If the people who knew him happen to hear about my project, they would know whom I had written about. So, whenever someone in the presence of other friends asked me about my research (because many of them knew I was a graduate student), what I could answer to the question was “doing something about human development” or “writing a story on the

way of knowledge” or such broad explanation. Although, it cannot be avoided that someone in the future might read my dissertation and say “I know him!” The last thing I would wish in my dissertation was to hurt my coffee shop man while the story could not convey his very important aspect of life. Even with the underlying condition that one understands others reflexively only through one’s interpretation, I imagine nobody would like to be interpreted by someone else if the outcome is not hitting the right spot on what he or she actually is. Motives, skills, and sensitivity in writing another’s life story are truly ethical matters of a researcher.

At the end of summer 2006, my coffee shop man suddenly moved to a neighboring state. Actually, it happened after his heartbreaking incident, and he needed to move on with his life elsewhere. Other members of his band had already moved to the East coast in the beginning of summer, and his girlfriend was the main reason why he did not go with his friends. Fortunately, an old friend who managed a café in the nearest big city offered him a job. By the end of July he had decided to take the job there, and in August he arranged to have two solo music shows locally to say farewell to his friends. The final show held at the coffee shop was truly a farewell to him, I think. Many familiar faces I knew from past events showed up, and the room was packed. And more importantly, his parents, for the first time, made an appearance at their son’s music show. I had heard about his upbringing in the church-oriented private school. On the one hand he developed doubt in his faith and in what was called God, on the other hand his sister went to a religious university and married with a man of the same church. I remember in

the first summer he mentioned to me that he was “left-handed” in his family. Knowing the brief background of his life, seeing his parents in the crowd meant a lot to me, too.

Within the year 2006 I had two occasions to visit his coffee shop in the big city. He was still a man behind the coffee counter. The shop was located on ethnic district where there were varieties of small businesses such as restaurants, bars, business consultants, ethnic groceries, and so on. The frequency of seeing my coffee man dropped from three to five days a week to nearly none. Without having the internet and social network systems such as MySpace or Face Book, our connection would be slim.

On Feeling for Others' Pain

My question—what researcher’s eyes could let us feel about other people’s pain—has remained over the past years, and unexpectedly it hit the deepest spot in the beginning of the university’s spring break. On March 11, 2011 2:46pm local time, the largest recorded earthquake, Magnitude 9.0, hit Japan. The earthquake triggered a massive tsunami on the coastal line. The highest wave was said to be over 130 feet, and completely washed away some towns and the people nearly into the ocean. The death toll was climbing every day, and more and more the brutal reality was revealed. Followed by the news of the failing multiple nuclear power plants, it triggered by the quake, was the nation’s largest crisis since WWII. For a week, I could not move myself from the Japanese live internet news, gathering the most current information of what was happening in my country. On March 17, 2011 8:47 PM, I wrote my professor:

Dr. Boody,

I know, no matter how much I wonder what's going on in Japan, I cannot save anything there. Yet, one week is passing since the first earthquake impact, and surviving people is there in their barely minimum living condition, while I am

able to live my life as comfortable as usual, such as sitting in front of PC in my heated apartment room, cooking my food, sipping coffee, receiving a box from internet shopping, etc. Although my family is fine far from the badly affected areas, I cannot help but searching for any updated news. A part of myself observes other part of me doing such thing endlessly as if the "I" wants to be part of those affected people living in Japan. And the "I" keeps failing to be anywhere near their pains. Another "I" tells the "I" who is foolishly trying to be sympathetic as much as possible, "there is nothing I can do right now, so live my life." I am trying to put these "I"s together.

In response to his suggestion to read about the philosopher Simone Weil who died showing solidarity with the people occupied in France during the WWII, I wrote to him on March 22, 2011 12:30 PM:

People's lack of compassion may derive from a lack of imagination for other people's life situations. The lack of imagination may be because of a lack of relate-able experiences. The level of individual experiences differs; so does people's imagination, compassion and sympathy. Still, I think there is no such true achievement of solidarity with others by imitating limited condition of the conditions of others. Many have tried and failed.

As everyone should seek their own truth by doing what they believe, I should not be too critical about Simone Weil, but I don't see my truth in her way of showing solidarity with occupied Jews and French people by Nazi during the war. If she had a chance to breath outside of the country in such life-threatening condition, she should have lived strongly for her people. Especially if she didn't have enough physical strength, not taking care of herself and ending up with others having to nurse her after all, I think her action was just narcissistic and self-indulgent. As I read about her, she weakened her health by not taking enough liquid and food, but she was later sent to a sanitarium where she was cared well and eating some food. So, although her image of dying by limiting food to show solidarity with occupied people in France during the WWII has been favorably projected, I think she died with misconduct of her own health. She might want to feel those people by doing so, but it would not help; as how much I try to feel as near crisis with Japanese people as I could, if I was not doing what I should have done, it was not helping anyone, me and people in the distance.

Only momentarily or short range of time, mystical wonder opens the type of experiencing the oneness and unity to the whole, but what left to us is our daily living among people.. I used to be a bit sad for not being able to return to such experiences whenever I wished. Also, I was mistaking that something hidden as a secret of the world might take me there. Without holding such illusions, however,

I should more appreciate my being able to be in the world during the given term of life. If Simone Weil didn't take care of herself and weakened her health, it was a waste. At least, the trial would not be for the public display. Giving up something for prayer happens, but it should be within the person's capability in privacy. Nobody needs to know what you are doing, and the rest of your day should go as usual as nothing special is going on. Because of the identity Simone Weil holds as a demonstrator, I have a feeling of rejection against her method. Her way of truth is different from mine.

She is also known as a writer with her experience of proletariat working in a factory for a year. Without experience, there is no or little imagination possible. But, with having her teaching job secured during such a leave, with such a year short experience of being a labor worker, what would she understand? Many unprivileged people in the working class would have no exit from such working class life condition. Even though an experience gives you taste of the laborer class, you cannot tell what the real emotion of the proletariat because it is often drown out in alcohol, violence, non-sense quarrels, as well as anger and self-pity. Children of such workers class have even harder time to picture their bright future. I just do not accept the way she tried to understand working class people, which would be too heroic and too ego-centric approach to my eyes. Or, I should consider her not an activist but an ethnographer doing her fieldwork and wrote her findings.

If her life did not deteriorate by weakening her health in such empty demonstration activities, Simone Weil could have made much more different contributions for her people and for the world instead of indulging her wish for the oneness with others. She could have saved more people by living her life strongly while activist temptation of togetherness with those under the Nazi occupation. While people are dying in the disaster, I feel even anger to her action of no sense. My "I"s tells each other I may be wrong saying this, but at least the "I" who tried to feel as close to the people in Japan as possible also knows I have to live to find what I could do while being in the world. As far as Jewish philosophers go, I much more prefer Hannah Arendt who survived and left her writings of totalitarian through her personal view and experiences of WWII and beyond. She did fully live her life to do her project even after having to leave her home and Germany

On March 22, 3:03 PM, my professor replied:

This struck me as a very thoughtful personal narrative!

I personally would tend to agree with you about Simone's choice, but I can't help but respect someone willing to be so disciplined when they could so easily have

not done it or "cheated" on the sly. I have found it inspiring--but only in general and not as a guide to specific action.

On March 22, 4:42 PM, I wrote back to my professor:

I don't know if her action should be called "disciplined" in the situation. It's not practicing fasting or hunger strike. It's not even the situation that if she didn't eat, the amount left could be shared with some others starving. To me, it is very self-indulging action. Many people facing their own people being in devastation would rather feel more comfort in restricting themselves to stay feeling togetherness with their people. To some extent, it may be natural to fall into such condition. However, I observe some people are just getting their "high" ecstasy by focusing on their own involvement in it instead of taking any action to be useful for others. Life goes on and it is pity sometimes that we cannot intoxicate ourselves in such play, for the very people who are in the devastation would only wish their condition will become better -- not getting someone in the far distance trying to starve herself as if believing she is feeling those people's pain. I once wrote this in my writing about my dad's cancer. The pain he has is beyond what I can imagine. Wondering how to understand his pain is already disrespectful and arrogance of me who would never have the same pain and emotion of his. All we can do in front of others pain is, I think, just to care and hope for a better change from where we stand even with this discomfort of not being able to feel the same pain without any mindless pretension of understanding others. People who do not have food right now in the war or disastrous life condition would not appreciate us others in the safe place trying to play the limited living claiming we relate them in this way. It even looks insulting to those who suffer right now by such demonstration. While we act like drama queens, nobody in the distance get salvation. We need to live our lives to run the day to keep everything on for those who cannot have their normal life. Even after 11 days since the first quake hit Japan, it was revealed last night that there were still many people who could not eat more than a small roll for a day or even a piece of hard candy from their stocked food source, as delivery of supplies is not easily done to all 2500 temporary shelters spread all over in the north area, not everyone is getting enough supply. I just hope food and water supplies will reach those who really need right now. If there is someone acting like Simone Weil in front of me, she will get a slap.

On March 24, 2011, I wrote to myself instead of further writing to my professor:

It is as if I was re-experiencing what Wittgenstein was against. We have to live the ordinary life instead of longing for empty metaphysics. Once I was like Simone Weil, and because of so, my denial is not only her but also for my old self. Here, I feel what Wittgenstein was angry with. He went through the path and saw

it did not help the real living of people. If the philosophy does not help self and other, it is better not to cling to it.

Regarding sympathetic action for the Jews, the story of Chiune Sugihara (Steinhouse, 2004) came to my mind. He was the Japanese ambassador in the Japanese Embassy located in Lithuania. He saved over 6000 Jews from Europe by issuing visas to transport them through Japan to the U.S. by hand-writing each document, with his wife's help, until the last minute of their evacuation. As he worked against official orders, as Japan was the ally of Germany at that time, his actions cost him his career after returning home. Due to his humbling, he never publicized his contributions; therefore, until a year before his death in 1986 the entire story was unknown. Aligned with this episode, one's desire for, and contentment from solidarity with, others' pain by experiencing the tragedy in a simulated condition produces only bad faith.

Observing myself who is observing the others, I sometimes realized, in reaction to what others do especially heroically, that I might be somewhat too sober. Helping others is important, indeed. However, if people start thinking that they could put their foot in the shoe of those who are in difficulty or pain, it makes me wonder if it's hypocritical. But, as long as such help actually brings out a greater good, no matter what the motive is, there might still be someone helped, which is meaningful. But if the end result does not go anywhere positively, any noble motive would result in mere self-praising ego-polishing behavior. When I "study" my life, what do I offer myself in return?

Recovering Self in the Practice of Being a Doctoral Student

I cannot talk my emotional, mental, and academic recovery without my dissertation chair. He has taught research method and helps doctoral students do research

ever since I knew him. My memory of meeting him goes back to the Fall 1999. The first day of the semester, when my doctoral admission was still not official, I was hesitant to tell him—the instructor of the prerequisite educational research class—I was not yet admitted officially. After the class, I walked up to the instructor and said, “It’s hard to explain why my name is not on the list.” He glanced at me, and said, “Well, if it’s hard to explain, then don’t tell.” This was how I first talked to my professor. Relaxed and interesting was how he ran his courses. And if you carefully listen to him, it was mind stimulating. Through his course, and later Dr. Smith’s course, my idea of research was changing as the concepts of postmodern and interpretational research began sinking into my mind. At the same time, I started having doubts about the pretensions of quantitative method. In the following Fall 2000 semester’s quantitative analysis class taught by my professor, I confessed to him that I could not trust the way quantitative methods work with statistical testing any more. Although it was a night class, he stayed another thirty minutes to discuss this with me after the class. At that time, I did not trust the method, but could see that the way the professor tried to deliver the idea behind quantitative research was sincere. A year later, I was sitting in the same analysis class as he had mentioned everyone could come back to his class for better understanding. I liked his teaching that much.

When I finally got him as my dissertation chair in the end of the Spring 2004 semester, however, I did not know how to work with him. Being reserved to freely express while holding my worldly mission that was hard to describe in the nature of language, I hesitated to come back to him until I could prove that I finished my

homework—proposal paper expressing what I really wanted to do in my study. Then another five years passed—in a meantime, I was spending in my Dark Age as well. But eventually when I returned to him, I was weak and my mental condition was still messy. Since I came back to my dissertation chair in the fall, however, I began seeing myself having a gradual change. It was still when nobody had mentioned my recency issue. My professor invited me to co-teach an intro statistics course for the following semester. Then, when he told me there was a psychometrics seminar he created as an individual study for another graduate student, I jumped on to it even without credits. Following semester was even busier. Teaching the stat course with my professor meant I study harder to catch up with him. Also, I sat and participated in a doctoral course he taught in the semester. Teaching gave me some confidence to be an advance graduate student. And being able to actually understand and discuss on the course material gave me a life of doctoral student again.

Teaching Assistant

Although I was not paid as a teaching assistant, I was considered to be so by the students in the intro statistics class. All of them were graduate students, including some from the doctoral levels, as well. The week before the new semester started, my professor emailed saying, “Our class will start next Tuesday. When shall we meet to talk about the class?” I was somehow relieved that he was willing to plan together. For him, teaching a class he was used to by himself must be easier than coordinating how “we” could do so together. He was willing to take the time from his schedule.

Unlike many doctoral students in other large institutions, who are just sent to teach on their own, I had my professor in the same classroom to teach together, which I considered a rare opportunity. Before this teaching opportunity, I had thought that statistics was one of my strongest subject areas in my Masters program, but soon I came to realize my old learning was only scratching the surface. The way my professor went through the context was more conceptual, instead of mechanical computation with SPSS. I found new aspect of statistics in his approach. The psychometrics I had learned in the previous semester with him had already started me thinking that quantitative research could be more thoughtful and sincere if one really cared about validity and reliability issues, and whether what the research studies really matches what the researchers wanted to know. It could be more than simply a p-value to compare means.

Learning as Discussing about It

For almost every class period, I met with my professor before the class time. He sometimes pointed out the errors or false explanations in the textbook. To explain some complex concepts in inferential statistics, analogies and examples are effective. But if the analogy is wrongly over-simplified, leads students to total nonsense in the real research context. There are a few of such false explanation even in the textbook. He said, “Don’t teach the textbook, but teach knowledge of the subject with some help from the textbook.” To do such textbook evaluation, you really have to know what you are teaching.

“This is what teachers would do.”—are words my professor often said. Asking him a question or two had never bothered him. Knowing how busy he could be, I

wondered how he could take time to take care of his students. It was not only me, but there were some other students he had been taking care of for their dissertations. As he gives out so much of his time for students, teaching students who needed extra help outside classroom became my habit as well. I sometimes had trouble explaining in front of the class, but individual tutoring was a way I could polish my own teaching skills. I soon had several regulars in my outside-class session.

Working for Students

As my professor took more responsibility for the content in the class, I took on the test scoring for the three tests. His term tests were always hard despite the relaxed classroom atmosphere. I once questioned, “Why do you make the test this hard? It’s hard to grade, because they don’t do well.” Giving harder tests, he also allowed students to rework their mistakes for extra half points. “More work for me!” It was during this time of test grading that I pictured myself being an apprentice to my professor. I did not understand his intentions, but he wanted me to learn through the experience. Mumbling about my labors, I accepted this was what an apprentice does.

When one of the students requested an additional exam instead of reworking the same test, I was wondering whether we should let the student do another new test. “I wouldn’t have any problem with that.” He responded as expected. Revising a test into a different but similar content level took at least two hours for me. That week, I also received a response from another faculty whom I had requested to be a part of my dissertation committee (as I lost two members over my Dark Age). The faculty’s response was: “I’m sorry, but I’m over-extended.” Obviously, many people do not want

to do any unnecessary “extra” work for a student whose life is none of their concern. With the frustration I had from the repeated rejections, when I saw my student’s new exam result—as bad as the one before—the thought “it was a waste of my time” came to my mind, and I hated such feeling. The student might have wanted to prove herself with another chance, as did I in the desperation of searching for new committee members. If possible, students deserve a chance. And I hoped that I could provide it generously, which I realized is not that easy to do.

You Have to Grow a Thick Skin

While I used to work for the departmental office mentioned above, I saw so many negative evaluations of the instructors whose native language was not English. This university is in the Midwest, widely considered to have the “correct” English accent, so students tend to be critical about how instructors speak. If the students do not understand something, the blame goes automatically to the teacher’s English. Surprisingly, I received a fairly decent evaluation from students in the statistics course. Of course, it might have been because of my co-teacher holding my back to make sure students understood. Some comments about a lack of clarity were to be expected. There were more positive comments than negative ones. My labor of individual tutoring might have helped. And my labor in providing students rework and feedback opportunities might have helped, too.

He often said, “You have to grow a thick skin.” For classroom teaching, you would not be able to make every student happy and satisfied, although you give a lot of yourself to the class. The same may be true in academia. When I had my dissertation

proposal defense, not everyone agreed with the direction of the project. Criticism comes no matter what, but you need the kind of strength to humbly receive it and try to improve based on what is usable. I know my professor is not a perfect teacher: being late or even forgetting to meet me, slipping his words sometimes wrongly, and being unorganized. But he being just a person with some flaws often makes me think I should not pretend being a perfect scholar but a humble teacher in front of students. The professor I apprentice for may have sensitivity and thick skin.

Teaching Alone

“Do you think I can do it?” I asked my professor nervously when he told me to teach one of requirement course for teacher’s education instead of him for the following year. “I think you are ready to do your own course teaching,” my professor said. Using his grant funding, he arranged for me to teach a course he usually taught. Because I was exceeding the seven-year time frame that the university sets for doctoral programs, I had to retake several courses before finishing the dissertation. Full-time graduate coursework and teaching one undergraduate course—I was getting an authentic busy graduate student life as a TA. Unlike one-on-one tutoring sessions and grading students’ tests for the statistics course, having my own class meant I was responsible for everything. The professor shared his teaching materials, but I still had to plan each lesson’s details. Even though I had teaching experience in my home country, I still found it challenging to teach a whole course alone at the college level in the second language. But I told myself, “This is how people get started.” When the first three weeks were passing by, I wrote my

professor about assigning my students a reflection paper of the first course unit on
September 11, 2010:

Dr. Boody,

I'm glad that I made Unit reflection as a part of assignment for the assessment course. Although the due date is next Tuesday, students started sending me their work which is pretty much free-style mumbling on their personal experience and thought regarding the unit topic. It is just a page or two, but their thought and experience reflecting on their learning of this unit come to tangible form of their development of thoughts and knowledge. I'm enjoying to respond to each student's work. Although I am not that good at chatting with students in the classroom, this is my way to relate to each student. The eLearning system is such a great tool to make this work easier.

When doing this way of individual feedback, what I remembered is Doug Magnuson's teaching. There were many short paper assignments in his course. That's the time he noticed the importance of what I wrote and helped me expand to the full article when I wrote about the street kids in Hawaii. When I first wrote how the kids at the beach often ask for change from strangers, it was just a piece of my memory transferred to a paper. But a small piece of writing opened me to go back to more memories and thoughts back then, as well as connecting the central issue as framework with such personal experience. I was not a strong writer during Masters years, but because I later found a joy of writing my thoughts freely in his course, I started writing a bit better, which surely helped to go through the rest of entire EdD coursework.

Once I started feeling relaxed writing my thoughts to show you, I could write better for my dissertation, too. Strangely, if it is assumed as a formal paper, I don't do well. So, mumbling my thought with you surely works better for me. I hope the students in my assessment course will have a chance to connect their personal thoughts and experiences with the content learning to find any meaning during taking this course.

Identity of Future Professional

Reporting to my professor in his office after the class teaching was my routine. In contrast to the stories how hard it is for a TA to receive teaching support from faculty (Nyquist et al., 1999), I had my professor to consult with. During many hours of sharing stories with my professor, I received countless anecdotal lessons. Besides contents of the

course, my professor also discussed how to take care of the students, deal with difficult situations, and relate to students. Here is a mail sent to my professor about the class of the day I consulted him to figure out my misunderstandings on a few of exam questions at the last minutes before returning students the mid-term exam, on October 12, 2010.

Dr. Boody,

Although you told me that I should not say I had disagreement in the test items in front of students, I did. I had to tell why I need to change some people's once-marked-incorrect answers will be credited anyway. By now I know every 34 students by name and face, and I am the one who preach that getting to know the students are important part of teacher's job. I wanted to try out how much mutual trust we have developed in the classroom. I ended up not reducing any points from the items I misunderstood. When I first announced that there are some items I need to change, there were some worried faces, but I managed to get people settled with my explanation on those items. After the class, there were some students came to question on their tests, but it went fine. I told them that I had discussion with my professor (you) and came to decide to be open about my mistake on the tests, which could be an example they should not be doing in front of their young students... I decide to put my faith on my students for my judgment for today. I don't know what they are thinking, but it is me who made mistake, so I'll take care of it.

Andrew, one of the students in the class, stayed late and talked to me. He was one of a very few people who marked NR as correct answer for the easy-to-mistake test item. I appraised his good judgment for answering the item. After he left, I remembered that in his reflection assignment he wrote something about the trust between teacher and students, and I was glad that I tried to be honest in this case. If it were before getting to know them, I could not deal with today's situation as I did. I went back to eLearning and found what I just responded to him yesterday. I mentioned about you there, so I wanted to paste it here:

Andrew,

Your reflection on the mutual respect of teacher and students for student's accomplish higher level goals reminded me how importantly the relationship with my professor plays the role in my dissertation process. Knowing he has his faith in my goal, I can take his criticism on my research; as he knows my respect to him, he can accept my challenge in our discussion... Knowing who your students are is such important part of teaching.

As I know my teacher knows me, I can feel free to express what I want. And as I know him over the extended time, a small misunderstanding or mismanagement of

things he makes would not be a big of deal to me, as he is a human and so am I.

I was developing a different identity during this teaching experience. And at the same time, I was realizing the connection with my professor as a student. Whenever I was taking a doctoral course during my teaching semester, I started observing other professors' teaching strategies and interaction with students along with the content of the course as well. As I have a strength and weakness in my own teaching practice, there are different types of strength and weakness in each professor. On the positive side of my re-taking many courses even after defending a dissertation proposal, this period of time gave me opportunities to learn what the professors would do in the profession, along with my teaching experience.

Having the final instruction of the semester on 12/8/2010, I reported my professor about my last day:

Dr. Boody,

It was strange last class meeting. Earlier before the class time, a student left me a note that she needed to be absent from today's class due to her family member having open-heart surgery. While I was busy with other student asking me about the test items and project expectation, the note arrived. So, I don't even know if she just stopped by or her classmate delivered it to me instead. After explaining to the questioning student about what she was supposed to do for her project, I looked at the note on the pile of my belongings.

It was already a few minutes after 2pm. The whole class was watching me read the note saying "Mmmm. . ." with facial expressions of some sort. I looked at the students in the classroom, and said, "One of your classmate's family is having a major surgery today. Let's hope everything will go alright." And the next moment, something struck and made me tear a bit. Then, I began talking about why this course is ending a week earlier due to my trip to Japan, about my father and his lung cancer, and his surgery of last summer. I was like, "Well, I'm like a runaway daughter not seeing my parents nearly 6 years. I wanted to accomplish something before facing my father whom I hadn't talked more than two years. But I need to go to see him before it's too late." I also told the class that I had had difficulty in my academic career, and been stagnated with my dissertation

until recent year, which had made my returning home more difficult. I told the class to take care of their family. I don't know why I even started telling them this much of my story, but it happened.

After that, I continued the class giving my feedback on their performance assessment projects by listing some of creative examples of their project ideas. Although it was 20 minutes earlier, I decided to let students go. Many of students who attended the class today already had finished their take-home final exam, so they handed their tests to me individually at the end. One of least expressive students of this class wrote me on the front page of the exam, "Good luck on your trip to home." Another quiet student wrote me, "Thank you for sharing your story." And later at night, another student who is also rather quiet in the class wrote me a long and expressive email message to give me sympathy and encouragement as well as her appreciation for my class.

I was excited each day going to teach the course. According to the student evaluations at the end of the semester, I was "happy," "enthusiastic," and "passionate" in my teaching. Of course, there were negative comments as I had expected. I could improve my teaching from such feedback. My mistakes of mid-term exam were also pointed out. At least the students cared enough to write it for me. My life was busy with teaching duties, but I could engage in my coursework even more productively. Unlike the initial coursework period, I was watching other professors' teaching styles. Not only from my dissertation chair, this time I had learned a lot from faculty members of past courses I had taken or re-taken; gradually I came to know what kind of professor I would like to become. My depression seemed having faded long ago. I now could picture myself a future faculty.

Social Capital of Doctoral Student Life

The change I felt I had gone through my experiencing teaching job, interaction with other faculty members, and retaking coursework with new set of doctoral students,

might not be a change in itself. This was reminded through corresponding with my professor. On April 27, 2011 6:53 PM, I wrote my professor:

“Good to have you aboard.” –Dr. Zeitz wrote me so in response to my explanation for the reason why I had to retake 240:240 to deal with recency issue. Isn't it a nice small comment he made?

Although I still don't feel close to the curriculum studies in general, especially in the course where they always talk about U.S. public school curriculum, getting acquainted with faculty on the 6th floor and those of C&I surely reminds me that my home is here, not anymore in the old department I used to worked for. Although I don't know many people's names in SEC building, I now see myself regaining social capital of the doctoral student life.

Even though I knew everyone in my old department for my work, after some small number of leisure faculty members who recognized me as a doctoral student and tried to help me out had left UNI, I felt nobody actually knew I was there behind my well-made posture of a good and happy mannered office girl.

I know nobody else has changed but myself. When I change, what I can see in my doctoral program also changes. I focusing on the doctoral curriculum, I am lucky to recognize this while I am in it.

On April 27, 2011, 11:20 PM, my professor's reply:

So the world changed--but it was only you? This doesn't sound like positivism to me young lady!

On April 27, 11:25 PM, My response to him:

>>This doesn't sound like positivism to me
What does this mean?

On April 28, 2011 3:15 AM, I wrote to my professor again:

Without waiting for your response to the last question, I decide to write more on this...

Do you think the C&I department changed, too? I don't know. I am not sure who ~~else~~ has changed. Only I know for sure is I changed.

By the way, I didn't say "the world changed" but I said what I can see is changed. This is an important part, old man!

On April 28, 2011 10:31 AM, my professor wrote me:

Except that Heidegger would say that although the universe might not have changed, the world changed. Your seeing is REFLEXIVELY bound up in the world. The world grounds, and is constituted by, meaningful human action. So young lady, thus my JOKE about positivism--your language implied something other than positivism.

On April 28, 2011 11:52 AM, I wrote back to my professor:

Sure, I knew it was either a silly joke of you wearing a hat of behaviorist, or you losing some intellect before your retirement age. If the latter happened, I would still stay with you but I'd be the boss...

I'll come in this afternoon for a while to see you, unless you won't exist in the universe.

On 2/28/11 8:06 PM, I wrote my professor:

Dr. Boody,

Today, I went to talk to Dr. You-Know-Who in the late afternoon before the seminar class. Once facing her, 30 minutes was such short time. She told me that I still have many chances to save the world AFTER I get an academic position, instead of doing all in one dissertation. If it were 3 or 4 years ago, I would be cynical like "in what opportunity?" as I had been losing my hope to get an academic job. Now, I can listen to her words very well, as I now know that I have a little bit of foundation for academic job you helped me build in recent semesters. Without this kind of confidence based on actual experiences, I would have had no clue how to take her words as a possible future. I didn't say this to her as the time was pressing, but I just want you to know this.

The Dissertation Process and Independence of Mind

Throughout the past decade, I have tried to defend why what I saw as a personal project in coffee shop man and myself—expressing our continual living with awareness toward existence for which we have no language to describe exactly what it is. When I first time came to write on my coffee shop man was actually in this line of inquiry.

However, it was only the summer 2011 when my chair and I finally came to agree to take my dissertation to be on personal project, instead of an autoethnographical study of doctoral student experience in completing a dissertation. Why couldn't I make this way from the beginning? On one hand, it could be my lack of ability to defend my project to my professor. On the other hand, my professor would be suspicious about the ability of his student to carry out this philosophical study, or not aware of how much it meant to me at the time.

Without mutual understanding for each other's philosophical position, I wonder how a student could actually start this way of phenomenological inquiry from the beginning while the goal of inquiry would not be certainly "educational" at a glance. When I presented my study prospectus in the doctoral seminar in the spring of 2002, my idea of writing on my coffee shop man was not clear enough to defend against the positivistic science. Then, I visited Dr. Boody, for his help, and re-wrote again and again to form a paper which consists of some parts of my beginning story of this dissertation. In the end of the Spring 2004 semester, all four other committee members—Drs. Robinson, Dieser, Smith, and Deemer, joined, then finally Dr. Boody agreed to become my dissertation chair. I started reading Martin Heidegger to understand why my dissertation chair required me to study his thoughts in order to precede my project of one's being in the world.

During my Dark Age, most of the dissertation work I did was reading philosophical literature, such as Heidegger's and Merleau-Ponty's for my project. But when I returned to my professor, I did not have strength to defend my project. At the

same time, I was required to have an educational context. But isn't the questioning the way of knowledge and the relation with language a certain educational context? Again, I did not have skills to defend my position against my professor. Also, at the point of my dissertation stage with long absented time, I was grateful for Dr. Robinson and Dr.

Deemer, the original committee members who remained for my dissertation, as well as for Dr. Waggoner in replacing Dr. Smith who retired a winter before my return, and for Dr. Marston who kindly agreed to serve on my committee during my desperate week of not finding any other support. I was rushing my result of preceding a possible and doable dissertation. The evening after my proposal defense something did not feel right. There were many more issues I had in mind, but had not been able to project in the form of a proposal. The following is what I wrote to my professor on 6/2/10 7:51 PM:

As I projected a context of doctoral student life, the focus of people got into the details of it. Did my getting myself in the doctoral dissertation survival as the topic of this dissertation really take me to a path of inquiry on what I intended in the first place? Didn't I look for too conventional framework just avoiding philosophical outlook? It is as if I pointed at the moon in the distance, and some people might look at my finger tip. It's me who put my pointing finger in the air without telling explicitly that I was pointing at the moon, so I cannot complain about it. Maybe, letting people try to see what I intended to point at in the beginning of my action weren't too bad idea if I could avoid people start talking about my finger tip too seriously. I don't know how far through my finger tip people look at the moon. I know it might not be worthy to tell that I was pointing at the moon though, because some may not think looking at the moon is something they should be doing while they could examine the actual finger tip. I don't regret about today and the structure of my proposal, but after looking at ****'s dissertation, I felt I wouldn't prefer going too far in the doctoral program critique. Mine is more developmental rather than political.

Since I came back to him for my dissertation in the fall of 2009, my professor and I had several arguments on "reflexivity" as a form of analysis. While I was preparing my proposal, however, I could not defend my position with convincing logic. As a result,

when I finally crafted a proposal in spring 2010, I had removed much of my original emphasis on reflexivity. But a year later, I found myself fighting back against my teacher. One's reflexivity, hermeneutics, and my theme—our efforts trying to see things as close to in-itself as possible while being in the world (that was shared with my coffee shop man)—needed to come out as what was deepest underlying in my research.

One evening after a night class, we discussed the relevance of taking a descriptive approach that could also play the role of an analytical point of view. He challenged me, by asking something like “What can descriptive do? Without analytical view, isn't just describing something a weak form of research?” When I was describing my take on the descriptive and narrative approach as highly personal and risk-taking because of the narrative directly reveal who the person is in the reflexive process, I felt that as if I was practicing my dissertation defense by making argument with my teacher. I wrote my professor on February 24, 2011 1:58 AM:

When you video tape someone's life, you don't actually video tape 24/7, but you have certain parts of his life you are picking. When I told you that it is still analytical in the way you choose what to videotape. I couldn't answer when you asked something like what's the point to do so, but I knew I could say something, which just came while washing some dishes. So, let me write you while I can.

In the descriptive way of showing something, you actually show what you picked instead of what exactly is the life of someone. What is not picked, or what is picked. How (what angle) his pieces of life were videotaped, why not other way you didn't videotaped. Where the perspectives come to actually videotape this person's life is the main discussion of how we come to learn this person's life. Isn't this really reflexive mode of thoughts? Where the choice of particular description come from -- asking this is really important to really know where the knowledge and understanding of this person's life come from through the mean (this time, videotape).

You might say this is weak analysis for the study of someone's life, as the focus shifts from someone's life to the one who videotaped. This is part of issues I had

while looking for the way on how to convince you to study on the coffee shop guy. I was not sure if this could be the right way to go. Although I don't want to oppose you too much, but I now started thinking I wasn't so wrong. Please tell me if I am wrong. But when I consider my study "reflexive", I have something coherent in what I'm doing which is part methodological (social science), and part contextual (study of life). Oh, I know you don't like "reflexive" word, just like postmodern, and just like Sartre didn't like people misuse the word "existentialist" and I totally understand.

On 2/24/11 10:30 AM, my professor responded:

As I tried to convey last night--you don't need to have me approve of what you want to do--it's your study, not mine.

And you're right--there is reflexivity here, and it is important. The reason I don't like the term is I've read/heard too many whose entire study was about their study instead of what they were supposed to be studying. To ignore reflexivity is naive realism and runaway empiricism/objectivism. But to ignore the world is naive idealism and runaway subjectivism. And as I read interpretivism it is neither.

Your second paragraph is quite brilliant--it really shows why reflexivity is such an important issue. I'm not sure I've ever seen it put better.

It is true that description is already analytic as you say below—but the intentionality of doing research on someone else is directed to the other, not oneself, although the intentionality is in ourselves and comes from our project. Yes, we are the instrument and all that implies, but if we don't want to actually learn something about the other why bother doing a study at all?

Self-study for example, is not exclusively about the self--it is about practices in teacher education, but with recognition that it is through our eyes and needs and perspectives. As Levinas points out, we are only a Self ourselves because there is an Other out there

You're NOT wrong--just go do the study how you want. You can still study the coffee shop guy if it will get you where you want to get. If his form of life helps you surface what you need to that's fine. Just do the study as it seems to take you, and document the "method" AFTER you do it. I think you may have a bit of "reflexivity paralysis" where one goes around in circles trying to get the right relation between self and world. Just assume you already have it and move forward.

On 2/24/11 2:58 PM, I responded with:

I stopped by this afternoon to find out you had gone. I hope you are feeling alright--you had been coughing last night...

Thank you very much for your response. But after reading your response, I felt very down. I wonder if it were the way I write or something else, somehow whenever I bring out coffee shop guy as study, you tend to tell me I could go back to study him as first intended. My intention of bring out about coffee shop guy was not that in my past emails. I just need to understand where I stand while still having coffee shop guy in mind!

Certainly, I was stagnated with the complexity and its confusion between what to study and what to gain through reflexivity. After years of depression on my own education which seemed going nowhere in the field I wanted to pursue, what I could do I thought was to study myself as autoethnography, which will include all my educational experience since the time I noticed this coffee shop man. That's why when you told me I had to choose whether to study him or to study myself, I chose myself as a case. If you don't mind my language, I am studying about myself through my reflexivity over whatever the phenomenon surrounding me. I cannot separate my coffee shop man for this reason. However, you seem to think I am wanting to do the original life history research on this coffee shop man. You usually show greatest understanding on me, my dear professor; however, in this case, you are not hitting the right spot. Coffee shop man is part of me, and here is Tomoe who is observing her education and her research. As I told you before, I have only two sets of eyes -- one is my personal eyes, another is eyes of researcher. I need your eyes as the third sets of eye beyond my reflexive researcher's eyes. Otherwise I cannot get out from my reflexivity to reach further understanding of my study. If you are saying that it's my study and do my own way, I feel like we are going back to the first point where I had no clue how I could get a help from you...

>I think you may have a bit of "reflexivity paralysis" where one goes around in >circles trying to get the right relation between self and world. Just assume you >already have it and move forward.

I don't understand what you were trying to say in the last part of your response.

I kept figuring out how I could present what inquiry I wanted to do for my dissertation.

The dissertation proposal I provided my committee was simply a study of dissertation survival using autoethnographical research. But the survival I meant is not just the mere

completion of a dissertation. My original attention to one's being and knowing needed to survive in my dissertation.

While the EdD program was reviewing the doctoral curriculum, the discussion between my professor and I sometimes went on to the topic of doctoral curriculum and student life becoming a part of my dissertation. Regarding Spradley's (1980) ethnographic analytical techniques, my professor suggesting I look at pieces which consist of elements of doctoral program and doctoral life for students then classify them into further pieces. Taking into account the learning experiences of a doctoral student like myself, it could be said that an autoethnographical dissertation on doctoral student learning may fit into the framework of curriculum studies. However, my main focus was something else, not doctoral curriculum. What we go after in curriculum studies and in philosophical exploration is obviously different. On 3/1/11 4:37 AM, I wrote to my professor:

We did not discuss further about it at the time when I returned to you in the Fall 2009, but I wonder if you remember I mentioned that my experiences as a doctoral student could be considered as a curriculum in the autobiographical curriculum theory. It could become a spanking clean dissertation of curriculum study if I followed the Pinar and Grumer's (1976) autobiographical curriculum theory of life history and self-transformation, but I just avoided to stay myself in any curriculum research framework. Since I had known nobody there ever since Dr. Smaldino had gone, and frankly I felt no attachment to curriculum study, doing a curriculum study was not an option. The only attraction in the curriculum studies while taking courses back then was William Pinar's curriculum theory having phenomenology as the basis of discussion. I was very much attached to my idea of lived-experiences and the knowledge of God to be actualized in a living among people in the society of human being, which was a lingering line of thoughts since my Masters project. So, while learning and human development was my interest in large context of education, the institutional curriculum has been totally ignored.

My distance to curriculum studies remains even after visiting with Dr. You-know-who or taking another curriculum theory course. I have been wondering the reason why I feel such resistance to fit my research in the curriculum study. One thing I could think of is that my wondering where my research interest and theme would belong has been the exact issue I have been facing in the past years during my doctoral dissertation. Of course, the concept of "curriculum as experience" is inclusive without much limit, but I'm still looking for a different way to display my study.

Our administrator lady said I should get my dissertation done and get a degree to do more studies whatever I want. I see her point now. But while I was working in the department office and someone teaching a stat course told me "You have so much to offer to the field" in the copy room where I happened to explain her what was the role of reflexivity in qualitative method, I was not at all moved by her words but more depressed with the awareness of myself unprepared for the future. Today, the contrast is quite interesting to me, and there is some argument I can make in such a small difference.

My education has been messy, and I would like to try working out this messy condition as a starting point to analyze rather than taming and polishing it to fit in a nice frame for further analysis. Do you see the difference? I guess once you are in the real research profession, you have little luxury of being messy like this. I am aware that this is exactly a privilege of my being a graduate student to freely inquire the yet-shapeless image and concept of what I have been trying to figure out as something meaningful. Even though I am a naive student, I know in the future nobody would pay me to ponder on something not-yet-proved-to-be-meaningful. I know I may not be reasonable right at this moment to you. But, let me stay with my hands dirty for a while making a shape of something out of a hunk of mud. I'm aware that I need to shape something before the mud dries out.

My professor and I kept our open discussions on many things around us. It actually helped me to build my skill to make arguments on topics. Knowing the argument point only does not take one to refute the point. Comfort to discuss out things that have been sitting in mind was obviously not naturally given in my case.

On March 10, 2011 8:39 PM, I wrote to my professor:

You call Wittgenstein having two totally opposing views in his history of thoughts, and I recognize it may be out of necessity as one's mind activity is

complex and always in transition. Thoughts of myself throughout decades also had torn into two major distinctions. I focused on one's Being in-itself during my Masters, and then I turned my focus to one's Being in the world later on. In a sense, I recognize myself rejecting my past obsession for Being in-itself. I can imagine your grin on your face. Keep reading.

I still think it was fortunate for me to feel something worthy to spend my lifetime in leisure studies in a moment of my time, which got me started and pushed me coming to this day. When I felt a potential benefit of leisure studies--strong connection of enjoyment and experiences in deeply engaged activities as 'leisure' experiences, and one's sense of oneness in such heightened consciousness, I thought promoting leisure experiences of such inter-faith experience of God could be a source of world peace across different faith traditions. Wasn't I so charged in a worldly mission? Seriously, I was arrogant enough having such a world mission myself at the time of applying for doctorate degree programs. Pursuit of pure enjoyment had so much power. I don't know how Heidegger had entered himself in Nazi even for a short length of moment, but I understand this kind of idealistic pursuit of oneness could go blind optimism and over simplicity about the world. The story of Narcissus and Echo tells focusing too much of myself is harmful in a sense nobody could be saved. But the story can be an anecdotal meaning when viewed by outsiders.

I don't know even where I started like this... I was thinking of your words on Wittgenstein, then later of Heidegger this evening.

On March 10, 2011 10:01 PM, he responded to me:

Very interesting thinking. . . .

Unfortunately it does seem that overly enthusiastic idealism does often lead to problems. . . . I really don't know why Heidegger did, and what involvement he really had. I'm sure that he would not personally accept the killing of millions of people. But then, that happened years after he came and went as a Nazi, and most Germans didn't know, and there were practical reasons to join the Nazi's, and Hitler did get some good things for the "average people" going on. Levinas, who studied with Heidegger, came to believe that Heidegger's philosophy was not the answer to the problems of Western philosophy but instead the ultimate manifestation of the problem. He believed that Western philosophy had a metaphysical strain in it that allowed people to feel they could totalize other people, thus allowing them to see them as things, thus allowing them to kill. My main philosophy prof believed this in the past. I believe that since then he has rethought this and has decided that perhaps Heidegger wasn't the bad guy.

And speaking of multiple perspectives, scholars often see an early and a later Heidegger. Well, even I can see the differences. . . .

BTW, I don't think its arrogance to want to bring peace to the world. I will say it hasn't worked out too well for many that have tried. . . .

On March 10, 2011 10:43 PM, I responded back to him:

It is interesting you point out the metaphysical strain in the Western philosophy. Yes, I often felt there was a dilemma of western philosophers even in Kant's watching the oneness from outside. In Eastern philosophy, the oneness is pretty much self-included. Once seeing everything in a totality of existence, I cannot harm you as you are I and I am you. But Levinas' logic makes sense if people tend to see the totality in the objective sense. Calling you Dr. Boody, or calling you a professor or teacher make me perceive your personhood differently. Once I call you a teacher, you are one of bunch in UNI.

While gaining strength to debate with my professor over topics that mattered to us, I finally got to the point that I had to stand for my own thinking and philosophy even if it contested with his.

My 44th birthday was approaching in the middle of the spring break, and right before the spring break week on March 11, 2011 early morning, I found that my country faced the devastating earthquake and tsunami disaster. The sense of loss for those lives of nearly 20,000 people was difficult to deal with, although my immediate family and friends were not directly affected. Looking back at my past years of stagnation and what has been still left uncompleted yet, it was the time I decided to live my life: I needed to do my dissertation. More than 11 years were passing since I began to pursuit the doctorate, and I was not that young anymore. By then, one bright thing at that point may be that I had developed a good habit of telling my perspectives somewhat freely to my professor. For the re-assigned doctoral seminar course, I was supposed to write a

conceptual paper for dissertation. Without consulting my professor, I just wrote up a new conceptual paper centering my personal project. On March 31, 2011, I wrote to myself:

Until I could feel comfortable to speak of my own mind to him, it was impossible to do my own philosophical writing. Without worrying what or what not would be appropriate as the context to present to him, I am now writing what it is in my own thoughts. Being able to discuss out my perspectives which was contesting against his at the surface, I finally found my voice to write down. How long did it take? How much sacrifice did it take to come to this point? How much help did he give me for this? Ten plus years have been long. But I imagine it was worth to spend my youth.

My confrontation began then. During the summer 2011, I was occupied by the evaluation job working for my professor, as well as one of summer course. Along with my report of the evaluation data analysis, he had to write the annual report, so the time was tight those days and it took longer for me to discuss about the change I had made in the recent months. My professor often asked, “What are you finding in your field note (a.k.a. mumbling in between us), but I knew he was still referring to my future analysis of doctoral student experience. The following is from my note written on June 9, 2011:

I went in his office around 2pm. Showed the printout of new variables and poked him for his possibility of mis-handling the printout as he was not doing stuff he was supposed to do. He counter-attacked by asking me how I'm doing on my dissertation. I knew he was going to ask me when he could not defend himself. I said "I've been doing it" but not sure what to tell about actual writing progress.

I told him that I've been reading Wrathall's (2005) book on Heidegger (he gave to me). I was telling how the author's way to interpret Heidegger seemed similar to Dreyfus' whose explanation of Heidegger's being-in-the-world and Dasein—one's being toward Being—seemed to me having a fundamental mislead because of him not including the experience of Being as a human phenomenon. I told him that Wrathall who was in fact a student of Dreyfus did fairly better job expressing that how we readers understand the writing of Heidegger is always through our own experience, not Heidegger's experience; therefore, we have to be conscious what Heidegger wanted to say in his experience. Still, it is not right to me that the author was emphasizing Heidegger's phenomenology through only tangible daily

living experience while disregarding ontological aspect of Being and the experience of ultimate reality which is not describable and unreachable by words.

Once a published author says, "Heidegger believes. . .," it is hard not to mislead some people. Especially this issue of Being and beings, Dasein and being-in-the-world. Long time ago, when I returned to his office in 2009, I had expressed that I didn't like the way Dreyfus (2000) provided a commentary of Heidegger's being-in-the-world, because Dreyfus' explanation does not seem to convey what Heidegger (1968) had tried to discuss the relation between Being and human beings in the concept of Dasein and being-in-the-world. Awareness of "Being" is, for Heidegger, the prerequisite of philosophical thinking. This was important part of why Heidegger matters to me. Then, the mislead portion of Dreyfus and Wrathall was not acceptable to me.

Dr. Boody asked, "What does this do with your dissertation?"

I was telling that it was significant part of my story. How I noticed the coffee shop guy with whom I noticed we shared something important about our way of knowing, knowing something whose original being would disappear whenever we sense it. Everything recognized in our perception does not remain the same in the next moment in a true sense of our experiencing things around us. And we are still living in the world. There is a certain lived experience that there is such Being in which we live. We cannot separate from it although we cannot see it just like table or chair right in front of us. I wanted to write about it, and he wanted to create his music out of such intangible nature of Being and how we human beings live in touch with such Being. It is our living in the world pursuing our personal project making sense of our existence in the world. My life has shifted since 11 years ago when I first time met the coffee shop guy. By looking at the Face Book, he still works at the cafe in the city; and I am here working on my project. It is ongoing project, and Heidegger's being-in-the-world and Dasein explains very well to identify what we have been going through.

On December 9, 2011 from my note:

"I was actually reading *Tractatus*." I said to Dr. Boody.

Since Dr. Boody was commenting in the previous meeting that *Tractatus* (Wittgenstein, 1922/2007) is more about ethics, which I did not completely agree with, I had to read it one more time. Although many people say that Wittgenstein denied his first book or totally switched his idea, I had different take on the shift from his first book to his next book, *Philosophical Investigation* (Wittgenstein, 1953/1973). His book seems to me pointing to Being all the way through from discussion of beings, which might be a confusion to some people. For Heidegger, beings are events or things; being is how we describe those things through language; and Being is the ontological level of existence including those things.

As Wittgenstein started his discussion by saying 'my book can be understood only by those people who share the same experience with me' or something like that. To me, for only those who actually understand Being would see what he was trying to say. And for some others who do not see Being aspect of existence, what he wrote could be only to prove what cannot be observed does not exist (positivist way of the world view). His discussion cannot be understood by just picking up an excerpt of his book in the middle of it. He was developing his argument one by one just like to describe the phenomenon in detailed logics. It seemed very calculated mathematical manner. Even though we look at the middle part of math problem solving, we cannot understand what the problem solution is all about. His first book focused on language, reality, existence and non-existence, etc.

Although he started out saying that what does not exist cannot be expressed in language, this refers to me that he was pointing out the 'beings' type existence if I use Heidegger's language. The reason is that he was actually mentioning reality, existence, and non-existence in the same discussion. If he says what cannot be described in language does not exist, how about the non-existence? It is as if his argument leaped from beings to Being without having the middle of it too carefully. At last he concluded his argument by saying what cannot be said should remain unsaid, which is to me totally about the Being.

It is the most honest way of saying about the existence of Being in relation to the language! Even when I use the term Being, there is some kind of hesitation or wish people to understand this endless notion of existence by the use of term Being. Identifying as Korzybski's general semantics does what the word actually refer to on and on is like peeling outer skins of something that would never let us reach what it is; but in this process, something could happen. Like Zen koan does not make sense in a piece of conversation, but suddenly something gets revealed as the existence. In this sense, Wittgenstein's effort throughout *Tractatus* is not wasted. It is certainly difficult task to let things revealed in language.

I was telling Dr. Boody what I was interested in is not Wittgenstein's concept of language, but how he came to shift from his focusing on Being to his focusing on 'being of beings' after his first book was not understood in the way he intended but taken as positivist thinking by many people. If the introduction of Russel was badly describing Wittgenstein's ideas, and so as the review of positivistic scientific community at the time on *Tractatus*, I was feeling for Wittgenstein how badly he had felt by many people misunderstanding his work. Trying so hard to discuss on Being and he failed many people; therefore, this is my guess that he had to pull himself from discussion of existence and focused on beings and being as our everyday operation of language. For his first book, he surely lacked the explanation of being in relation to beings and Being, as Heidegger did quite beautifully. I think this is the dilemma he had in the first place.

Although people (including my professor) said Wittgenstein completely changed his ideas from first book to the second book, I am not sure if it is the right way to interpret. To me, he had to develop his argument accordingly. He did not deny what he first wrote; instead, he had to look at the nature of language from different level of existence in his second book in order to assure how uncertain the concept of universal language would be. I questioned Dr. Boody where his interpretation of ethics came from in *Tractatus*. He pulled a biographical book on Wittgenstein and read a passage in which Wittgenstein talked about action over saying. Then he continued on the last sentence of *Tractatus*: "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent." I told him I was not sure if I should agree with the way he understood the last verse as ethics of human life. Wittgenstein discussed about language (of all sorts) all the way through *Tractatus*, then if he looked at something ethical, it would be the ethical attitude toward language use. As there is no word actually able to frame the existence that Heidegger named Being, Wittgenstein's saying is somehow the most honest and sincere attitude toward what we cannot describe. From this point, I would not call *Tractatus* is about ethics like Dr. Boody was bringing out. At least not the human life type ethics of doing over saying.

Dr. Boody was listening to me and said, "This is interesting argument that I had never seen before. I have to look at my *Tractatus* again." He could not find his book in the office, instead, he printed out from online documents. He mentioned Wittgenstein would be frustrated by the audience not understanding his idea, while his own advisor was misunderstanding him as well. He somehow implied that he (my advisor) was not understanding me in some ways. I said, "I have been thinking of language these days. As I had two years with Wittgenstein, I had more chance to think of him." As I think about how little I could know about someone by reading his idea through just limited understanding of his culture and background, I may not know about whole a lot of him. But the last sentence of *Tractatus* was different. Although my experience and Wittgenstein's experience might not be exactly called the same, such existence could be carefully shared. All what I counted to defend my discussion was my experience of ontological Being that Wittgenstein might have had.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGICAL ARGUMENTS

This is shown both by an examination of historical episodes and by an abstract analysis of the relation between idea and action. The only principle that does not inhibit progress is: anything goes. (Feyerabend, 1975/1993, p. 14)

There are many reasons why this dissertation does not utilize the traditional format. Going through different phases of my inquiry, even after defending my own dissertation proposal, I should admit that a dissertation on my project of describing the relationship between my epistemological and ontological mode of being in the world by observing, thinking and writing my personal and academic life and stories has been a challenge. Unlike other research projects I have engaged in having some kind of blueprint in mind to precede a research plan in order to answer a defined research question, the whole process of my surviving this dissertation has gone through high degree of ambiguity and messiness.

June 2010, I presented some evocative autoethnographical account with a focus of at-risk doctoral student returning from stagnated years for the project. However, I was feeling some important theme was concealed behind the line of thoughts projected in the initial proposal, such as dissertation completion and doctoral student identity. Along with taking open field notes in the range of memory work to recording epiphanies of student life, I began to reflect on the gap I was feeling between the proposed autoethnography and what dissertation I may have wanted to do originally. In this chapter, I would like to illustrate how my dissertation process has constructed current way along with data

gathering procedures, and data interpretation process of narrative construction as well as philosophical argumentation.

Anything Goes? It Depends. . .

The wide acceptance of qualitative methodology for the social scientific research in the past decade certainly helps. Contrary my initial attempt of single subject life story research ten years ago resulted in facing a high and thick wall of empiricists for which qualitative researchers beyond post-positivistic research had to defend the value of interpretive methods. However, although this life history dissertation could be labeled as qualitative, interpretive, autoethnographical, narrative, or even phenomenological for the convention of social scientific research, these labels do not actually prescribe what and how the researchers will do in a real sense. As my project is more like an existential inquiry of knowing one's self, it was inevitable for me to explore more than conventional methodological descriptions. I have been searching for and trying out what would work for my inquiry.

Considering the phrase "anything goes" in Paul Feyerabend's (1975/1993) *Against Method*, it strongly confirmed his opposition to the dogmatic scientific culture of his time. He was using such a strong term to throw a stone in the scientific research community stuck in an particular old method and theory never looking for other possible options to bring out the maximum findings for the questions researchers pursue in their inquiry. Feyerabend (1975/1993, p. vii) explained: ". . . 'anything goes' is not a 'principle' I hold—I do not think that 'principles' can be used and fruitfully discussed outside the concrete research situation they are supposed to affect—but the terrified

exclamation of a rationalist who takes a closer look at history.” As a wake-up call, he did it right. Not only hard science like physics Feyrerabend was involved in, social science and human science has benefited from what he tried to convey. For such openness to possibilities and changes for further and deeper understanding of phenomenon is what would be required to inquires of any kind—scientific and humanistic researchers, and even those in their spiritual pursuit.

Anything goes—regarding these two words, I recall Dr. John K. Smith, one of my very initial intellectual influences in my doctoral program, often reminded the students who listened to his lecture: “The idea of relativism does not include ‘anything goes.’” Standing at the frontline of the postmodern arguments across decades in development of the interpretative research tradition, he argued, “Judgments are not reduced to simply a matter of taste opinion, or emotive reaction. This version of relativism still holds that reason and rationality are crucial . . . and thus does not reduce itself to a kind of solipsism” (Smith, 1988, p. 18). His lecture was often difficult and challenging without philosophical background, but his remark—not anything goes—surely took reins of students who would not always readily explore the depth of interpretation or would easily get persuaded by the qualitative methods being more useful than the traditional quantitative methodology due to its approachable nature of non-numeric and narrative orientation.

Regarding “anything goes,” my dissertation chair often told me I could do whatever I want, but I just had to have a good reason and explain why I was doing it. It gave me freedom but also personal responsibility. Whether what I choose to do is a good

reason to do so? Asking questions of why I am doing what I am doing at least might bring me to close to bigger questions of essence, or naturally makes me a better scholar.

What It Meant to Be in an Inquiry of Learning

Inquiry on education in general involves many people in a broad range of perspectives which could be students, teachers, parents, administrators, specialists, and supporting staff in educational institution. Also, it could be whoever touches the life of the learner even informally; they could be a custodian of the school building, a recreation program leader, or even a coffee shop worker in the college neighborhood. Such a view may conflict with those educational scholars who focus their research on classroom teaching only (e.g., Pring, 2000). Research studies on educational topics can be seen in conjunction with a variety of academic disciplines outside of education such as in history, philosophy, sociology, psychology, and even in business leadership. Human development—Kohlberg and Mayer (1972) highlighted it as the aim of education as well as the focus of their educational research. In a sense, we could say that inquiry on education happens with wide variety of educational phenomenon when we carefully observe the life of self and others who learn and develop. Could we consider inquiry of one's learning and social science to be equivalent then? Indeed, we are social beings living in the relation with others, which would make the inquiry of one's learning relevant social science.

Systems for Inquiry

There are contesting forces of science and scientific methods. For example, Aristotelian systems label objects such as identifying detailed pieces of evidence and

further characterizing such details by naming. On the other hand, non-Aristotelian systems investigate such named pieces of evidence and their references to their reality and further clarifying the gap and misconception between those names and reality of the given time (Korzybski, 1933). Korzybski's general semantics is such latter analysis of language which creates certain degree of distance between knowledge (what we get to know through such language) from what is referred in reality, which is the epistemological issue fundamentally different from linguistics semantics. Interpretive approach is not based on "anything goes", but through constant refinement of our interpretation of phenomena instead of taking such concepts and understanding of things for granted. When taking a close look at the language in order to see what the phenomenon really is about, we may have a chance to see the gap and misconception. Careful observation of the world opens us to a beginning of inquiry. And social science or natural science or even education research does not have much difference in this attitude. But what further science do we need for the inquiry of education?

Unlike such a science that discovers things in the world or advances the technologies, the center of educational research is the life of learners. In other words, what educational inquiries deal with is human phenomenon through interpretive approaches. When one's responsibility for perceiving the existence of others comes to our awareness, such science is no longer only dealing with mere epistemological matter, but also having something toward ontological. As the ancient Greek concept of school

(Skhole) derived from the concept of leisure, one's contemplative and spiritual attitude (Pieper, 1952) and mode of being in the world should be concerned.

Study of Lives

In the social science methodological world, studying lives of people in relation to researchers has many labels such as life history (e.g., Cole & Knowles, 2001), autoethnography (e.g., Ellis & Bochner, 2000), ethnographical (e.g., Wolcott, 1997), or phenomenological research (e.g., Giorgi, 2009). But I also acknowledge Wolcott's (1999) concern that "the labels tend to hide rather than highlight the vexing question of how intimately involved the ethnographer can or should become" (p.173) because it should not be forgotten that every careful observer of any labeled discipline is actually understanding through her or his own context reflexively. It is not quite important which label my study of Self would use, but certainly my philosophical inquiry has the essence of what these studies of life aim to achieve.

Life history is defined by Cole and Knowles (2001, p. 9) as "a critical epistemological construct illuminating the intersection of human experience and social context." The depth of connection between researcher and the topic makes the study significantly personal. The degree of personal involvement/attachment may make a difference, relationship with topic, relationship with the life of people whom researcher associate with, and relationship with ourselves. This aspect of researcher's engagement is easy to overlook in mere qualitative study of observation and interviewing to objectively record what is said and seen—I can tell this from my experience of data collection and analysis in a school district evaluation process in which data collection

was done without much personal attachment. As a resource and a tool, we could have such stories as well. But there is a fundamental difference between empathetic personal life stories and a technical report about certain objects and people.

Douglas and Mouatakas (1985) who wrote on heuristic method described that phenomenological research is the search for the essence of people's experiences while the focus of heuristic research is the people in experiences. I do not know if I would readily agree with them, because realizing something significant in the people's experience may at least require some kind of analysis (decision making), then it is no longer pure experience itself. Nevertheless, in the past decades I looked at many named phenomenological studies and some qualitative handbooks formulating phenomenological research method in social sciences, and I could see their point as well. Essence—analyzed and conceptualized evidence tend to be the result part of research. A part of reasons would be the aim of scientific research was heavily weighted to be testing the theory or/and further confirming such theories by theorizing out of empirical (observed) evidences. Individual deviations or outliers of human experiences tend to get diminished or thrown out in this deductive process. However, understanding the evidence or the context of human lives is already deconstructing what it is in-itself and reconstructing it as interpretation of the thing—Sartre would call it for-itself. Our way of understanding cannot get away from such process unless we are talking about the direct experience of the existence or Being that is ontological level of our knowing.

If a study consists of a direction toward Being in the context, such study refer to our way of 'being of Being' that is the underlying aim of the phenomenological in

philosophical inquiry. On the other hand, if a study aims understanding of the phenomenon as the context of the inquiry, the main concerns of such study is our way of 'beings of being' that is our defining and interpreting events or evidences. In the hermeneutic process, researchers put their perspectives and understanding under questioning for further refinement of meaning making. In social science and educational research, some meaning-making process involved study could be called phenomenological research, which I think is not adequate. In respect of Husserl and the succeeding phenomenologists such as Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, it seems to me more reasonable to define a study as phenomenological if the type of inquiry has certain existential attitude and language sensitivity toward Being.

Experiencing the World Inductively, Deductively, and Abductively

In my apartment room, there is a big pile of small piece notes in which I often wrote short comments whenever something clicked my mind. They are all my field notes. Although I would never be fond of writing something directly in the Microsoft Word on the computer, if it was on the small scratch paper, my thoughts came out rather freely. I did not call such process of writing as dissertation writing, so I thought I did not do much writing during my stagnated Dark Age. Later on, after I returned to my dissertation chair, he and I started calling such a piece of writing as “mumbling” just to put a cute character label on it—cute enough that I could go on writing more. After a while, I switched my tool from small 3x4 size memo paper which is actually the library’s scratch sheets to 4x6 size email screen on the computer though. Such a small thing—how I label my writing—makes great change psychologically indeed. But until such small something was

discovered as a blockage, the issue remained as an issue. Although it is logically so easy to clarify, but how difficult it is to actually change the habit of mind! Those days in 2005, I started going to watch the music show of my coffee shop man and his band in the local music house. While I was hiding myself from my formal dissertation writing, such small pieces of mumbling was gaining its volume. Now looking back at those pieces of memo paper, some of those were written with amazingly tiny size print that I cannot read without squinting my eyes (I did not have any bifocals at the time of writing those).

Representation of Direct Experience and Learning

Considering the difficulties of observation of people's direct experience beyond our normal epistemological levels, my concern was what kind of writing method could explain such hard-to-grasp-cognitive experiences in a coherent and understandable format for the audience of this dissertation. Transferring direct experiences from one to another seems improbable in our developmental theories. The concern for the holistic learning without interference of detailed conventional knowledge of things in the world is seen in the writing of educational philosophers. As Whitehead (1967, p. 6) put in *Aims of Education*, "the apprehension of general achievement can be evoked by no form of words, however accurately adjusted. . . . there is a proverb about the difficulty of seeing the wood because of the trees. . . . The problem of education is to make the pupil see the wood by means of the trees." Similarly, Heinz Werner (1940) pointed out the challenge of modern man in comparison to the men and women of primitive cultures to experience such wholeness of phenomenon in his work of comparative psychology of mental development: the access to the closer sense of relationship with the things and

phenomenon happens before filtered through more advanced categories. Although the level of individuals may differ, according to Werner's microgenesis mobility, the degree of one's bodily experience shifting from to genuinely original state of experience of the wholeness of existence to the cognitive experience associated with conventional reality with words would determines how one's mind is free from his or her cognition (Crain, 2000). Cognitive experiences previously mentioned are the examples of one's altered perception sensing the phenomenon directly without language interferences. However, as Whitehead (1967) explained, there is no such a direct method to resolve our inability to grasp it all in our normal cognitive state.

However, one's experiences are more than what merely cognized as something. Without being able to identify as something particular, we do have sensations and feelings before recognizing any. Similar should be told in the narrative form. What people experience is not only what they read but the image, sensation, and feelings they create with what they read. If the narrative could bring out such imaginable details for some readers to experience their own—as I feel the smell of freshly-cut grass in the Midwestern early summer in Ray Bradbury's *Dandelion Wine*—it would be the best I could aim for.

Procedures Taken Place

As this dissertation is, in part, a methodological narrative on how my dissertation has been constructed over the years, I will therefore document my procedures of data collection and data analysis as well as highlight some of issues around them.

Data Collection

Writing contains rhetorical and analytical processes in the way of word selection, grammar, content structure, and decisions on what to write or not to write. Therefore, even in the random memory work, we make concrete decisions, which the researchers, especially those who write narratives or autoethnographical accounts, should be aware of. From this point, field note taking especially from past and current life observations could be regarded as data collection and some type of data analysis phase.

The period of data collection. For most of the cases, the term: “field note taking,” refers to data collection in this dissertation. Field note taking officially started since June 2010 (my proposal was defended on June 2, 2010); however, as seen in the most of intuitive qualitative data collection, field work begins sometimes before getting into the field (Wolcott, 1997), and is on-going process (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Consequently, I consider all observations and information gathering—noted and unnoted—as data collection.

The data sources. As the context of my dissertation actually started even before my doctoral experience: the primary stage of my doctoral education and its prerequisite courses since the 1999-2000 academic year, and even before my doctoral experience, such as childhood and adolescence years, the sources of data for this dissertation are mainly originated from the past evidences—recorded memories and past paper writings, pieces of memo, email correspondences, and ongoing reflections. Along with such memory work, since June 2010, I started taking my field notes on the significant events of my dissertation and doctoral education, my on-going thought process, and many

correspondences with my advisor in person and over the email. Everyday life events and exchanges with others as a doctoral student led me to produce questions and insights on my education. For the memory work, it should be noted that by writing on my life events to my professor who was supposed to be my “third set of eyes,” I had numerous opportunities to remember more past events, which further enhanced my field notes.

What I Did with Field Notes—Data Analysis

Preparatory stage. Although I had a question about the direction of my dissertation even after my proposal defense, I started gathering my memories of past experiences and old notes on how my original dissertation idea came with my coffee shop man and developed into more complex observations through ethnographical experiences in various pieces of writings. There were many pieces of memory and events to reconstruct into the written document. In this stage, my professor and I started calling my personal field note writing as “mumbling” either on the paper or through email in order to take off the type of tension of writing about my own self. Indeed, writing as mumbling worked better than writing field notes as the research data. Memories were too personal to be officially written on the Microsoft Word from the beginning.

Identification of meaningful themes. About one year was spent writing down my mumblings along while taking my re-assigned coursework as well as the graduate assistant work. Many writings relating to doctoral student life, insights on learning were generated in this period. Some were chronologically written; some were more topic-oriented. Whenever and wherever memory came (e.g., in the shower), I sat in front of a piece of paper or email to write it down. With so many story pieces, I started to identify

some meaningful, recurring themes. Themes do not emerge by themselves unlike many qualitative journal articles lightly describe in just one line for the convention of space. It is more like looking at the pieces while at the same time looking at the whole. Through going back and forth of writing pieces, something starts peaking out. Some had been there already in mind, and some came out by its frequency of occurrences. What has been discussed heavily in the society, classroom, or conversation with teachers form certain type of attention to this theme identification. Literature review of doctoral student research also helped me think of to where I should pay my attention. In those days, I tried to write thematically in both first- and third person writing. Sometimes the way of third-person writing fits better to feel the fair view on the story about me written by me.

Along with this process, the more my memory work continued I became the more intensely aware of my personal project shared with my coffee shop man; I started talking to my dissertation chair about the gap between the study we were generating and what I really wanted to do for my dissertation. When I finally redirected this dissertation as my personal project themed study it was already mid-summer 2011. However, with a lack of tangible examples from educational- or social scientific dissertation of philosophical anthropology research, I remained resolved in developing identified themes from these narratives. As the preparatory stage and theme identifying stage took place to understand myself in my own stories, it worked out well to switch my focus to a deeper level of self-knowledge in the context of doctoral dissertation. In this stage, I was not yet writing narratives in the form of dissertation chapters; instead, I kept writing more of my

thoughts while asking myself, “What needed to be written on my personal project?” for a justification of such change.

Identifying the transformation. The term—transformation—is borrowed from Giorgi’s (2009) process of the description analysis which actually fit better than the term—development—that I originally had in mind. From this transformational point of view, the story achieves some type of solution, conclusion, or even sublimation and catharsis in the life story. I was seeing my intrinsic shift from an apprentice-like doctoral student to an independent scholar who began to contest ideas with her own professor in this line of analysis. It is true that the road was long to reach a point where I could assert my point of view against that of my professor. In this process, I was aware of the master-apprentice learning community (Lave, 1996) where every master was once an apprentice going through the same training experience as his or her students under the guidance of his or her master.

Identifying one’s knowing process. If my dissertation was purely about doctoral dissertation completion, my dissertation could be concluded as a process of self-transformation. However, after having my personal project submitted to in existential questions, I have been further observing my own decision points and attitudes toward this dissertation, which forced me to look beyond this dissertation as a self-transformational process. As of the key arguments in my dissertation became more philosophical, I began to challenge my professor with alternative viewpoints of existing theories. He invited me to his office weekly, although he might have known I would end up with bringing him big arguments as if I was going against everything of his stand point.

On Analysis of Data from Within

At the time of my beginning to deal with my “data” about my past experiences, which is ongoing while writing this phrase as well, I have been facing some issues. It seemed to me there was an apparent gap between the way of my approaching the data about others and the data about myself. The data coming from my own experience though my own perspectives seemed very different from typical qualitative data I have ever handled in the previous research experiences.

For example, during one of the school district evaluation projects, I have observed a number of teachers and instructional coaches in public high- and middle schools. I recorded my observation in highly detailed field notes about what I saw happen in the classroom; what the teacher or the instructional coach talked about in the session or in the interview with me; and contents of small talk among those coaches. Even all of the environmental descriptions were also recorded. At the time of analyzing field note data, I tried to clarify my observations and determine what I actually meant by reading what I wrote as memories of episodes not in my official notes influenced my interpretation. Even though the conclusion would never easily arrive as a solid deducted form, there was surely a point of data saturation in such case of handling data of others. On the other hand, it seems to me an everlasting fountain of data in the description of my own experiences and thoughts. My field notes (a.k.a. mumblings) were to describe recollected events and my thoughts process around past incidences; however, there are more and more not-yet-described details, meanings, and emotions that popped out whenever I read through such written documents of my reflected past. I told my professor, “I cannot

analyze my mumbling in the way of handling regular qualitative data analysis. New things keep coming out endlessly.” This is one of the reasons why I had difficulty to construct my formal dissertation narratives. I was afraid of freezing certain phenomenon which is still alive and full of possible meanings known and unknown by putting a formal label on it.

In my observation, the act of interpretation has two forces on the surface: one is the force of creating meanings and judgments out of the source; and another is the force of identifying the original meaning of the source. It is as if parallel to the forms of science: the former may be seen in Aristotelian science and the latter in non-Aristotelian science. As the data is about myself from within, I tend to push myself to see further in. How about the data about my coffee shop man? Although he is not me, it seemed difficult to me to give in to the data saturation as well. Long ago even before I came to decide to write on his personal history, for example, I remember I had a fear of misinterpreting his life. For the case of his life story as data, it was not only how I could observe, but also what I noticed through his actions and stories from which I could interpret themes orchestrating quietly and subtly under the surface of everydayness. Maybe already at the time of describing my observations about him, the description involved my own past experience, presupposition, and life view to notice something I thought important about him. In this way of viewing the data on him, probably the data was not only about him but also about my self found in him. This is evidently different from the field note data of school teachers and instructional coaches. How much is enough to really understand and interpret what we observe? If our judgments about

inquiry are free from the rules or methods of others but still must be rational, the appropriateness and quality of my analysis of my own self may be my openness to interpretation and reinterpretation.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

The narratives supposedly create another dimension of reality in the mind of readers (Polkinghorne, 1988). The challenge of my dissertation consists of the limitation and possibility of narrative representation as the tool to connect my multiple levels of reality to the description of such perceived realities. The narratives I presented in the Chapter 2 contain numerous past memories that I have revisited first randomly and selectively. I then deconstructed the memories into pieces, and reconstructed them with the new meanings from my present perspectives. This process reminds me that the experiences and their relationships to one's life are more than the sum of its recognizable parts. Having this idea in mind, I would like to discuss the following themes: (1) how my dissertation theme has survived and evolved; (2) an overview of my learning on the study of dissertation; (3) a doctoral student experience beyond the traditional concept of time; and (4) implications to the field of doctoral education.

The Dissertation Theme That Survived and Evolved

My dissertation theme has evolved in the past three years from research of at-risk doctoral student to my personal project of the ontological dilemma. However, this project actually began even before my doctoral years—this is why I thought I needed to include stories from my childhood and adolescence. The narratives in the previous chapters are the portrayals of the construction of my inquiry across different stages like my background story, intellectual and academic motives, fieldwork experiences, internal and external events, and my shifts of awareness on self and others that led me to my

voice as an independent scholar. In order to help the reader with an overview of the development of my project, I provide a summary of my dissertation process below. The reason I call it “a summary” is because there are many different ways to summarize these stories given in the previous chapters.

A Summary of Narratives

Since the experience of being in the light during my prep-school year and searching for my spirituality during undergraduate years, I have had a central image of one’s being in the world with constant self-clarity. It was not that of Heidegger’s being-in-the-world but one of the Zen concepts associated with the teaching of the Ten Ox Herding pictures, these pictures illustrate the stages of a person’s transition toward enlightenment and beyond. In this series of pictures, experiencing the enlightenment is not the ultimate purpose of one’s spiritual inquiry; rather, what the tenth picture describes is—returning to the society to live among other people. Even after experiencing an enlightened moment, the real challenge of life and discipline is in everyday life relating with various types of people, during which we must keep clarifying our mind to have a clear perspectives on the phenomenon we encounter. And such a process cannot be separated from the nature of language. From the point of my life-long inquiry, I was so fascinated when I noticed a young worker in a coffee shop working to overcome the problem of knowledge and language for himself while earnestly serving other people behind the coffee shop counter.

This constant clarification of mind resembles hermeneutics and one’s meaning-making process. With my personal experience of being in the light in mind, I became

certain after reading *What is Called Thinking* (Heidegger, 1968) that what I comprehended as the oneness of the world or “being what it is,” that I often dreamed would come back, was the indescribable nature of existence and the whole that Heidegger called Being. As far as the awareness of Being associates with a certain type of thinking, according to Heidegger, I thought this type of knowledge claim and the relationship of language to human existence would be a critical contribution to the educational research.

For the initial proposal, I had worked out some concepts along my original topic right before returning to my dissertation chair; however, I had not had the strength and confidence to defend such an original and philosophically-framed topic to my chair whenever he dismissed my saying “being in the world” before I learned more of Heidegger’s philosophy. Since returning to my dissertation chair, gradual doses of academic and professional experiences over the following academic year helped me to produce a proposal; which was progress compared to those unproductive years in my Dark Age. Much anger and emotional emptiness which had developed during my Dark Age needed to go before contesting my thoughts with my chair.

After the initial dissertation proposal using the framework of the at-risk doctoral student (e.g., Council of Graduate Schools, 2008; Gardner, 2009; Lovitts, 2001) was approved on June 2, 2010, I began wondering how to re-develop my original theme—the ontological dilemma I shared with the coffee shop man in the first summer. During the same summer, my recency issue was revealed by the Graduate College, and then I was required to re-take 30 plus credit hours. Accordingly, my life became quite busy as a typical full-time doctoral student with a full-load of graduate coursework as well as

teaching and a research job. My progress of re-developing my original theme slowed down during this busy student life. However, I continued writing numerous pieces of life stories through my memory work.

Still, I could not freely express my need to pursue my philosophical theme to my dissertation chair who did not think that I would understand the ontological and epistemological concepts involved. Also, I was not certain how to construct such philosophical argument in a form that would be accepted as a dissertation for my EdD degree. It took quite a long time before I actually began to engage in philosophical arguments with my professor. Whenever I mentioned such a theme, I was not taken seriously until I started demanding my professor's attention for it in the summer 2011. Since the earthquake-tsunami incident in March 11, 2011, however, I came to feel that the life is too short to live someone else's. The strength to defend my own thoughts was developed as I regained my positive attitude and confidence toward being a doctoral student in an academic and professional community. Assisting the teaching and research of my professor surely gave me energy to come back to my project; also, taking re-assigned coursework actually let me have another opportunity for meeting different types of faculty members and learning with fellow doctoral students.

Dissertation as a Process of Life-Long Inquiry

Though taking many years to finish, my focus for the dissertation has never been to write a dissertation to fulfill the degree requirement. Instead, my purpose has always been to create a discussion that explores my long-held ontological and epistemological questions in the process of inquiry. This is probably the reason why I felt uncomfortable

adhering to a research framework, and its body of literature, with its focus on program completion and student attrition. Such a student attrition study would help provide knowledge of what an institution of higher education could or should do to help doctoral students from dropping or delaying completion, and so will my inquiry in a different way.

However, because a dissertation is such a huge commitment for doctoral students, we must pay attention to its meaning to students and to student's topic choices. The dissertation process—not just the document—is a road map of the student's scholarship and further academic life. Therefore, an academic environment where students are encouraged to reflect on questions, such as “Why did I notice this?” “What does this mean to me?” or “Why does this matter to me?” may be important in order to help students create a dissertation with real meaning, not just a document to finish a doctoral degree program.

Overview of My Learning on the Study of Dissertation

The writing of this section might duplicate some of my previous narratives and the summary of narratives; however, the purpose of restating some of my learning experiences here is to bring attention to this inquiry as a way to study the dissertation process.

Dissertation as Process

First of all, as the most important aspect of study on dissertation I have learned was that the value of dissertation is truly in its process. By saying this, I would not intend to waive the quality of the outcome, of course; however, often dissertation handbooks would not spend enough pages to describe the importance of inquiry process. The more

diverse the research in the field of social science for new tools and methodologies, the more research needed for the student's individual process in engagement and decision making for his or her dissertation.

Recognizing evidences through the researcher's eyes. Active reflexive interaction in the environment led me to find someone whose project shared the same theme with mine, which raised my fascination and awareness in the lives of people in the ordinary settings as a social science researcher. The doctoral level research methods course introducing the hermeneutical process was an important part of training to develop such researcher's eyes.

Identifying what was important to express. Through defending the research validity of such interpretive personal narrative inquiry against the positivistic research, knowledge claim became a necessary part of inquiry. Identifying the importance of the project that my coffee shop man and I shared, I had gone through the humiliation against the empiricist perspectives.

Being with the others as a researcher and as a person. There was a gradual shift of my selfhood from a researcher to a person at the site of ethnographical observation. Perceiving the life of a person is not only seeing the visible part of the person, but also searching for the invisible depth of the person. Observing the others and arriving at some understanding (interpretations) involved a reflexive process. Being with the others, what I found was that it was not only about those people; I felt like it was about me as well. Instead of being there as an impartial researcher, my personal Self came forward eventually in my interaction with others through my inquiry, which gave me more

responsibility and commitment to my project even during my time of academic and mental stagnation.

Active academic and professional experiences as the supportive factor. My recovery from my stagnated stage to re-engage in my dissertation work, and becoming an active doctoral student cannot be discussed separately. Through various academic tasks to prepare for a future profession, I began to regain the confidence and energy to fully participate in the dissertation process. Further, I found myself even defending my own thoughts to my dissertation chair, which really helped me come back to my project.

On the way to becoming an independent scholar. Toward the end of the process, there were many decisions involved. It is ultimately the student's responsibility to conceptualize and write his or her dissertation. "Do what you want, it's your study"—by saying this, my dissertation chair delegated me the responsibility to be in charge of my own inquiry. It was like my practicing to be on my own for future research, which is what true scholarship is.

Importance of Personal Project for Dissertation Process

The personal project is portrayed in this dissertation as one's most important philosophical question. Though I will discuss about my own personal project in the later chapter, in this section I will outline the importance of having a project in doctoral dissertation process regardless of the subject.

It motivates and guides the process strongly. The pursuit of one's own critical question motivates and guides the process more strongly, especially during the difficult times. Dissertation can be a long and wearing process; therefore, unless the student is

aware of personal values and meaning of his or her dissertation, the long process is difficult to endure and produce quality. If the research questions are personally highly important, it would sustain student's motivation and energies, and even generate hope for a successful career or even vocation of scholarship. In other words, if the research question is something the person has not found personal connection or meaning, it could fall into being just a subject to change without much commitment or follow through.

A roadmap of one's scholarship. The dissertation process is like a roadmap of one's future scholarship. There are many ways to get research questions, of course. I have no problem if people find their research topics or questions with other ways— a professor's suggestion, or picking one out of a list in the literature, etc. However, the dissertation is one of the highlights of doctoral programs, and it should reflect who we are, and what we want to become. By viewing the doctoral dissertation this way, we find a helpful tool to identify what are critical questions in one's life and connect them to the research field in some ways.

Doctoral Experience and Time beyond Chronological Meaning

At a time of retaking courses during 2010-2011 academic year, I pushed myself to take a fresh look at the doctoral program where I had belonged for over ten years but to which I had little attachment during my stagnated years (Dark Age). When my professor, who was then running my independent-study qualitative method course, suggested I try reviewing the various elements of the EdD program, I could not help noticing how much of a misfit I was during my initial doctoral period of 2000-2004 by referring to the program goals and learning outcome rubrics. As my depressive feelings were about to

come back, I thought that looking back at what went wrong would not help me let my story emerge. Since then, my dissertation scope has completely shifted from doctoral student issues to one's personal project and constructing a dissertation to match such a project. No matter how I resisted, however, as long as I try to understand my own education through writing my story, I came face-to-face with the fact that my story is a form of evaluation of my doctoral program experience. What if the university did not accept me? After all, other PhD programs did not take me in, what should I have done? I had to make my experience as best as I could. And to this day, I have been allowed to be myself doing so. I have had the time to keep thinking.

In a way, I appreciate the fact that I had this opportunity to study at this university; a period in which I could continue developing my thoughts to a height which was almost impossible to attain alone. Storytelling has been the helpful method for me to understand what could have constructed my learning experiences; hence, curriculum that I would not notice as it happens. In my state of desperation in past years, I was probably blindly looking for the ideal figure of doctoral experience. Until they have passed the test of time, some things do not reveal their meaning to our eyes. As many elements of life story interconnect without showing their pattern at glance, we go back to our past to look for what initially let things happen the way they did. Even though focusing on a particular educational experience at a particular period of time, such time past—nearly lost in our memory—comes to a lively display in the present. Would it end at the moment I finish my dissertation after publicly defending it and binding the leaves of the paper into a book? Looking back at an event or activity of our past that has given an

impact on our present being that we call it life, or our live event that signified a particular period of time as the source of energy for the rest, human activities would never be chronologically counted. Have I been looking at my years of development as a doctoral experience or as a life path?

Implications: Needs of Knowledge Claim in Doctoral Education

"We need real-life application!" Often I hear this phrase from educators at various levels. Indeed, it is important that what we study we relate to what we do in our real life settings. Mere discussions on the desk, especially in educational research, can be counterproductive and even dangerous as it could mislead people toward unrealistic expectations about scientific implication. Identifying what knowledge we understand as reality is the purpose of epistemological discourse. How then, is inquiry into ontology—the indescribable natures of human reality and existence that we still have to use expressions in order to discuss—possibly useful? What in our actual living we can achieve is only an in-between of ontological existence and epistemological understandings due to the nature of language that describes the reality we determine.

Understanding the epistemological and ontological dimensions of what we call reality is essential for researchers as well as educators, because both professions require close attention to what we know and how we actually know it. In the past, when postmodernism (Lyotard, 1979/1984) opened up the perspectives of some scientists, discussions of knowledge claim was fundamental in order to set their validity and reliability of the method of knowledge. Those scholars who have led the new paradigm of knowing along with constant justification through what some call hermeneutics

thoughtfully discussed what truth we are facing in regards to research-able knowledge. I had gone through my share of such struggle for my original dissertation idea of single subject life history in 2002. Today, the field of educational research openly accepts highly interpretive ethnographical studies as a valid form of scholarship. In our current qualitative/interpretive research-ready condition, however, one thing what I wonder if the succeeding generation will get the type of epistemological training needed to reflexively observe and identify our way of thinking.

If doctoral students only appreciate the methods and information readily available and directly applicable to their current and future educational practice instead of having to step back and engage with the ways of knowing or thinking about that from where their thinking, methods, and information actually come, such doctoral education would be reduced to a packet of professional development courses with clear goals and objectives, spread out across of time and cost.

CHAPTER 5

ONE'S PROJECT AND BEING IN THE WORLD

Dec. 18, 05: Personal project—spiritual, mental, and internal journey. Do I have the courage to submit my feeling to public by writing subjective dissertation?

Story is the tool to connect the experience and what experienced. Why do I want to record that I met this person? A little encounter in one of the ordinary locations, meeting my self and a story sitting behind the counter. Metaphysical theory is a mere exercise on the table, but there is something alive in the story of ordinary incidents.

Longing for the Connection to Being in One's Context

The question on our existence in relation to Being is highly personal, could be “violent” (see, Webster, 2010), yet a necessary process, in search for our own relation to the world. Having the coffee shop man working on his project has been—in a sense—my hope for my dissertation process. His patience and persistence in his creative endeavor was there before I noticed him behind the coffee shop counter. Without recognition from others he is still in process even now. Even after he moved to a different city in the fall of 2006, I kept thinking what I could do to write on one's deep relation with Being and to bridge the gap between epistemological and ontological realities. I noticed a piece of note on his music posted in his SNS sometime in the middle of November, 2008:

Language beyond words. Years of imitating what inspired me. Only ever being there when it's happening. Trying to cage ghosts to haunt me when I'm along. Leaking everywhere on the carpet. So embarrassed for myself. Exposed in broad daylight. Seriously misunderstood by professionals/ Never works out the way you thought it would. Just for the record. May not be worth trying to salvage the originals.

I was still in my Dark Age when I saw this note; as much as I had kept my project those years, he had had his somewhere in the distance. There was still a story I had to tell.

Sharing the Experience that is Hard to Describe

Lao Tzu, an ancient Chinese philosopher of the 4th century B.C.E, described the nameless nature of the Tao (Way, Truth, or Being) in the following words:

The Tao (Way) that can be told of is not eternal Tao,
 The name that can be named is not the eternal name.
 The Nameless is the origin of Heaven and Earth,
 The Named is the mother of all things.
 Therefore, let there always be non-being so we may see their subtlety,
 And let there always be being so we may see their outcome.
 The two are the same,
 But after they are produced, they have different names.
 They both may be called deep and profound.
 Deeper and more profound,
 The door of all subtleties! (Chan, 1973, p. 139)

Even though it is hard to describe, and not an ordinary goal for a dissertation, I wanted to tell a story about certain phenomenon that are indescribable but that have occurred, or will occur, in everyone's personal life. Although either or not framed in religious language, there are a number of recorded descriptions of people's mystical experiences (e.g., Happold, 1990; James, 1902/1985). However, there may be an argument to not tell what one has no way to say. "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent," said Wittgenstein (1922/2007, p. 108). This experience "whereof one cannot speak" is something only for the people who have experienced it. But trying to discuss the indescribable nature of an experience to those who can only speculate without personal experience could be seen as a waste. So, how I tried to tell my experience of being in the light in Chapter 2 may be difficult for me to defend like a theory. However, I have to admit that I feel such an urge to share with others the impact of an indescribable experience—like my being in the light—that I am willing to attempt to overcome the

problem of language to do so. As Heidegger asserted, there is only our language for human beings to communicate with, though there may be various forms of entity such as art or music. What I expect is that the reader will develop an image of this experience which will be affected by their own perceptions and life course. In this way, I do not expect every reader will have the same understanding of my experience.

The image of solidarity, as Simone Weil tried to show her sympathy with those who were suffering in starvation is, strictly speaking, only an image and not the reality. There is no universal language as Wittgenstein (1953/1973) claims; in this sense, Weil could never experience the same suffering as the others. As this is an important ethical point, I cannot ignore this distinction. If my country had not experienced the tsunami and suffering as a result, I might not have paid close attention to the difference between the nearness of experience and the experience.

Then, why I still hold my hope to write on the personal project shared with my coffee shop man that is some kind of dilemma of human beings between what we can describe in variations of words, and what we cannot express exactly any more. As Merleau-Ponty (1964) noted the success of literary-philosophical method in Simone de Beauvoir's novel, *L'Invitée* (She Came to Stay), concerned with "establishing a certain attitude toward the world" (p. 27), literature and philosophy are just different expressions but both are aimed to approach philosophical questions. Clarifying the point of view where the idea is coming from, a story may have power to let readers personally experience what is written. As my project associates with written format to tell a story

especially from my own recollection of memory, I would like to further discuss on narrative of one's life events.

Memory, Narrative, and Temporality

What is the thing we call the past? While the major part of this dissertation was written retrospectively looking back at past events, it would be important to question how a past might look. What is the past? When I look back at the day I first noticed something very important in the life of my coffee shop man as described in the Prologue, I surely have a feel of celebration continuing to the present. One summer day on the sidewalk he was smoking cigarette in a white t-shirt and blue jeans, and sitting on the concrete step in front of the coffee shop when I came with my interview paper to read to him. There was the smell of summer afternoon—or maybe the Laundromat across the street. The sidewalk was in the shade and cooler. Recapturing the very clear memory of the encounter with his project, the moment I met him seems to me beyond just a memory of an old event; it is the sudden revival of its appearance along with my fresh emotion. Though there could be many other events I do not think remember at all, the reason I have this particular memory is evident—it or came to mean important to me. The past can be recreated into the present once I give my attention through assigning with a meaning. In this sense, I wonder if my narratives represent the self in the present reflecting the past.

So, is the past actually turned into the present? In order to think of such a question, we have to ponder where we actually exist. Do we exist in the present? When we pinpoint this current time as the present, however, the time in a minute or even a

second later is already a minute or a second old past. We may remember that we were once in the present, but the articulation of the present time is also in our memory, strictly speaking. The very strong and bright experience in the light that happened in my prep-school time of the Chapter 2 is also in my memory. Even if I sense the extreme temporality in which I would feel it is only “now,” by the time when I can comprehend what happened to me in such physical and psychological sensation, it goes away as a past. In this logic, every moment will become the past in the next moment. However, do we live in the past then? This sounds slightly strange to me. We surely cross our past and our present somewhere in our time. And even though our memory cannot really catch up with it, I would like to think that my body is capturing the present even while I may not recognize it. As Merleau-Ponty (1962/2002) pointed out, our bodily experience happens even before our perception. To him, what he called radical temporality should occur through our actual bodily experiences. By our memory, our emotions develop as well. I sometimes still feel like weeping over some of the very sensitive stories from my past. Such feeling might be understood as regret, grief, or anger—but I do not think we can specifically tell at the moment. The emotion that makes me weep surely happens in the present. And this is what narrative or a story does to us.

I would like to agree to Ricoeur (1980, p. 170) agreeing with Heidegger’s conception of time that “the ordinary representation of time as a linear series of ‘nows’ hides the true constitution of time,” because our story of present that binds our future, past, and present may bring some kind of flexible nature of human existence and time. “How well?” It is another question to ask later. While I was writing the narratives

included in Chapter 2, I did not pay much attention to the future aspect of time. Maybe I was preoccupied with the past-now relationship for my field note writing. But now I am finding the future is included in my present. I notice the increase of my positive experiences and strength to defend my own voice through developing my academic and professional skills and identity in order to advance my dissertation on the topic I have cared for the most. It could be called a hope for the future that still has not come yet, but already in the awareness of my present time.

Human Existence in the World

The phrase, “Being-in-the-world” has been a headache for many reasons during my dissertation process, while it has also been showing me the path I acknowledge I share with other thinkers. My professor had insisted it came from Heidegger; I had brought the concept from the Ten Ox Herding pictures of Zen Buddhism. However, the more I read Heidegger’s writings and about his thoughts (e.g., Steiner, 1979), the more about different dimensions of it I actually came to know. Although this theme could make itself a large dissertation, within my limited time and space, I would now connect this concept and my dissertation.

Language That Does Not Capture What It Is

I had had a fear of writing in the past because of the shortcoming of language that what is mentioned does not represent what it is before it gets experienced by me. Here is my presupposition in the line of this thought—the world is there even before my existence. By my experiencing the world, I am the agent to perceive something there and to identify it as what it is, of what it could be (interpretation). But once an encounter with

the thing is transferred to words I choose, what the language captures is only a limited part instead of the entire what is, and thus my expression does not fully represent what I want to tell about. Once put in to words, the expression, indeed, no longer carries the original experience or sensation I received. If I name something in front of me, the word I used to name what it is actually separates me from what I tried to name.

Language that Connects Human Existence in the World

Because of the nature of language mentioned above, I was quite sad about my inability to directly relate with the world. Yet, it was also a huge creative surge because you are the one in the world experiencing what it is and now with your access to the world it is something looking only to you to express! It is therefore not all fear, but also a trembling with excitement of the thought, “How I shall I design my interaction with the world?” I am here in the world, and I am the one who could name it (give expression/meaning), because I am the one who is actually experiencing something in a world that is not originally defined. Especially after having the experience of the world full of light, my image of the world became one of complex layers of realities.

Introducing how well Heidegger’s (1968) way works of explaining the human relation to the language, the Being—the ultimate existence of infinite whole—is expressed by what language can reference as actual things or events expressed as existence (beings) and by the existence of language (being) that can explain how language works as a tool (being), relate to the existence (Being) and things (beings). The thing out there that we call tree exists in the world (Being) of existence, but an explanation (being) in language refers only to what we are seeing as named as a tree

(beings). The awareness of existence and the language relation to our understanding of the things in the world lets us view the world in a different way.

Living in the Society, Living in the World

Conscious separation between each action and consciousness of the moment has been the practice I learned in my prep-school year as an important process to prevent me from taking the phenomenon for granted. Why I did this was more influenced by the General Semantics of Korzybski (1933); however, different philosophers and psychologists have also pointed out the mechanism of consciousness related to the actual human existence. Clarification of life events and our mental process is also the subject of Zen training as well. The experience of enlightenment achieved in such practice is only a part of the process. Experiencing the oneness and the wholeness of a heightened moment is just a part of understanding the world and Being. That may be the reason why Zen teaching emphasizes that the inquirer will return to the people to live happily in society.

Once attuned to the truth of existence, one's existing in the world (living in the town, with neighbors, etc.) is more important than individual inquiry to keep seeking for the moment of enlightenment again through focused spiritual training in isolation. Because once one understands existence, living among people is important for further clarification; thus, more spiritual training. We cannot stay in the light all the way. Heidegger also called awareness of Being as the prerequisite for philosophical life, but not as the ultimate goal. Every individual has a personal thing to work on in his or her life. My understanding of the term, "being in the world" came from here. It seems to me Heidegger's Being-in-the-world notion also indicates human life with its ontological

relation while living as a human being (bodily existence). The essence of human existence and our life-long learning is more than just the pursuit of Being in-itself. Because we exist in the world; hence the awareness of Being also comes along with us to be a part of human world, which is just like how human kept their desire to know God (or eternal Being) since the ancient time of East and West.

Revisiting My Coffee Shop Man

The end of October in 2011, the weather of the weekend in the Midwest was surprisingly nice and warm. When I was ready to leave the coffee shop in the first evening of my trip to his city, my coffee shop man at the counter asked me whether I had visited the city for a conference or something I had to attend. I said I just came with a bunch of international students for a weekend city trip, and came to see him. It is true but only partly. I came to the city to stay over the weekend, but I did not do any city thing with my fellow students. As soon as the charter bus stopped at the hostel and our luggage was unloaded, I just hopped on a subway to head to the familiar coffee shop where my coffee shop man worked. I had nothing to expect in mind; instead, I just wanted to see him at this stage of my dissertation. Honestly, I was nervous, too. For all those years since I met him, his existence in my life became such big influence to my thinking and dissertation. And I had not seen or talked to him since last time I visited him for his music show that happened right after he moved to this big city. As his shop became busy soon after I came in, we did not have much time to talk together. We wanted to talk more.

I asked "Is there anything going on tomorrow?" He said he was free before his work in the late afternoon. "Shall we then set up a date for lunch time?" To my request, he smiled and nodded. I asked, as the next day was Sunday, "Don't you need to go to church?" "Every day is church." He repeated, "Every day is church" cheerfully. Although we talked mainly about his music career development and personal life in general during the next day's meeting over a few cups of coffee, a month later I found myself thinking of him. I pondered this concept of religion/church, and wondered if his world view might be evolving.

Before the trip, I actually wondered whether I could ask him this type of question still now, especially after such long distance from each other over these 5 years. But it happened just like we used to sit on the sidewalk in front of the shop and talk about any kind of topic. Going back to one summer night of the year 2004 after the local music event, once I asked him, "Is there God to you?" He looked at nowhere, and then looked at me saying, "No, there is no God." "Everything is lie." A few days before the night, I just had seen him in the coffee shop having a harsh debate with his friend on some religious topics. The anger I saw in him in the first summer still existed those days. Since the time, we hadn't directly talked about religion. This time, however, something about Being and Holy may be transforming with different meanings in his life.

At the final moment while giving him a hug for a farewell outside of the coffee shop, I told him, "Hope you'll have a good life." Yes, I meant the authentic life where we continue asking questions for clarity, deeper understanding, and meaningful choices in life.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS WITH NO ENDING

How do we come to recognize such a question in the doctoral education that has been, to some extent, hauntingly obsessive and so profound that one could spend the rest of the life pondering it? It could be an illusion of finding such a project in a person's life, but we cannot help but finding ourselves asking for something almost unattainably to reach. The kind of question surely existed all through my 12 years with the nostalgia of finding my self in the light of the world. And I was not only the person who was obsessively caring for how to connect our own existence in multiple levels of realities to our present expressions and contexts only to leave such things behind as if creating them was to a way to witness our temporary existence and the inspiration that followed.

If the present interest relates to the past experiences and thoughts, when did my dissertation begin then? It could be when a doctoral student recognizes something about a possible inquiry. Or, it could be long before a doctoral education began by searching the critical root of his or her philosophy (value, ethics, etc.). My personal project which I identified in my adolescence and have refined continuously consisted of epistemological and ontological issues of human existence in the world—how human beings could continue clarifying one's mind for the clear perspectives, while clarifying our human experiences in its relationship toward how it is expressed in language, and in its relationship toward Being. Although it has taken me longer than others to go through my doctoral degree and dissertation process, the feelings I have at this point about my past

was nothing but appreciation for such an opportunity to keep thinking about an issue that was worth all those years.

About My Being in the Woods or the Woods in-Itself

Coming to the point of this conclusion chapter, I have been questioning myself about what I have accomplished in this dissertation. I told my story, indeed many pieces of it; however, the questions of how well, how much, or for with what purpose ultimately—still linger. Often times I name certain mental states of mine ‘being in the woods’ to explain to my professor that I am in the world of thoughts and Being (respectively, Heidegger loved living in the woods). It seems like my project has been some kind of exploration for a way to write about the woods in-itself in my academic writing. And I have been trying to defend how such an inquiry could be a significant part of science and academic discipline in doctoral education by insisting this scope of dissertation topic.

Small pieces of the story gathered from the past were revived with new meanings into the present. What did I try to mean by doing so? I went back to a chapter of Heidegger’s writing on phenomenology to figure out what I was doing. In *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, Heidegger (1975/1988) was differentiating his phenomenology as a method of the (scientific) process of philosophy by pointing out three components: reduction, construction, and deduction. Instead of directly aiming to the (ontological) issues, he suggested that we look at the events or things in our living environment to construct what we could discuss on. That’s right. This is what I have been doing by using different narratives to illustrate how my experiences and thoughts

are interwoven. I needed to insist to my dissertation chair that my personal project would progress as I wanted it to progress instead of making this dissertation another one about the doctoral research experience. At the time, did my fear of the language issue get in my way? No. By then, I had developed a voice strong enough to tell him what I needed and gained independence in thought from him. After that point, I really started to shape a sum of mumblings (field notes) into a dissertation, although I was unsure how I could deal with the gap between what is described and its description. In such a writing process, I could see myself continuing to interpret what I had previously made sense out of for further understanding. Such a process might take me away from the thing in-itself or lead me closer to it. And then another attempt at interpretation occurs. Maybe it is both the dilemma and responsibility of people who try recreating their experiences of certain phenomenon to produce representations of human experiences—whether it be visual arts, and music for artists, and writing on the human life world for social science researchers.

Ultimately, for what purpose have I been doing this inquiry then? Having my personal project as a torch of my dissertation this time, what have I done? The flash of thoughts keeps telling me that I may have been writing about my effort to keep the discussion on my project alive, which may be also a necessary part of the project itself. In other words, I have been writing about my being in the woods to shed a light on the woods in-itself.

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