Becoming an Insider and an Outsider in Post-Disaster Fukushima

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In this essay, Karou Miyazawa reflects on how she was both insider and outsider during her fieldwork in Fukushima, Japan, between 2013 and 2016, after the 2011 earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear power plant explosion devastated the region. During her time in Fukushima, Miyazawa experienced the emotions of community members as well as her own, which were rooted in specific individual and collective memories. While her nostalgic memories of home pulled her inside the community, community members' anger and skepticism toward researchers, which stemmed from memories of the wartime atomic bombings, pushed her outside the community. Based on this experience, Miyazawa has reconceptualized agency as one's ability to be susceptible to various emotions that circulate in the community and to move toward and/ or away from insider and outsider positions. This new approach allows researchers to recognize the agency of their participants, form dialogic relationships with them, and collaboratively give testimonies over the long term. Miyazawa contends that such relationships will contribute to the decolonization of research.

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The history of ethnography and colonialism is long and intimate. Ethnography has served the interest of the colonizers by uncovering facts about the "uncivilized" and by providing suggestions on how to use this knowledge in order to govern them (Vidich & Lyman, 2000). This legacy is reflected in the power relationship between the researcher and the researched even today. Thus, researchers who may not be conscious of this power relationship could inadvertently turn their participants into objects to be scrutinized and written about and place them in asymmetrical relationships through their research (Fine, 1994). In the past, sustaining such a power relationship was justified by the colonizers' intention to enlighten the colonized and bring benefits to the communities by using knowledge gained from their research (Vidich & Lyman, 2000). Such an intention reflects the colonizers' idea that they are

the ones who possess the knowledge to empower "others," who lack knowledge. However, a prevailing belief that the scientific method inquiry can place researchers in a neutral position and allow them to produce unbiased knowledge served to defend the colonizers' way of knowing (Kanuha, 2000; Rosaldo, 1989; Thompson, 1995). In contrast, feminist researchers argue that unexamined biases involved in research are the cause of turning participants into "deficit subjects" (people who are behind and thus need guidance) and problematizing claims, which stress the neutrality of research. They also warn researchers to be vigilant about their own values related to their research topics and participants, and their relationships with them (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004; Pillow, 2003).

Past discussions of the relationship between researchers/colonizers and researched/colonized evolved based on the assumption that researchers were from locations that were culturally and geographically remote from their research sites (Appadurai, 1988; Ghaffar-Kucher, 2015). However, in recent years, as the number of native ethnographers trained in Western institutions has increased, discourses of native researchers' identities as well as the advantages and challenges inherent in native researchers' inquiry have emerged (Narayan, 1993; Punch, 1994). Some researchers stress the advantages of native researchers, arguing that the physical resemblance and cultural knowledge they share with their participants could facilitate them in developing an immediate rapport with local populations and in gaining access to "honest data" (Al-Makhamreh & Lewando-Hundt, 2008; Cui, 2015). Others warn that such advantages could lead native researchers to the verge of unethical conduct (Smith, 2012). With their friendly faces, native researchers could falsely lead native informants to let their guard down and provide information without knowing how the information will be used and for what purpose (Punch, 1994; Smith, 2012).

To remedy colonial practice underlying research, researchers, whether native or nonnative, must be reflective enough to interrogate the colonial power that runs through established methods during their research (Villenas, 1996). Interrogating their own positions and methods of inquiry could place native researchers in an ambivalent position, and shifting back and forth between the positions of researcher/colonizer and the researched/colonized could cause tension within the researchers as well. For example, Vilennas (1996), who identifies as a Chicana, had to choose her primary personal affiliation during her research, with either a Latino community or an English-speaking scholarly community. However, this tension can also be used strategically to decolonize research. For example, as part of their research, native researchers who use methods developed in the West could take advantage of opportunities to record and critically examine how a particular method they adopt influences the power dynamic between them and their participants. Being placed in the position of both the colonizer and colonized could bring up strong emotions in native researchers. However, they can also use such

emotional moments as opportunities to enhance their understanding of the aspects of the community (and its members) they are studying (Emerald & Carpenter, 2015). Finally, they could use the knowledge gained from these struggles to transform their research into a process that can empower their participants.

I was influenced by the work of native and feminist researchers when I began my research in Fukushima, Japan, my hometown, which experienced an earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear power plant explosion in 2011. My personal history with Fukushima strengthened my commitment to conduct research ethically. Prior to the data collection, I viewed myself as an insider and planned to conduct the study from that position. However, as soon as I stepped into Fukushima and had emotional encounters with new and familiar people, objects, and events, I began swaying between insider and outsider positions. Through this experience, I learned a nature and function of emotion that I was not aware of before. Contrary to a common belief that emotion is something completely internal to oneself, I learned that emotions emerge between oneself and others (other persons, objects, or events) as they come in contact with each other. Emotion also mediates the relationship between them by creating boundaries, separating them, and/or drawing them close (Ahmed, 2004).

At different moments during my data collection in Fukushima, I experienced a range of emotions as I encountered various subjects and objects in reality and through memories. Such emotions shaped my relationship with them and also my insider and outsider positions. For example, my romantic feelings toward Fukushima surfaced when I returned home and felt that I was an insider, part of the community. At the same time, I also felt the community members' anger toward me, a researcher, as I began recruiting participants for my study. The anger shifted me into the position of being an outsider. Experiencing this shift gave me insight into a new type of agency researchers and participants exercise during research and helped me see how such agency can decolonize research. In this essay I delineate feelings that community members in Fukushima and I had about particular people, events, or objects and how those feelings swung me between insider and outsider positions during the seven months I spent in post-disaster Fukushima between 2013 and 2016.[1]

Contextualizing Fukushima

The Great East Japan Earthquake, 2011

On March 11, 2011, a 9.0-magnitude earthquake and resulting tsunami hit the northeast coast of Japan. The lives of 4,040 people were lost, and 96,027 homes were destroyed (Fukushima Disaster Countermeasure Headquarters, 2018). The subsequent explosion of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power

Plant added to the catastrophe. The tsunami damaged the reactors' cooling pumps, prompting a series of hydrogen explosions in four reactors between March 12 and March 15. The explosions released 770,000 terabecquerels of radioactive substances into the air. It was classified as a Level 7 accident, the most serious level measured on the International Nuclear Event Scale (Yamaguchi, Kondo, & Kotera, 2011). These radioactive substances contaminated towns and villages as far away as fifty kilometers and displaced approximately 165,000 people (Fukushima Disaster Countermeasure Headquarters, 2018). Yet, in December 2011, the Japanese government declared that the reactors were under control and that decontamination of radiation within the power plant was complete throughout Fukushima. This declaration that Fukushima was safe left the 1.9 million residents who remained in Fukushima to live in silent fear of radiation (Hoshi, 2012).

I was born and raised in the northeastern Tohoku region of Japan and spent my teens in Fukushima. Although I consider Fukushima to be my hometown, my social and emotional connection to the city prior to the disaster had weakened to the point of becoming almost nonexistent. Like many other Tohoku-born people, I left the region immediately after graduating from high school to seek better opportunities in Tokyo, and I never returned. As soon as I arrived in Tokyo, I erased my local dialect and hid my origin as a way to avoid negative stereotypes associated with the region, such as being poor, indolent, and backward. I felt it was a necessary strategy for survival (Morris, 2012). During the course of this self-driven assimilation, I internalized the colonizers and oppressed myself (Freire, 2000). I lived without a voice or critical historical consciousness for many years. Despite my scholarly work and teaching on the discursive construction of marginalized people through the history of modern education in the United States and Japan, I had never thought of examining my own history and positionality. Instead, I researched and wrote about Latino and Black immigrant students in working-class communities in New York and Pennsylvania.

It was the tsunami that woke me from this amnesia. The images of towns turned into piles of debris and the sight of people—referred to as "refugees"—cramming into temporary evacuation centers reconnected me to Fukushima emotionally. And through *Tohoku Gaku* (*The Tohoku Study*) (Hopson, 2017), I learned that Tohoku has historically been an internal colony of modern Japan (Akasaka, 2012; Hopson, 2017; Kawanishi, 2016; Okada, 2013). Learning this brought about a paradigm shift in me. Throughout my education in public school in Tohoku, my teachers taught me repeatedly that Japan is a homogeneous country with one language and one ethnic group and whose members share a common origin. Learning about a new version of history from the position of Tohoku paralleled a critical deconstruction of the dominant view of the region and revealed the tension of the assymetrical relationship the region has historically had with the center of Japan, which is Tokyo.

Tohoku's Past: An Internal Colony of Japan

The Tohoku region has served as an internal colony of Japan since the inception of the modern Japanese government. The very name given to the region—Tohoku, the North East of Tokyo—reflects the subordinate position of Tohoku in relation to Tokyo, the economic, political, and cultural center of modern Japan. Seen from the center, Tohoku had been documented as a distant and poor region inhabited by uncivilized, immoral, indolent, and unsanitary people, who were different from the normal Japanese people. The Boshin Civil War of 1868, in which thirty-one *han* in the Tohoku region fought against the new imperial government, reinforced this negative image of Tohoku people and added yet another stereotype, one of being untrustworthy (Kawanishi, 2016).[2] Throughout the modern history of Japan, the central government tried to "civilize" Tohoku people. In school we were taught the standard Japanese language and a unilateral version of national history (Kawanishi, 2016), an experience like those colonized in other parts of the world. Another colonial aspect of Tohoku is the central government's policy to develop the region for the purpose of achieving national economic goals rather than to benefit the region itself. This policy, which started in the early twentieth century, structurally exploited the region, which survived by providing the center with natural resources (including energy), agricultural products, and cheap labor (Kainuma, 2012; Okada, 2013).

After learning this version of the modern history of Japan, one so different from what I was taught in school, I came to realize that my determination to leave Fukushima for a better life and the shame I carried around my language and culture were rooted in this history. My awareness of the marginalization of Tohoku also opened my eyes to the structure of exploitation manifested in energy policies in contemporary Japan (Mizuno, 2013). The fact that there are fourteen nuclear power plants in the Tohoku region, ten of which are in Fukushima, is not coincidental. The colonial relationship between Tohoku and the center established in the early twentieth century paved the way for Tohoku to host nuclear power plants in the 1960s (Kainuma, 2012). These power plants, which are owned by the Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO), sent all the energy they produced directly to Tokyo, with none used locally.

While casting a critical gaze on the structure of exploitation in Fukushima is significant, I am aware of the importance of also critically examining the long, intimate, and dependent relationship between the colonizers (the Japanese government and TEPCO) and the colonized (the local people in Fukushima). For example, four towns in Fukushima chose to have power plants, despite knowing the risks of nuclear power. For many years, these towns enjoyed heightened standards of living secured by employment opportunities and subsidies that TEPCO and the national government provided (Hirokawa, 2011; Kainuma, 2012). Everything appeared perfect—until the 2011 explosion revealed the structure of exploitation behind the economic development postwar Japan enjoyed (Mizuno, 2013).

Contested Memories of Home

Nostalgia and IRB

Between the summer of 2013 and the winter of 2016, I visited Fukushima three times and stayed a total of seven months. My intent was to explore how high school and college teachers, students, and community organizers lived in post-disaster Fukushima and how their experiences impacted their beliefs about curriculum and the implementation of it. I was especially interested in how they were dealing with displacement, contested definitions of radiation risks, and the uncertainty of scientific knowledge. Further, I wanted to find out whether the disaster had changed their views about implementing the human capital model of education for economic development. To find answers to these questions, I conducted three focus group interviews in a university and eleven individual interviews at public schools, two in the coastal region directly hit by the tsunami and nine in Fukushima City, which was affected by radiation. I also collected primary resources, such as essays written by students and teachers and newsletters published by public schools and districts. Going back to Fukushima to do research, and especially learning about the oppression the region experienced and reflecting on my own identity in light of this "new" history, made me feel attached to Fukushima more than ever before. After being away for thirty years, my heart was filled with romantic memories of home and self, which were supposed to be absolute and immutable (Boym, 2001). When I returned to Fukushima for the second time, in July 2014, I wrote the following field note:

> When I got out of the long tunnel, bright green speared my eyes. What I saw was not a strange land, as in Kawabata's [1996] novel. It was a world I had known. The Bodhisattva statue right in front of the mountain, the flat farmhouses, the green rice fields were all familiar to me. It was as if I was back 30 years into the past. *Tadaima*: I am home.

Contrary to feminists' claims of home as a dynamic place where you can transform your sense of self by becoming aware of how your own memories are shaped by political power (hooks, 1990), my romantic feelings for home made me feel that my true self and its connection to home were being restored. This nostalgia also inspired me to conduct research as a native researcher for the benefit of the community and to stay away from any practices that might replicate colonialism. However, my naive notion of home and my native identity collapsed as soon as I began recruiting participants for my research. Multiple invitation e-mails I sent to potential participants via acquaintances were never answered. This told me that I was not an insider. It also challenged my romantic feelings toward home, which I thought constituted a solid ground for my "true" identity." One e-mail I received from a friend who introduced me to a potential participant poignantly clarified how I was perceived in the community:

 She [a local community organizer] said that she began to feel skeptical about your research project after she read your email. People in the region do not want to be "guinea pigs" in anyone's research project. You may not intend to take advantage of them, but they are going to see you with suspicion if you talk too much about your research project. It is difficult to communicate with Japanese people after having lived abroad for so many years. They might think you are talking down to them, depending on how you present your ideas. If they see you as being arrogant, they are going to reject you. (personal communication, November 15, 2014)

In effect, this friend pointed out that the way I communicated my research project to potential participants was inappropriate. Following the ethical guidelines set by the Institutional Review Board (IRB), when I sent out the invitation e-mails, I tried to remove any elements of deception that might underlie the research by being transparent about myself and my research (Punch, 1994). However, as my friend indicated, the detailed description of my purpose, procedures, and risks and benefits, which I determined without consultation with the participants and communicated unilaterally in writing, was viewed as a sign of arrogance because it lacked reciprocity and respect (Smith, 2012). I had to accept that IRB guidelines reflect the culture of the West, which do not align with the cultural code of Fukushima. I followed the IRB protocols strictly in order to conduct research ethically. However, my blind compliance to the guidelines resulted in replicating a hierarchical relationship between my potential participants and myself—the self I was bringing in as a researcher, as one who blindly followed the ethical guidelines set by researchers in Western academia. I had to admit how different I had become over the last thirty years and that simply following IRB protocols could not guarantee ethical conduct of research (Librett & Perrone, 2010).

Memories of Hiroshima and Skepticism Toward Researchers/Outsiders

Given this reaction to my research, I had to admit that the language I used evoked skepticism in prospective participants. However, the problem was more than my language. The painful memories of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombs and the biomedical research on *hibakusha* conducted by the Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission (ABCC) within the post-disaster community highlighted the inhuman nature of scientific studies.[3] For example, it was common for hibakusha to be picked up from their homes and taken to research institutions without prior notice (Jacobs, 2011). In addition, the ABCC did not share its data, which could have benefited the health condition of the participants; nor did it provide treatment to the participants, as the provision of cost-free treatment could have been considered atonement (Lindee, 2016).

Fukushima residents' fear and anger directed toward researchers was revived when the Radiation Effect and Research Foundation (RERF), an institution with historical ties to the ABCC, launched in June 2011 a large-scale bio-

medical study in collaboration with Fukushima Medical University (Sawada, 2013). This link between medical researchers and the pain hibakusha experienced was pulled out of the past into the present: all researchers were viewed with skepticism. In fact, "guinea pig" was a popular expression that circulated widely in Fukushima through social media after the RERF came to Fukushima. Through this metaphor, Fukushima people expressed their pain and anger about their bodies (which had been exposed to radiation) being turned into pathological objects of scientific studies, as had happened in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. That my research did not involve experiments with human bodies did not seem to matter to the Fukushima residents. Their generalization of biomedical research to all types of research could have been a reminder that ethnographic studies could potentially be invasive and exploitative and could harm those who had become the objects of those studies.

My personal history in Fukushima, including the fact that I attended and graduated from a local junior high school and high school, was something I shared with people in my initial encounter with them. But it didn't grant me insider status automatically. Even the fact that I, too, embodied the collective memory of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and felt the same pain beneath my identity as a researcher went unrecognized. Unlike past native researchers, who have been able to capitalize on their cultural knowledge, language ability, and social connections in their research (Al-Makhamreh & Lewando-Hundt, 2008; Cui, 2015), I faced a major challenge in recruiting participants. As a result, I came to accept that my memories of "home" were no longer genuine: in effect, the "home" I remembered no longer existed, nor did a "true self" rooted in a "true home," which I thought I could rediscover. I thus came to acknowledge that there is no such thing as true origin, true home, or true self (Adams-St. Pierre, 2008). I learned that meanings of home go through transformations as individuals become susceptible to contested memories and emotions. Although I could no longer consider myself an insider in the community, I was not completely an outsider either. I had to generate new ways to work with people in Fukushima, which was once my home.

Trauma: Unspeakable Memories of Catastrophe

Encountering Trauma

My experience of moving between insider and outsider positions was affected by my romantic feelings toward home and also by the community's skepticism toward researchers. Each of these positions was determined by emotions entrenched in specific memories and also by the unique type of memory associated with experiencing a catastrophe, namely trauma.

Trauma has unique characteristics and effects, and it impacted community members and myself in a way that was different from my nostalgia or our collective memories of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. According to the American Psychiatric Association's (2013) *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders,*

trauma is a direct or indirect exposure to events such as death, serious injury, or sexual violence, and those affected by trauma potentially developing symptoms like anxiety, delusions, hallucinations, or disordered speech and behaviors. I originally viewed myself as an outsider to the trauma community because I had no direct experience of the catastrophe; nor did I think that the trauma had much impact on my participants or on how they interacted with me. Without this knowledge of trauma, I was sometimes dismayed by the way people behaved during the interviews, as I recorded in a December 2015 field note:

 When I asked a principal about the radiation contamination of school property, he burst into laughter and said: "I hope it's safe." I didn't know what to say to him. On another occasion, a student came to a focus group interview [at a university]. She remained silent the whole time. When I asked her if she wanted to share anything at the end, she responded with tears. I apologized to her and just thanked her for being there. A few days later, she told me she wanted to be there to be in a conversation about Fukushima. Many people I met emphatically said: "I don't want people to forget about Fukushima. I want people to understand Fukushima." However, when I asked them what they wanted people to remember about Fukushima, they looked at me with blank eyes and said: "I don't know."

Looking back, I believe it is reasonable to assume that the series of tragedies Fukushima people experienced impacted their psychological well-being individually. For example, a survey conducted in Fukushima indicated that 21.6 percent were at risk of post–traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which was significantly higher than the national average of 3 percent (Maeda, Ueda, Nagai, Fujii, & Oe, 2016). However, I did not expect to find effects of trauma on my participants, as none of them claimed to have PTSD and all appeared to be socially functional. It was only after I returned to the United States that I came to realize that the puzzling behaviors demonstrated by some of my participants could be the effects of trauma. For example, some of them failed to remember the tragic events during the interview. This could have been a coping strategy for dealing with trauma: by pushing their feelings into their unconscious, they can avoid reexperiencing the horror (Thompson, 1995). Others did have memories of a particular event, but they struggled to find the exact words to articulate their experiences (Caruth, 1996). This dilemma of wanting to speak but not being able to find words or remember the event clearly can result in tears, jokes, and incomprehensible utterances (Miyaji, 2007).

Being Drawn to the Trauma Community

The emotional connection I formed with my participants attached me to them emotionally and instilled in me a desire to understand the community and its members' experiences from an insider's position. This also led me to be susceptible to trauma in the community (Nuttman-Shwartz, 2015). As past studies of trauma indicate, listening to victims' stories causes one to transcend the boundary between self (insider) and other (outsider) (Zembylas, 2006). Transcending the boundary through empathetic connections between the research participants and the researcher can, in theory, decolonize the relationship

and erase the participants' skepticism. I experienced this as I interacted with my participants; I felt the boundary between self and other blur as I listened to their stories. The dissolution of the boundary changed the power dynamic.

However, this new relationship with the participants introduced new challenges into the research, namely, vicarious trauma. Like other researchers who have worked with trauma-related topics or trauma victims, I encountered traumatic events indirectly through my participants and began developing symptoms resembling trauma itself, such as anxiety and depression (Newman, Risch, & Kassam-Adams, 2006). It is also common for researchers who are affected by vicarious trauma to disengage from their work and isolate themselves from others at work and in their private lives (Nuttman-Shwartz, 2015). As I developed an emotional connection to the victims, I began feeling guilty about being there mainly to do research and about planning to leave the community when my data collection was over. In addition, I minimized the value of my research and doubted the authenticity of my findings (Dickson-Swift, James, Kippen, & Liamputtong, 2009). A field note I wrote in January 2016 indicates the effects of trauma on my emotional status and behaviors:

> I am not sure why I am doing this research. Am I doing this just to collect data to justify theories in the scholarly community in the US? If so, am I just using people in Fukushima? Am I selfish to ask people who are in pain to tell their stories? What if I misrepresent them? Sometimes when I listen to people's stories, I feel overwhelmed, and cannot say anything or ask any questions. I couldn't even turn on the voice recorder in my last interview. I have been here for four months, but I am not sure if I should continue this research or not.

I was being drawn inside the trauma community, where members were tightly bonded because they understood what it was like to experience the tragedy without verbal explanations (Miyaji, 2007). At the same time, I was holding on to a researcher's identity, an outsider identity. These two positions caused a tension within me. On one hand, I had the intention to move away from the traditional style of ethnography, in which researchers studied natives objectively and used the research findings to "govern" them (Vidich & Lyman, 2000). On the other hand, I began wondering if I was colonizing my participants by distancing myself from them and possibly even betraying them. Especially, the idea of collecting my participants' stories for the purpose of writing articles for Western academic audiences, and in a language my participants may not understand, made me feel guilty. Furthermore, feeling uncertain about how community members might benefit from my research heightened my concern that I was exploiting them.

Drawn into a trauma community bonded by silence, I was doubtful about whether it was possible for any outsiders to understand the meaning of the community members' pain through written representations of their experience. This concern grew as I thought of the skepticism some community members continued to project onto me. I was also concerned that the information I

would share with the outside world could be falsely interpreted. I realized that my acts as a researcher had the potential to cause more pain to these victims with whom I had become emotionally attached. The longer I stayed in Fukushima and experienced the community's trauma, the more my guilt grew and my motivation waned. Consequently, I began to avoid talking about the disaster and the radiation in my daily life. I became hesitant to approach potential participants, and in some interviews I could not bring myself to turn on the voice recorder. When I tried to write, I could not find the exact words to express my experiences. Instead of actively seeking new participants and collecting more data, I ended up spending many hours alone in the library reading about topics that had some relevance to this study but were not directly related to the disaster (e.g., education reform in Japan, history of Hiroshima, and nuclear and radiation education). This put me behind in data collection and writing.

Being Supported by Insiders in the Trauma Community

Telling stories about traumatic events is often challenging, as the experiences victims attempt to communicate may be beyond nonvictims' imagination. Sometimes there are simply no words to describe the experiences. In addition, fear of reexperiencing the horror can block memories (Caruth, 1996; Dutro, 2013). Being drawn to this trauma community and vicariously experiencing the trauma, I also fell into a world of silence. Similar to the victims, those who experience the trauma vicariously also face the challenge of giving testimony. That is why I found it difficult to make progress in writing about what I witnessed in Fukushima.

Laub (1992), who studied Holocaust survivors, notes that giving testimony requires effort on the part of both victims (insiders) and listeners (outsiders) and that testimonies are not monologues of the testifiers but, rather, are told through the collaborative efforts of the listener and the victims of the catastrophe. In this collaborative effort of giving testimony of catastrophe, the listener is held responsible for listening to the victim's words empathetically; they must put together the fragmented pieces of words and hear messages behind jokes and tears (Miyaji, 2007). Through their words, both victim and listener attempt to get close to the event and find their personal feelings and meanings. In this sense, testimonies are never monologues. Rather, they are dialogues between victims and listeners. In these dialogues, outsiders, who did not experience the catastrophe, most often guide the insiders, the victims of the catastrophe. However, during my study I encountered moments when the roles were reversed, when my participants took the initiative in engaging me in dialogue about the traumatic event so that I could give testimony. Although I was not aware of the nature of my interactions with my participants at the time, reading my field notes made me realize that such dialogues were taking place even at quite early stages of data collection. For example, in June 2016 I noted:

One day Mr. Shiraki suggested to me that he would drive me to the restricted zone. The area was washed out by the tsunami on March 11th and was abandoned after the nuclear power plant explosion. The tsunami ran through these homes and washed everything away. I imagined the faces of the people who once inhabited these homes, which were almost unrecognizable. What happened to them? Where did they go? Weeds were starting to grow from the debris left around the property. Although I had my camera with me, I just stood there silently. "Do I have the right to take photos of someone's painful memories? Who am I to do this anyway?" Then, Mr. Shiraki spoke to me from behind: "Please go ahead and take pictures. You should take good pictures and tell what you saw sincerely."

This suggests that outsiders can become co-witnesses to the catastrophes only if they are given permission to and are guided by the insiders. As this example shows, I would not have been able to witness the scars of the tsunami if Mr. Shiraki hadn't wanted to show them to me. And I would not have felt comfortable in writing about this specific incident had Mr. Shiraki not encouraged me to take pictures. His words empowered me to overcome my fright and guilty feeling about communicating this tragedy to audiences who live outside the trauma community. Through this emotional experience, I learned that research in post-disaster sites cannot be done without participants' agency and their desire to work with the researchers, with the outsiders.

Discussion

Multiple Communities and Fluid Boundaries

My journey between insider and outsider positions in post-disaster Fukushima was confusing and emotionally draining. However, it allowed me to understand the complex effects of emotions and the behaviors of community members, as well as my own, and how these came to shift my insider and outsider positions. The experience also allowed me to speak about the multiple realities of Fukushima from different positions, instead of making absolute truth claims about the community and its members from a single point of view (Lather, 1992; Toma, 2000). The reflective account of the knowledge construction process in reference to my shifting positions in a post-disaster community adds a new perspective to feminist scholars' efforts to decolonize research, to move away from asymmetrical and exploitative relationships with their participants.

One strategy that native researchers have used to decolonize research is to take both insider and outsider positions consciously and to use the insight they gain from negotiating these positions to disrupt the hierarchical relationship between the researchers and the researched. Instead of using this strategy, I let myself be vulnerable to my own and community members' emotions and let emotions shape my relationships with my participants. In this process I also released my control over the research process by accepting community members' skepticism toward me, vicariously experiencing community members' trauma, and getting caught up in the dilemma of wanting to write

but being unable to do so. Going through this journey taught me that to be affected by emotions is also a way to decolonize research.

In addition to a new way of decolonizing research, this study also changed my thinking about what it means for native researchers to be insiders and outsiders during their research. Studies on native researchers' insider and outsider identities have focused on the researcher's relationship with the community in which the research takes place, which is also the researcher's home (Cui, 2015; Ghaffar-Kucher, 2015; Kanuha, 2000; Villenas, 1996). These studies often juxtapose the culture of the research site (non-West, colonized) with that of the academy (West, colonizer) and examine how researchers negotiate the tension between these two cultures. Similarly, reflecting this view of dichotomous cultures, these studies discuss the researcher's insider and outsider identities mainly in relation to the researcher's affiliation to native cultures. In other words, they looked at whether or not researchers had connections to the language and culture of the community and how they used those affiliations (Al-Makhamreh & Lewando-Hundt, 2008; Cui, 2015; Narayan, 1993). I concede that my personal history of Fukushima had an emotional and social impact on my relationship with the community and its members. Yet, I also experienced the complicated nature of insider and outsider identities. Despite my perception of myself as an insider, I was viewed as an outsider by potential participants. Also, my lack of direct experience of the disaster placed me outside the trauma community, where members were bonded strongly through their common, unspeakable experience of the catastrophe (Miyaji, 2007). In time, I was gradually drawn inside that community.

To fully explain these complex and fluid movements toward and away from multiple communities, we must use a new notion of boundary. Boundaries have been assumed to be something fixed. Studies assume that there is a clear boundary between the community's culture and the researcher's culture, and that native researchers, who aim to decolonize research, should cross this boundary that separates the two communities (Fine, 1994; Villenas, 1996). Through my reflections, however, I have become aware of two new aspects of the concept of boundary. First, multiple boundaries coexist. In Fukushima, while some of these community boundaries overlapped with geographical and cultural boundaries, not all of them did. Some emerged based on specific memories circulated in the community and how individuals felt about subjects and objects included in those memories. For example, skepticism toward researchers rooted in memories of Hiroshima and Nagasaki generated a community in Fukushima. And that community created a boundary that separated researchers (outsiders) and victims (insiders and potential objects of research).

Second, these boundaries are fluid and dynamic. My experience in Fukushima suggests that boundaries disappear and reemerge, and are weakened and strengthened in response to emerging collective and personal memories and emotions. For example, while I felt pushed out of the insider community

because of the skepticism the residents projected onto me when they found out I was a researcher, encountering nostalgic scenes and feeling romantic about Fukushima helped dissolve the emotional boundary between me and the residents. With these emerging and disappearing boundaries, I was also driven away from certain communities and was positioned as an outsider, though at other times I was gradually drawn into these communities and became an insider for a while. Being drawn both away from and into communities was a confusing experience that kept me from following my original research plan. I felt as though I had no control over my positions or my research.

However, in writing this reflective essay, I came to accept the reality that I don't have total control over what happens during research, that I cannot make anyone or myself feel a particular way. Looking back, I see how being open to affect was a rewarding experience. In fact, I now recognize that it was the most critical element of this research. In shifting through insider and outsider positions, I became connected to and disconnected from the community members at different points in the research, providing me with new and unexpected insights about the community members' experiences of the disaster.

New Agencies and Decolonizing Research

This experience of being open to affect also provided me with new insights into what agency means in research. In past studies, researchers' agency was viewed as their commitment to conduct research ethically and to decolonize the research process (Mutua & Swadener, 2004; Smith, 2012). This was done by navigating through multiple discourses within communities and academia, carefully examining and reflecting on the researcher's insider and outsider positions, and acknowledging the interdependent relationship between the researcher (colonizer) and the researched (colonized) (Fine, 1994). In those studies, a researcher's agency was assumed to be internal.

My experience in Fukushima overhauled this view of agency and provides an alternative viewpoint. I no longer view agency as something individuals hold and exercise through their subjective and conscious desire to change something external to them, such as social structures or the research process. I now believe that agency is about a researcher's subjective decision to take (or not) the position of an insider, outsider, or both in order to conduct research ethically. Agency is a disposition that allows researchers to be susceptible to emotions running between and through bodies and objects and to be affected by them (Ahmed, 2004; Bennett, 2010). Agency means letting emotions move you and allowing yourself to become both an insider and an outsider. In my research, it meant accepting community members' skepticism toward me and remaining outside the community in some moments; while in other moments it meant being drawn into the trauma community. Although the skepticism toward me never disappeared completely during my stay in Fukushima, I developed empathetic relationships with the victims of the disaster as I entered into the trauma community and experienced their pain vicariously. Accepting vul-

nerability as a researcher by succumbing to affect requires the researcher to recognize the agency of the participants, their ability to move with emotions and influence both the researcher and the research.

This new perspective on agency also shifts the focus of discussions regarding the ethical conduct of research. Focus has been placed on the relationship between the researcher (colonizer) and the researched (colonized), how traditional research placed these two actors in an asymmetrical relationship, and how we can disrupt the nature of that relationship by modifying our dispositions and actions. However, with this new perspective on agency, the focus is not on researchers or the researched but on the emotions that move researchers toward or away from their participants. It also pays attention to what emotions are at play, how they are related to history (memory), and how those emotions affect the relationship between researchers and the researched, as well as the knowledge they produce. This shift away from a colonizer-colonized relationship, the recognition of both researchers' and participants' vulnerability to emotions, and the freedom to move along with emotions contribute to decolonizing research.

Implications: Accepting Skepticism and Developing Trust in the Long Term

This new type of agency—being affected by others—requires researchers to be emotionally vulnerable. Furthermore, it urges researchers to relinquish their control over their participants and community members during the research process. In that sense, researchers who have agency do not consciously decide whether they are going to be insiders or outsiders. While recognizing that a possible asymmetrical power relationship that exists between the researcher and the researched is significant, researchers who operate with a renewed sense of agency will not make consciously reconfiguring such relationships a priority during their research. Entering the field with a particular intention reflects researchers' desire to have control over the research process and their relationship with their participants. But with this new notion of agency, I suggest that researchers, especially those who conduct their studies in a post-disaster society, accept their vulnerability to the various emotions they may encounter during their research. And since emotions are tied to particular feelings about something, researchers need to carefully observe community members' feelings. They should, for instance, ask what feelings community members have about certain objects, persons, or events in the present or in their memories and then consider how those feelings impact their relationship to the community members and the topics they are dealing with in their research. Such an inquiry also has the potential to provide insights into how we should transform our research method.

In my study, accepting and looking into the skepticism my potential participants had toward me led me to inquire further about the causes. I learned that their skepticism evolved from two actions ABCC researchers failed to take: approach potential participants in a personal way to establish trusting

relationships and share data with the individual participants for their benefit. Conducting research in this manner is dehumanizing and lacks reciprocity.

Building a reciprocal partnership with participants in a post-disaster society requires a more robust view of informed consent. Constructing this informed consent requires more than an exchange of information about the study and instead demands a mutually experienced space of coming to know one another. To do this in a post-disaster society, researchers can, for example, participate in community events and meetings on community reconstruction and intentionally express their views. Such interactions could change the dynamic between researchers and community members, which is often led by researchers' one-directional desire to "know about the 'other'" (Jones & Jenkins, 2008), so that participants are more fully informed when deciding whether or not they want to work with a particular researcher. Further, participants could develop a deeper sense of the extent to which they wish to share information about their disaster experience. Such informal and direct interactions with potential participants could also help researchers learn about a community's essential issues and help them align their research topic and method in a way that matches the interests of their participants (Librett & Perrone, 2010). Particularly in a post-disaster society like Fukushima, it is important for researchers to understand the community members' visions of reconstruction, or other responses to the disaster, and to shape their research design so that the process and outcome of research contribute to the community's recovery. Another thing researchers should keep in mind is that we are in a position of power to decide what to include and omit from publication materials (Magolda, 2000). In the case of studies in a post-disaster society, where community members undergo numerous changes as they go through the recovery process at both the personal and community levels, researchers need to attend to how their participants' perspectives evolve throughout and after the data collection. In that regard, sharing findings with the participants at different stages in the research is recommended (Mutua & Swadener, 2004).

Researchers as Co-Witnesses to Traumatic Events

Trauma was a significant factor influencing my data collection in Fukushima. Based on my experience, I suggest that researchers conducting research in a post-disaster community keep in mind that trauma impacts not only those who directly experience the catastrophe but also individuals who experienced it indirectly (Nuttman-Shwartz, 2015). Even though we, as researchers, are outsiders to the trauma community due to lack of our direct experience of the catastrophe, we run the risk of being drawn into the community and affected by the trauma (Miyaji, 2007). We can use this ambivalent position to advance our study as well as to benefit the members of the trauma community. With the permission and encouragement of the victims, we can become co-witnesses to the catastrophe and retell testimonies of the disaster to others (Herman, 1992). Researchers as outsiders have access to discourses unique to the aca-

demic world. As Gunew and Spivak (1990) note, researchers can use their position as outsiders strategically to speak directly to audiences that possess hegemonic power over the victims (colonized). Remembering the encouragement I received from the victims in Fukushima, I plan to continue to give testimonies of post-disaster Fukushima as a co-witness in scholarly communities. I believe such an act will contribute to the Fukushima people's desire to be understood and remembered.

To become a co-witness to a traumatic event, researchers must be well prepared. As International Traumatic Stress Studies Practice Guidelines suggest, researchers who work with trauma-related topics in their research need self-care and supervision (Newman et al., 2006). In this regard, researchers who conduct their study in post-disaster societies should equip themselves with basic knowledge about the symptoms of trauma, their impact, and how to cope with them. Self-care is a crucial ethical issue in research, because researchers cannot hold a healthy relationship with their participants if they fail to protect themselves from psychological risks (Emerald & Carpenter, 2015; Dickson-Swift et al., 2009; Thompson, 1995). Being vulnerable to one's own emotions as well as those of others at the research site, instead of controlling the research process, is a new form of agency researchers can exercise to decolonize research.

Thus, for the purpose of decolonizing research and encouraging researchers to think more expansively about informed consent, researchers must be provided with knowledge and skills to deal with difficult emotions they could potentially encounter during their work. Although there have been discussions of how education researchers and teachers can deal with their own difficult emotions during the research (Emerald & Carpenter, 2015), the field of education is still behind in terms of introducing the topic of trauma in education research training courses. I recommend that education research courses start including the topic of trauma. In designing a new course, education faculty should collaborate with scholars in other disciplines that deal with this issue in research and practice, such as social work, psychology, and counseling. Learning about trauma benefits education researchers because their potential participants, students, often are dealing with trauma-related issues, such as violence, discrimination, and loss in educational settings (Dutro, 2013; Miyazawa, 2017).

Conclusion

My experience in post-disaster Fukushima taught me that researchers conducting ethnography in post-disaster communities are likely to be susceptible to strong emotions circulating within the community regardless of whether they have cultural or personal affiliation with the community. Being influenced by emotions in the community can be frustrating and may make the research process inefficient at times. However, I contend that it is an indispensable part

of research. My vulnerability provided me significant insights into the community as well as my insider and outsider positions. Being vulnerable to various emotions and being able to shift between insider and outsider positions with those emotions is a new form of agency, one that doesn't require researchers to have a subjective will to change their relationship with their participants but instead allows them to be affected by others during their research. According to this new notion of agency, researchers should be open to those emotions and examine them closely instead of ignoring or fighting them. I found that by accepting and examining the skepticism projected on me by community members, I became aware of the invasive and exploitive nature of my research. Doing so also led me to reaffirm the importance of taking time to develop trust with participants, instead of mechanically following the IRB procedure, asking them to sign the consent form, and starting data collection. Also crucial is sharing data and being involved over the long term as communities and individuals go through the process of recovery.

This new agency also suggests that researchers doing research in a post-disaster community take the risk of getting close to the trauma community. This requires caution and training, since being drawn into the trauma community can make them co-witnesses to the disaster, allowing them to then relate those testimonies as they engage in dialogue about the traumatic event. The new agency and the relationship with community members in a post-disaster society show that neither the researchers nor the participants are fully in control of the research process or of those involved in it. Instead, both are susceptible to feelings generated around various individual and collective memories. Being vulnerable to emotions in research means giving up the control researchers have traditionally had in research, and this may also mean giving up their privileges as researchers. Furthermore, moving with emotions while recognizing the agency of participants can contribute to decolonizing research. Doing so is confusing, even frightening at times. Yet it is a journey that researchers who are committed to the decolonization of research must take, whether at home or away.

Notes

1. My first visit was in June 2013, and I stayed in the coastal region of Fukushima for two weeks. My second visit was in 2014, and I stayed for three weeks. The third visit was the longest one; I stayed at Fukushima University in Fukushima City from September 2015 to February 2016.
2. A *han* was a political and economic unit of governance that preceded modern Meiji government, which began in 1868.
3. *Hibakusha* is a common term used to refer to people who have been exposed to nuclear radiation. The term was originally used to refer to atomic bomb survivors in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Today it encompasses victims of nuclear accidents like Three Mile Island and Chernobyl, victims of nuclear bomb testing, and nuclear power plant workers.

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