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# The Body, TV Talk, and Emotion: Methodological Reflections

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Drawing on the author's fieldwork on women, television, and everyday life in South Korea, this article discusses three key issues in the research process to add insights into Western media studies on how women interact with popular culture. Central to the discussion is, first, a normative ideal of the female body as a condition for being there in the field; second, women's TV talk as a form of reflexivity; and third, outpouring emotions as an effect of the research interview. The article suggests that methodological reflections on the body, TV talk, and emotion could combine to yield a better understanding of the process by which we come to theorize the relationship between women, television, and everyday life.

*Keywords:* methodology; the body; TV talk; emotion; women; television

Early media studies in the 1970s on women's magazines (Winship, 1978), advertising (Williamson, 1978), and film (Mulvey, 1975) were primarily text-based analyses and were criticized for the absence of empirical investigation of audiences. From the early 1980s a general shift away from a focus on the study of the text was registered by the emergence of television audience studies within film and (British) cultural studies tradition. Starting with the conceptual analyses of women-oriented narrative and pleasure in soap opera watching (Modleski, 1979) and the interdiscursive characters of audience interpretation (Brunsdon, 1981), Western media studies have sought to empirically investigate questions of how women interact with popular culture. Hobson's (1982) research reveals that women incorporate pleasure of soap opera watching into their household activities by creating a space to follow the soap narrative. Radway's (1984) study finds the meaning of women's romance reading as a declaration of independence to claim a time and space away from their roles as family caregivers and pursue their self-interest in "caring for themselves." Ang's (1985) work *Watching Dallas* highlights the pleasure of popular culture in emotional realism, women's subjective experience of the world, and tragic structure of feeling. Women, in Morley's (1986) study of working-class families, complain that they seldom have control over the television set to view their favorite programs, dramas, or "nice weepies," when men are in the house. These studies

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laid the groundwork for an increased interest in a more sociological dimension, such as Gray's (1992) study of women watching programs recorded on VCR together in relation to domestic gender-power issues, research on how working-class women interpret television (Seiter, Borchers, Kreuzner, & Warth, 1989), and the cultural meaning of television reception among women of different class and generation (Press, 1991), to mention only a few key works.

However, many of the classic and often-cited early studies (such as Ang, 1985; Hobson, 1982; Radway, 1984; Morley, 1986) rarely address methodological issues in detail. It seems important, however, to shed as much light as possible on how a researcher comprehends how understanding is produced in a research process, in other words, "how what we take to be knowledge comes to be produced" (Skeggs, 1995, p. 1), for the researcher is constitutive of the so-called relational field under study (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 228) and is bound up with effects (Probyn, 1993, p. 71). More recent work in media and cultural studies and growing media research in anthropology has engaged with a reflexive examination of the relational field. For example, several White women researchers, who addressed the problem of gaining access to the close-knit communities of Asian and Black women, were met with suspicion and uneasiness (Hermes, 1995, pp. 189-191), the feeling of being "unqualified" to establish the appropriate subject-to-subject relationship with them (Gray, 1992, pp. 31-32), and how the field of inquiry to which one seeks to access is already constituted in certain ways through the categories (e.g., Asian culture, White woman) that structure the thinking of the researcher and of her participants (Gillespie, 1995, p. 68). Thus, crucial to this kind of research is "shared knowledges" (Gray, 1995, p. 161), which are part of a cultural reservoir on which the researcher and her respondents can draw. Talk about television can provide a "shared topical resource" (Gillespie, 1995, p. 56), of child rearing, of marriage in which women's conversations are so often saturated (Seiter, 1995, p. 149). Not through the researcher's own design, women's talk about television can reveal stories about their family histories (Gray, 1992, p. 33), or critique their own lives through their "affective interaction" (e.g., rage) with hegemonic television discourses (Mankekar, 1993). Often sympathizing with dominated subaltern groups (e.g., women), usually engaged and rarely neutral, some address the social positioning of the researcher in complex relations to the participants of study (Ginsburg, Abu-Lughod, & Larkin, 2002, pp. 21-23), and the ambivalence and negotiation of the position from which the researcher and/or author writes (Brunsdon, 1997a, p. 119), governed by a "will to tell a truth" (Walkerdine, 1990, p. 201), whose standpoint will necessarily have to present itself as "partial" (Ang & Hermes, 1991, p. 324). In short, methodological accounts can reveal much about how a researcher comes to assert a knowledge claim, a partial truth, a theory, with a degree of self-consciousness. What is the process by which we come to theorize? (Skeggs, 1995, p. 1). And what are the consequences?

In this article, it is my intention to seriously engage with such methodological issues. Drawing on my fieldwork on women, television, and everyday life in South Korea, this article discusses three key issues in the research process to add insights into the existing media studies on how women interact with popular culture. Central to the discussion is, first, a normative ideal of the female body as a condition for being there in the field; second, women's TV talk as a form of reflexivity; and third, outpouring emotions as an effect of the research interview. The article suggests that methodological reflections on the body, TV talk, and emotion could combine to yield a better understanding of the process by which we come to theorize the relationship between women, television, and everyday life. "We all write and speak from a particular place and time, from a history and a culture which is specific. What we say is always 'in context', *positioned*" (Hall, 1990, p. 222). To discuss three particular methodological issues, I introduce the context of my research.

What kinds of strategies would actually allow the researcher's "being there" (Geertz, 1988, p. 16), to not merely convince readers that the researcher herself has truly been there in contact with others but to enable her to see what she saw, feel what she felt, and conclude what she concluded? To understand how television intersects with the everyday lives of Korean women of different generations and classes, I designed a fieldwork in 1999 and 2000 to include a varied sample of women in their 50s, 30s, and 20s, of working-class and of middle-class positions: therefore, six different socioeconomic categories with a total of 42 women. The label *working class* is so problematic for working-class women, as they rarely speak of class and do not want to be defined as working class (Skeggs, 1995, p. 201). To identify women's class without asking directly about their occupation, income, and educational level, hence, without provoking any discomforts and humiliations, I instead solicited the expertise of real estate agencies and located two contrasting apartment complexes for the research end in the North River area of Seoul. Their information revealed the property size, price, geographical location, and cultural environment as well as indicated the residents' occupation, income, and general level of education. On the notice board of each apartment complex, an advertisement was placed highlighting the forms of exchange to negotiate access to the field: a session of free English lessons to women in their 20s and the children of women in their 50s, and a period of free babysitting to women in their 30s. While placing the advertisement I encountered several women asking if I could teach their children English, which indicated Korean mothers' keen enthusiasm in education. However, the idea of babysitting was an unforeseen problem. Later, the women in their 30s in this research, all of whom politely refused the free offer of babysitting, informed me that most Korean mothers would not feel secure about leaving their children with other people except for family members. These women have chosen to quit their work and stay home for child care, as one mother specifically describes her concern:

My daughter often cried and didn't go to others. What if that affects her personality? I was worried. Even now (at age 3), my daughter shows her "dislikes" about my going out. If I take out my clothes from the wardrobe, she treads on my clothes. If I say, "Don't do that. Mom will wear this today," she brings my (housewifery) blue jeans instead. She is afraid that I may go out. (Hee-sun, 30, working class, housewife)

Throughout the interviews with these Korean women (whose names have been protected through the use of pseudonyms), especially full-time housewives and mothers, I consciously adopted one important strategic position—of being a “nonjudgmental active listener”—which means showing “respect” for their choice of life, their different views, and thoughts on women’s life. This conscious positioning was intended to deemphasize my status as a highly educated researcher and to display a kind of “professional naivety” (Hobson, quoted in Brunson, 2000, p. 124)—in fact, a professional strategy “to make them feel I don’t know,” thereby keeping them feeling more relaxed, interested, and in control of their speaking before the appreciative listener. By adopting this particular positioning it was possible to build a felt degree of trust in the research process. This trust was built on the “nonviolent communication” (Bourdieu, 1999, pp. 608-609), on conscious effort to reduce, as much as possible, the symbolic violence that could possibly be exerted through the asymmetric research relationship. It became apparent that the establishment of this kind of trust based on nonjudgmental, nonviolent communication was crucial for these women in permitting the highly educated researcher to enter repeatedly the privacy of their homes, and in receiving her not merely as an intrusive investigator but more as a welcome guest, or a friend with whom they could willingly discuss and share female concerns.

### **A Normative Ideal of the Body: Who Could Be There?**

Why did they welcome me into their world? What kind of person was I perceived to be by them? What does this imply? In questioning my own position in relation to these Korean women, I reflect on how they perceived and invested interests in myself, not so much as a social researcher but personally, as a woman. “Whether or not people have knowledge of social research, they are often more concerned with what kind of person the researcher is than with the research itself” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983, p. 78). The questions of how researchers manage to form relationships when they arrive in the field and to what extent close relationships can be constructed must depend on “who they are” (Bell, 1993), and this has profound effects on the encounter with the participants of study. Given that all the encounters in my fieldwork were female to female with women of different ages and classes, it is necessary to highlight the points of commonalty and difference that decisively mediated exchange between the researcher and the researched.

When an individual enters the presence of others, they commonly seek to acquire information about him or to bring into *play* [italics added] information about him already possessed. . . . Information about the individual helps to define the situation, enabling others to know in advance what he will expect of them and what they may *expect* [italics added] of him. (Goffman, 1969, p. 1)

For the young women in their 20s, ages between 20 and 22 years and single, the interview experience with an individual from the outside world seemed interesting and novel, as they characteristically displayed a great desire to explore and travel freely, especially among those of working-class position who have little social experience beyond their immediate locality. With a pronounced desire for moving and an evolving practice of “modern travel”—by a standard definition and through the mediated experience of global television—these young Korean women can be viewed as “both natives and travelers” (Clifford, 1992, p. 97) living in a regional, national, and global nexus and their everyday cultures as “both dwelling and traveling.” As the following accounts demonstrate, this researcher was commonly expected to be an authentic storyteller, who could be interpellated to play out their existing fantasy or imagination about the West. The different types of cultural capital including the attainment of Western education were particularly magnetic features to these young women, thus my different socioeconomic status played as a unique asset to facilitate the research relationship.

Western people look so free (on TV).<sup>1</sup> They may not have to go to school and study hard. Do they go to school and study hard? It looks like a jolly party school. Even high school students wear make-up, go out with boyfriends, and drive cars. There seems to be no control from parents. [Pointing to the researcher] You have lived there, are they really like that? Are they really so free, as seen on TV? (Soomi, 20, working class, waitress)

In Western society, even strangers have a sexual relationship on their first encounter (on TV). Even though they don't know each other well, after having sex, they call it love. “I love you.” No matter how great that sex is, it doesn't look like love to me, that's just sex. I am curious, what is love to them? (Sung-won, 22, middle class, university student)

On the other hand, the women in their 30s, ages between 30 and 32 years and full-time housewives, were not particularly interested in the researcher's different socioeconomic status or cultural capital. Although my experience of higher education in the West (United States and United Kingdom) could generate enough differences to make us dissimilar, these housewives recognized me with a commonality between the positions we occupied as a “married woman.” On knowing I was married, they immediately placed me as one of them—“just like us”—and on explaining their everyday lives, they usually asked what my married life was like and whether it was similar to theirs. They strongly identified the researcher as a married woman of the same age, who could readily understand their everyday lives, as an “insider” with whom they could safely



share intimate experiences. It was primarily the strong identification as a married woman of the same generation on which a free and open dialogue was developed. Often asserting “as you know about Korean husbands,” these women revealed common complaints about their marital partners—for example, coming home late from work, not helping with child care, and “failed roles in making intimate relationships” (Cho, 2000).

We don't have time to watch TV together as my husband usually comes home late, sometimes past midnight. As it is so common for Korean men to come home late, I cannot blame my husband alone. (Nae-yoon, 31, middle class)

My husband always stresses to me that the child never grows by herself, so mom must invest all her time and effort. He says, I should feed the child's body as well as her mind. (Ha-jung, 30, working class)

Married women of our age don't care about men's appearances any more. In our single days, we fell for men who were smashing good-looking, well-dressed, splendid money-spenders. But all married women would like most is a caring, home-oriented husband. (Mi-ra, 32, middle class)

A crucial point here is that the Korean women's identification as a “married” woman was strikingly stronger than commonly assumed. The idea of marriage is normative, powerfully working for Korean women. A married body is a regulatory ideal, or a “normative ideal” (Butler, 1994, p. 1), which means that marriage not only functions as a norm but also is part of a regulatory practice. To be socially proper and normal, Korean women conform to the “unspoken normative requirements” (Butler, 1991, p. 6) of society. This unspoken normativity surrounding the idea of marriage and family has been recognized in Korean scholarship. Because the family is the basic social unit in Korea, a woman has been given social status by her family; however, the woman as an individual or as a member of society often does not possess self-identity beyond the family existence (Yoon, 1986). Family relationships take precedence over all other social relationships (B. Kim, 1994). The following quote from another piece of research on the lives of Korean women indicates the regulatory working of marriage and its consequence, that is, a subtle division between married and unmarried women in everyday discursive practices, including “talking.”

One of the most crucial social pressures is toward marriage in Korea . . . women feel tremendous pressure to get married directly and indirectly, and at the same time, many women are afraid of being left out as a single person. . . . Gradually, these women are forced to accept marriage as a proper and safe place. . . . *Unmarried women have difficulties in associating and conversing with married women whose lives are centered around husbands and children* [italics added]. (E. Kim, 1995, p. 54)

Precisely because of the assumed sameness based on the status of marriage, I did not have difficulties in associating and conversing with these married

women whose lives were centered around their husbands and children. By the same logic, my identity as a married woman—the unspoken normative ideal—further provided an entrée into the welcome experience with the older generation of women in their 50s, wives, and mothers. Yet this context enacted power relations that were complex and often ambivalent. Although these women in their 50s were considerably older than I, hence, by a culturally specific form of authority determined by “age/seniority” could easily exercise power and control, they did not treat the researcher as a young woman next door. Higher education, as a hallmark of respect and recognition in Korean society (Rowe & Kim, 1997), was visibly valued by this generation of women, of middle class and of working class. However, simultaneously, they seemed to take the researcher as a relatively inexperienced young woman who could thus be given a lengthy sermon on the proper female identity predicated on the family and motherhood. These older women forcefully sought to place the researcher within their experience by imposing their definition of femininity:

Even a woman president must take care of her home and family first! Woman's work is important, but the home must be always the top priority no matter what! (Won-ja, 52, middle class)

Without the family, what's the meaning of my life? Even though I have sacrificed my whole life for the family, if my family is well and happy my sacrifice is worth it. (Bong-wha, 52, middle class)

If a woman cares about her work and ignores home, she must not know the true meaning of life. (Kyung-ja, 50, working class)

Korean women should behave according to the Korean custom! Korean women should belong to the Korean home! (Min-sook, 51, working class)

Here, the cases of married women in their 30s and 50s raise one important question as to the discursive possibility of the researcher for being there. Who could be there? To put it in another way: “Which bodies come to matter—and why?” (Butler, 1994, p. xii), “Whose self is more important?” (Probyn, 1993, p. 67). Almost the most significant aspect of being a woman in Korea has to do with marital status, therefore, a lesbian, single, or divorced woman performing against this code tends to be socially categorized and excluded as a “nonwoman” (E. Kim, 1998), and such exclusionary practices based on the status of one's body are the norm. The fact that one “could be there” is a necessary condition for “being there” (Probyn, 1993, p. 71), and it must be recognized that research for getting and staying “there” requires a certain type of body. I argue that this kind of “person-specific” ethnographic research on the category of lived experience, or an intimate dialogue with ordinary women in Korea, is predicated on the taken-for-granted normativity around the culturally constituted desirable body (“married”) and its operative assumptions about sameness (“just like us”). The working of the heterosexual cultural imperative, the normative ideal of the married body and its presumed unity, is an unwitting regulation that governs



and allows for the possibility of research. It can be, therefore, asserted that the extent of research on the lived experience is contingent on “specific dynamics of research relationship” (Clifford, 1992, p. 97), which are spatially bound and operating by rules and possibilities within a set of local codes and social conventions—more specifically in this Korean case, within a normative set of female bodily definitions and experiences produced through the matrix of heterosexuality and marriage and its regulatory practices. Who could be there? The researcher’s body, the normative ideal, plays a crucial role in the research process. The body matters in doing research.

### **TV Talk and Reflexivity**

Why would (ordinary) women talk to a strange researcher about their personal lives and experiences? This supposedly would be highly unlikely, unless the participants chosen are friends of the researcher, or the friends’ mothers, sisters, or previous acquaintances, which is often the case in Western social and cultural research on the category of experience (e.g., Bourdieu, 1999; Hermes, 1995; McCrindle & Rowbotham, 1977; Skeggs, 1997). However, by virtue of the unknown researcher’s presence with the subject of television, these Korean women voluntarily opened a discussion on their personal lives. The unstructured, open-ended interviews on the subject of television generated a corpus of data, some of which were not directly related to television itself but to the women’s own lives (also see Gray, 1992). My attempt to return to, and focus more on, the discussion of television was almost in vain. Although the women were not asked to describe their intimate life history, such kind of narrative was readily disclosed and shared in the context of interviewing. This pronounced openness, readiness, and willingness were of peculiar interest to me. What motivates the women to talk to a strange researcher about their personal lives at such length? In exploring this question, I want to draw attention to, and give special credit to, the unique nature of television, its inseparability from women’s everyday life: Television is deeply embedded and interwoven into everyday life (Silverstone, 1994). I discuss women’s TV talk as a form of reflexivity and, therefore, highlight its unique advantages as a method of understanding women’s everyday lives. Given the problem of power and talk in asymmetrical society, my attempt to espouse women’s reflexive TV talk as a useful method can be particularly adept at recognizing the opportunities available in studying otherwise a hidden and muted presence of women.

How does TV talk lead to reflexivity, thereby allowing for such a useful method of understanding women’s everyday lives? First, this can be explained by the “intentionally communicative” (Scannell, 1991, p. 1) nature of television. Television is accessible to all, “it is there to be talked about by all” (Scannell, 1989, p. 155). Television constantly provides topical material for everyday conversation and functions as a shared cultural resource. In my research about Korean women, television drama, in particular, was the most

talked-about program, almost like a ritual social event. As existing audience research strongly supports (Morley, 1988), watching television drama was more or less an exclusively gender-specific activity. “Watching television drama is a woman’s privilege!” was commonly asserted by the Korean women interviewed. One of the key pleasures that women find in television drama is the “validation of their own kind of talk” (Brown, 1994, p. 22). This validation works neatly because television drama tends to use the same forms of talk that women use among themselves in everyday language, and also because its discourse provides common knowledge of the characteristically female patterns of social interaction and interest—the personal, intimate, emotional, and familial relationships (Brunsdon, 1997b).

Thus, this kind of research interview on a common knowledge of television was received by the Korean women as a welcome experience, in contrast to their lack of opportunities to express their own views and opinions in an unobtrusive way in other social circumstances. There was a significant manifestation of interest in the way in which they recalled the details of episodes and dialogues of their favorite programs and further related those details to their own life circumstances and experiences. It usually happened that women’s talk about the ritualized viewing of their favorite programs surprisingly digressed toward a reflexive articulation of their intimate personal lives—for example, their life conditions, formerly private complaints and discontents—surprisingly reaching “knowledge not prefigured in one’s starting paradigm” (Willis, 1980, p. 90). Precisely, I argue that reflexivity is an integral process of TV talk, and here lies the potentiality of TV talk as a method to be considered for an understanding of women’s everyday lives. To illuminate this point, I provide a lengthy extract, a surprising digression of TV talk (by Min-sook, 51-year-old working-class housewife):

I enjoy watching *Rose and Beansprout* [family drama],<sup>2</sup> particularly the character of the mother. Like her, I also lived oppressed under the order of my husband. I feel, ‘she’s just like me!’ I see myself in her. (Min-sook’s TV talk digresses toward a story about her husband)

Oh! He is so dominating with us. Let’s say, once he persisted “this is a beansprout” we had to believe this was a beansprout. Even though my son, daughter, and I knew that this was not a beansprout, we had to obey him by saying, “Yes, this is a beansprout” . . . He hardly talks with us. Man and wife should discuss things with each other, right? I am never involved in that. He makes all the decisions, all the rules. We have never had something called family time. We don’t watch TV together. He has never watched dramas with us. So, what’s the fun in life together?

Drama makes me think about lots of things. While watching that drama I thought, “Too smart a daughter-in-law is a definite NO!” A too smart woman tends to be rude. I tell my son, “You should not take that kind of wife, I wouldn’t approve of that type.” (Min-sook’s TV talk digresses toward a story about her son)

When my husband was out of work, I felt like the sky was collapsing on me. It was so helpless that I even thought about killing myself. If I died quick I wouldn’t

have to go through this hardship any more. . . . I couldn't die because of my son. My son would have to live forever with the memory, "My mom killed herself." I will live for my son. . . . Even at this age I sometimes feel sentimental to see the sunset and realize I am still alive. When feeling low, I have a drink with my son. He is now old enough to drink with me. My good son consoles my feelings. (Min-sook, 51, working class, housewife)

Arguably, reflexivity is a key practice that occurs at the moment of researching, registering as an integral process of TV talk on which the research interview proceeds to a partial articulation of self. In other words, women's reflection upon their self and world is the major element of TV talk that, as a dramatic indicator, arrives at a partial illustration about the structure and substance of everyday life. TV talk in this context opens up a possibility of gaining an understanding of women's everyday lives. It seems possible to say things in TV talk that would be otherwise difficult or embarrassing (Gillespie, 1995, p. 23). The banality of the most ritualized talk often takes place over the most serious occasions of daily life as the only way of "saying the unsayable" (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 384). This surprising digression toward saying the unsayable took place when there was a strong point of identification with characters and their situations, tensions, and moral dilemmas. This identification process took the reflexive form of "storytelling" (Hobson, 1989, p. 150): Women comment on the stories, relate the incidents, and move from drama to discussing their own lives and experiences, while expressing their own feelings, desires, and thoughts. The banality of the most ritualized talk about television can surprisingly trigger and stimulate thinking: "A-ha!" was frequently expressed by the Korean women interviewed. A-ha! moments are manifested in the reflexive process of TV talk.

Once *The Success Times* [documentary drama] showed a very successful woman doctor. . . . While TV was showing around her house, I got curious about her family, "What kind of husband does she live with? How many children does she have?" But her family didn't show up! She said, "I didn't have time to marry." A-ha! That makes sense to me. Women can choose either a nice job or a nice home. We cannot have both. (Bong-wha, 52, middle class, housewife)

I don't see the image of family inside [American] TV, parents are not seen. That's very strange. Western young people don't seem to have a time with their parents but with friends and lovers. . . . Without a parental control, young people can be promiscuous. A-ha! Maybe that's why there are many teenage mothers, sex scandals, drugs, violence. . . . Are they really like that? (Na-ri, 22, working class, sales clerk)

This man and wife quarrel like cat-and-dog all the time (in a family drama). They throw dishes and high-heel shoes. But when they face a really tough hardship they come to support each other. When they are about to divorce, they suddenly miss each other. When the wife gets into trouble at work, her husband tries to help her. While watching this drama, I thought, "A-ha! This is man and wife! An inseparable tie. . . . A-ha! That's why man and wife live together for long, even though we quarrel all the time." (Ha-jung, 30, working class, housewife)

What I call “A-ha! emotion” here is an explicit point of meeting of the sociopsychological needs of the women trying to make sense of their own lives. A-ha! is an emotional resolution and closure in the experience of the particularly relevant forms of television culture. Through the reflexive engagement with television, the women can find the means to understand their own lives, and A-ha! emotion provides “a magical reaffirmation of the sense of rational order” (Crossley, 1998, p. 32) over the meanings of the family and relational human conditions. It appeared to be a delightful experience for them to come up with a fitting interpretation on the moment of TV viewing and in the process of TV talk.

### Emotion as an Effect

Here I am just talking about TV, but I come to know more about myself! Is this a psychotherapy session? (Joo-hyun, 22, middle class, university student)

The unstructured, open-ended interview between two women on the subject of television, conducted in a relaxed home environment, often came close to a normal conversation between friends, or even surprisingly, to a therapy situation—“a psychotherapy session,” as one young woman stated while discovering a fitting interpretation, A-ha! The interview’s effect unwittingly produced in this felicitous context was the outpouring of emotions in these Korean women. By virtue of the researcher’s presence with the subject of television, the interview at times gave the women a dramatic intensity and an extraordinary emotional force that had the effect of a revelation. By and large, the research interview was an emotionally charged experience for the women participants. I, therefore, draw attention to this emotional dimension of the research practice and recognize the significance of emotion as a source of insight in the construction of knowledge.

How is the outpouring of emotions possible in the context of talking about television, drama in particular? This is not to suggest that television drama can be a therapy genre; however, that there is a certain therapeutic quality in the self-reflexive way in which these Korean women talk about characters and circumstances in drama with particular relevance to the conditions of their own lives and experiences. Especially, when painful emotional issues were identified through television drama and rearticulated in the interviewing setting, it closely resembled a therapy situation. Commonly, the interviews with the Korean women across different age and class elicited many affective responses—discontent and anger, resentment and frustration, pain and pleasure, uncertainty and ambivalence, envy and longing. To give a feel for how these women emotionally relate television to their everyday lives, I present some responses of the older working-class women in their 50s.

Husbands of our age are all similar. They are blunt, no fun. We have never had a family time together, never watched TV together. . . . I could have divorced a hundred times, but endured for my children. (Soon-hee, 52, working class)

Whenever I watch a sweet family on TV, I really envy that. Some people may try to be like that sweet family. But you just can't be a sweet family when you have lived this way for so long. (Soon-young, 51, working class)

Young women (on TV) get enough love from their husbands. They freely express affections for each other. They can hear from their husbands everyday, "I am sorry," "thank you," "I like you," "I love you." We never ever heard that kind of expression from our husbands in our entire lives! I have never heard that from my husband! (Na-ju, 50, working class)

It was only my son who brought flowers to me. (Jung-wha, 50, working class, quoting from a popular drama)

The interviewing situation was taken as an exceptional opportunity to explain themselves and their painful feelings in available language codes. There was an extraordinary expressive intensity and a deep emotional energy in what women do not always say. The women's outpouring of emotions is a fragmented, partial, expressive mark of self. The open-ended interview, with a silent pause at times for thinking and reflecting, enabled the women to articulate their affective subjectivity, needs, desires, and wishes. They took advantage of this condition, or the prompting afforded by TV talk, to vent feelings kept unsaid or repressed. The women's outpouring of emotions, in this sense, might be painful and gratifying, simultaneously.

The women's outpouring of emotions is an indicator that the women have some dissatisfaction in their own marriages. Here it is worth acknowledging the contradictions in what the women say in relation to the researcher as a "married woman" and the emotional outpourings triggered by reflections on television drama. The research process with television as a subject, as in TV talk, allows the women to make psychological connections to the researcher and to talk openly about their lives and domestic and marital problems. This emotional expression, which is kept unsaid or repressed in a relatively restrictive culture, is seen to be contradictory to the cultural salience of marriage in Korea and the women's strong identification as a married woman. The research interview on the subject of television has the ability to create a special place where these emotions could be voiced. Marriage and family are the central concerns of Korean women, and television is a particular kind of companion in the home for these women whose husbands are not home or emotionally unavailable. Television, as a medium, functions in a particular way in these women's lives that facilitates a therapeutic response, emotional connection and language.

At these emotionally charged moments, the Korean women "enthusiastically" engaged in a process of self-discovery. By *enthusiastically* I mean that far from being simple instruments in the hands of the researcher, the women respondents took over the interview themselves and gave the impression of

finding a sort of accomplishment in a self-analysis, an emotional gratification, “a joy in expression” (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 615). With the unique opportunity afforded by the interview on the subject of television, with an extraordinarily expressive intensity at times, they carried out a self-reflexive examination of their lives. I argue that this type of research can be considered as a “self-discovery exercise” that can prompt and sensitize the women interviewees to reflect on the way in which the ordinary circumstances of life are seen, felt, known, and understood. The role of social research, in this light, can be seen as a complex emotional intervention in the articulation of the everyday needs, desires, and feelings discovered through this very articulation. Here are examples among younger groups of women in their 30s and 20s.

Just like most mothers-in-law, my mother-in-law only cares about her son. Her son is the king of the world! I am a devoted servant. . . . She calls me sometimes during the day to spy on whether I am feeding her son well, whether I am taking good care of his health, whether I am keeping the house tidy. . . . I am taken as a servant. (Young-joo, 31, working class, housewife)

Men in this drama are nice to women, don't look down on women. . . . I am angry at the male-female relationship. Men around me regard women as trivial, “Women are nothing.” Sitting together at night, if I mention my future plan to my parents, my brother pokes in, “Cut it all out! Get married!” (Eun-soo, 22, middle class, university student)

Of course, I am not satisfied with my husband. He comes home late, doesn't help with anything in the house. I cannot follow him around the house, like a little puppy, “Please pay attention to me!” . . . While watching romance drama, I search for an ideal man, like the man in *All About Eve*. He's so caring. . . . Every night after watching the drama, I dream of him in sleep. (Sung-mi, 32, middle class, housewife)

“Am I having a happy life?” “What can I do?” I can't help thinking. (Hae-ji, 30, middle class, housewife)

“Am I having a happy life?” “Who am I?” “What do I want?” The women's “private reflexivity” (Beck, 1992, p. 7) to keep in touch with the grounds of everyday life (Giddens, 1991, p. 36) concerns precisely the self and its emotional state. This profound effect, the emotional self-disclosure, was produced by supportive intimacy and caring, on which the essential part of the felicitous condition for the interview was formed. My welcoming disposition to the supportive intimacy and caring involvement with the women respondents is not necessarily evidence of bias that needs to be eliminated in the research process. I rather argue that this welcoming disposition to the supportive intimacy and caring involvement, which leads one to make the respondent's problems one's own, the capacity to take and understand that person in her distinctive condition, is a manner of “intellectual love” (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 614). The relation to each individual woman of my research can be described as “a relation of affection, empathy, and the highest form of love: love that allows for intimacy



without the annihilation of difference” (Jaggar, 1992, p. 162). Such intellectual love is the essential precondition for comprehension and knowledge. I assert that to omit the personal and emotional is to omit the central intellectual and practical experience of research. It is important to recognize the personal and emotional character of research, and to reach the hidden experiences of emotions without giving into sensationalism. Often, doing research can be ambivalent, caught between two anxieties: “one a scientific worry about being insufficiently detached, the other a humanistic worry about being insufficiently engaged” (Geertz, 1988, p. 15). However, the involvement of the researcher is needed to take and understand the women under study in their distinctive conditions, and to become part of the relational field, “so that we continually do *feel* with the women we are studying” (McRobbie, 1991, p. 127).

However, the involvement of the researcher is not morally unambiguous, especially given the emotional intensity of the research experience. To approach and use women as informants in the pursuit of one’s research goals raises ethical questions. I deeply felt indebted to these women for their participation and willingness to expose, and this consciously obliged me to find a way to deal with moral conflict on my return to the academic base in the United Kingdom. Some 4 years after the completion of the research I am still in interaction with five women in their 20s and 30s through e-mail but have a measure of distance, geographically, emotionally, and emphatically. What is it to act morally here? It is very difficult to sustain the same level of emotional connectivity and empathy for the women whose emotions I tried to share in the face-to-face research context. Could I “really” share? However hard I tried to understand the experiences of these women and share their emotions, it sometimes induced an unsatisfying, defective feeling inside me with a realization that perhaps “the only way to share emotions is to share experiences” (Woolf, 1977, p. xxx). Despite this experiential limit on the researcher’s part, participating in the research was said to be a “good experience” by these women. It seems important to note that, unlike Euro-American societies where women might draw on expert psychological knowledges in their understandings of the self, such models and sources are not widely available and used in Korea. This kind of research thus engages the Korean women to have a tool for the learning of the self and for the speaking of emotions.

The women’s outpouring of emotions in the current research indicates that women experience and speak of self *as feeling*. It may be the case that Korean women operate with such emotional categories of experience, conveying internal states of feeling; however, they take them seriously “in a way that Europeans do not,” and their notion of personhood and emotional structure is “quite different from the European autonomous ego” (Marcus & Fischer, 1986, p. 47). I thus appeal to acknowledge the importance of the women’s emotionally charged experience, in the relative absence of the language of emotion. We don’t have the language to begin to talk about the emotionally charged

moments in which women *feel* their lives with clarity, only to defy description, to be beyond scientific discourse (Bell, 1993, p. 29). There is no doubt that emotion plays a key role in doing research, and methodology that is going to think with and engage with emotion is inevitably open ended and provisional. This productive uncertainty poses a question: What is the status of emotional knowledge? Emotion has been associated with subordinate groups and considered as irrational, private, potentially subversive of knowledge (Jaggar, 1992, pp. 145-157). My attention to emotional knowledge is an epistemological strategy “for seeing from the standpoints of the subjugated in order to see well” (Haraway, 1991, p. 192), although the standpoints of the subjugated are not innocent positions, nonetheless the subjugated standpoints expressed often through their emotions should be importantly acknowledged. Emotion, as a mark of self, can stimulate new insights and conceptualize differently how the world is seen, felt, known, and understood by women. My argument, therefore, is to think with and engage with emotion in the research process, and to strategically deal with the fact of emotion for theoretical and intellectual purposes.

### ***How Do We Feel?***

How do we feel about what we claim to be “being there”? In this article, I sought to provide methodological reflections in an attempt to trigger a range of issues arising from the research process that need to be fully addressed in media audience studies. Korean women in this research, regardless of their age and class position, engage in a process of self-analysis in everyday contact with television, and their ongoing self-discovery exercise is enthusiastically carried out in the unique opportunity afforded by the research interview. The specific dynamics of the research relationship—the normative ideal of the female body, the reflexive capacity of TV talk, and the unleashing of emotions—all combine to create the conditions for an extraordinary discourse “which might never have been spoken, but which was already there, merely awaiting the conditions for its actualization” (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 614). Such discourse is a product of discursive practice of research, which is crucially mediated by the researcher’s bodily presentation of self, TV talk, and emotion. The focus of media audience analysis should include a reflexive examination of the research process, to answer for how we come to produce a situated knowledge in a particular research moment.

### **Notes**

1. The most watched TV program genres are, according to 1-to-5 scale research, news (4.1) and Korean drama (3.7), followed by Western movies (3.4)—mostly Ameri-

can movies (61.2%), which are particularly enjoyed by young women in their early 20s and teens (Korean Broadcast Institute, 1999). Besides movies, American popular dramas such as *Dawson's Creek*, *Friends*, and *Ally McBeal* were often referred by young women in my research.

2. The most popular and dominant type of Korean drama is "family (*ga-jok*) drama" or "home (*ga-jeong*) drama," such as *Rose and Beansprout*. Family drama was first introduced in the 1960s in the context of public enlightenment, and in 1976 the Korean government intervened in the drama content and scheduling by specifically requiring that normative "family drama" should be aired for the entire family viewing in the prime time of 8:00 p.m. (Choe & Yu, 1999). The nationwide popularity of the prime time family drama has been phenomenal as its consistently high ratings (40% to 50%) testify.

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