

Maki Kawase - MQRC Session 2A "Highlighting Otherness": April 20, 2006

Crafting Selves in Multiple Worlds: A Hermeneutic Phenomenological Study on Being "Froeing(er)"

Research Question

What is young people's experience of being "foreign" in their everyday life?

Methodology

- ✓ Hermeneutic phenomenological study
- ✓ To describe and understand the lived-experience and meanings of being "foreign" for four young women in a Midwestern U.S. metropolitan area

Methods and sources for collecting stories

- ✓ "Hanging out" (observation), interviews, written notes, and the collection of objects such as films and novels
- ✓ Participants: Four women who have been born outside the United States and have had the experience of being "foreign." (ages 18 - 20)

Findings: Themes

Being in everyday life

Noticing, Energy, 'Tone of voice', Scary, To be assumed-to-be, To be marked

Being a student

Learning, (Not) fitting-in - being (in)competent, Becoming independent

Being a youth

Marginalization - left over & - sexuality, Growth, Pathway, Gaze, Young people taking on different roles, Approach - connecting with familiar members, Approach - hanging around with friends

Being self

In the middle, Lost, Home and my own space, Blend in

What I learned

- "Foreigner" in everyday world is not simply a person from a foreign land.
- "Foreigner" is living experiences and reflections of the four women as they go about living in their multiple worlds, taking on social roles in each and living in each in ways sometimes "old world," at times new world.
- "Foreignness" is shown as spatial, socially, culturally, economically, politically and personally.
- "Foreignness" is intersubjective, meaningful, interactive, contextual, and situational.
- A foreigner can be creative, persistent, talented, energetic, and humorous, and all with that she can become a part of the new world.
- The theoretical, abstraction notions of "foreign(er)" show themselves in concrete realities (i.e., in the four women's stories and experiences).
- Two approaches to understanding "foreigner" as "nonmember" and as "stranger" are equally important.

Contribution

- Reflections for Theory and Concepts
- ✓ Theory and Concepts
- 1) Understanding Marginality
- Marginality is originally studied by Park (1928): traditional, clear-cut way of understanding marginal person.
 - e.g. marginality - dichotomy of old and new worlds.
 - e.g. marginal person moving out the old world and moving into the new world
 - e.g. marginal person as "undesirable" abandoning his old memberships, values, social norms, knowledge
 - His work should be modified to capture the realities of marginality and its deeper meanings.
 - How?
 - a) Understanding the lived-reality of the role
 - b) Marginality is a choice: crafted and experienced by the marginal person.
 - c) The person's take on her marginality and what this means to her.
 - e.g. Four women's stories: more than two worlds.
 - e.g. Not simple to "abandon" their old memberships, value patterns, social norms, and knowledge.
 - e.g. They live both old and new, and they are both old and new.

2) Synthesizing the Notion of "Foreigner"

- The notions "foreigner" in social science are divided into two groups: "foreigner" as "nonmember" (Merton, Park, Smith) and "foreigner" as "stranger" (Schutz, Simmel, Bauman). Taking these two approaches together we can understand more deeply the experience and meaning of being "foreign."
 - e.g. Each approach names some aspects of being "foreign." Together makes a rich picture of being "foreign."

3) Reconsidering the Stage-Based Models

- A leading social science approach: studying the nature of a foreign-born person's being in a community.
- Developing and applying stage-based models: How a person moves from "foreigner" to "member" to "make it."
- Reconsidering this approach: these models give a broad outline for seeing how foreign-born persons become "members" and "make it." But these models do not capture the richness and complexity of the lived-experience of being and becoming foreigner and member. The realities are not straight lines.
 - e.g. Missing in these models is a space for the phrase "it depends." Four women do their lives and their selves respond to situation and relationship.

- Future Research Directions

- 1) Including five themes of being foreign(er): marginality, objectivity, mediator, ambiguity, and deviance.
- 2) Inviting people who already belong to a community to tell how they see and understand nonmembers. The reality of the phenomena is multi-sided, multi-perspective. Getting at the reality more fully.
- 3) Doing a similar study with young women from different countries or cultures who are younger and older. And young men too. How sex/gender and age work helps us understand the conception of the phenomena "foreign(er)."
- 4) Studying different places in the United States and internationally. "Foreign(er)" is culture-bound. Place is reality.

- Methodological Strategies

- Reflections for Practice

- ✓ Using Story

 - Training program

 - Research and evaluation