

Beyond the Detached Observer: Positionality and Knowledge in Feminist Methodology

ไกลกว่าผู้สังเกตการณ์ที่วางตัวเป็นกลาง: จุดยืน
ของผู้วิจัยและความรู้ในระเบียบวิธีวิจัยแบบสตรีนิยม

Taiki Arakawa
ตาอิกิ อารากาวา¹

Ph.D. Student, Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies,
Department of Women's Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences,
Chiang Mai University
นักศึกษาปริญญาเอก หลักสูตรสตรี เพศภาวะและเพศวิถีศึกษา
ภาควิชาสตรีศึกษา คณะสังคมศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยเชียงใหม่

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¹ taiki_arakawa@cmu.ac.th

Abstract

This theoretical article argues that feminist methodology should be understood not only as a critique of the detached observer, but also as a framework for examining how knowledge becomes legitimate, accountable, and limited. Its central contribution is to reread classic texts and debates in feminist methodology as a reorientation from representation to legitimacy, and from detached objectivity to accountable interpretation. Through a theoretical and interpretive reading of *Women Writing Culture*, feminist standpoint theory, Donna Haraway's situated knowledges, and Chris Weedon's poststructuralist feminism, this article shows that feminist methodology does not simply reject objectivity or replace it with women's experience. Instead, it understands feminist knowledge as situated, partial, reflexive, and shaped by unequal power relations. In doing so, this article seeks to contribute to *Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies* by reframing feminist methodology as a practice of accountable interpretation rather than as either a rejection of objectivity or a direct appeal to women's experience.

Keywords: Detached observer, Positionality, Knowledge, Feminist methodology, Situated knowledges, Reflexivity

บทคัดย่อ

บทความเชิงทฤษฎีนี้เสนอว่า วิธีวิทยาศาสตร์นิยมไม่ควรถูกเข้าใจเพียงในฐานะการวิพากษ์ภาพของ “ผู้สังเกตการณ์ที่แยกตัวออกจากสิ่งที่ศึกษา” เท่านั้น หากยังเป็นกรอบคิดสำหรับพิจารณาว่าความรู้ได้รับความชอบธรรม มีความรับผิดชอบ และมีข้อจำกัดอย่างไร บทความนี้มีข้อเสนอหลักคือ การอ่านตัวบทและข้อถกเถียงคลาสสิกในวิธีวิทยาศาสตร์นิยมใหม่ ในฐานะการปรับทิศทางจากประเด็นเรื่องการเป็นตัวแทน ไปสู่คำถามเรื่องความชอบธรรม และจากภาวะวิสัยแบบแยกตัวออกห่าง ไปสู่การตีความที่มีความรับผิดชอบ ผ่านการอ่านเชิงทฤษฎีและการตีความงาน Women Writing Culture ทฤษฎีจุดยืนสตรีนิยม แนวคิดเรื่ององค์ความรู้ที่ตั้งอยู่บนบริบทของ Donna Haraway และสตรีนิยมหลังโครงสร้างนิยมของ Chris Weedon บทความนี้ชี้ให้เห็นว่า วิธีวิทยาศาสตร์นิยมมิได้ปฏิเสธภาวะวิสัยหรือแทนที่ภาวะวิสัยด้วยประสบการณ์ของผู้หญิงอย่างง่าย หากเข้าใจความรู้สตรีนิยมในฐานะความรู้ที่ตั้งอยู่บนบริบท มีลักษณะเป็นบางส่วน มีการใคร่ครวญตนเอง และถูกหล่อหลอมโดยความสัมพันธ์เชิงอำนาจที่ไม่เท่าเทียม ด้วยเหตุนี้ บทความนี้มีมุ่งสนับสนุนสาขาสตรีศึกษา เพศภาวะศึกษา และเพศวิถีศึกษา โดยเสนอให้เข้าใจวิธีวิทยาศาสตร์นิยมในฐานะปฏิบัติการของการตีความที่มีความรับผิดชอบ มากกว่าการปฏิเสธภาวะวิสัยหรือการอ้างอิงประสบการณ์ของผู้หญิงโดยตรง

คำสำคัญ: ผู้สังเกตการณ์ที่แยกตัวออกจากสิ่งที่ศึกษา, ตำแหน่งแห่งที่, วิธีวิทยาศาสตร์นิยม, องค์ความรู้ที่ตั้งอยู่บนบริบท, การใคร่ครวญสะท้อนตนเอง

Introduction

Feminist methodology has long challenged the idea that research can be neutral and objective. In anthropology, conventional ethnography often assumed that researchers could stand outside the field and produce knowledge about others from a distance. Feminist scholars have questioned this assumption by arguing that knowledge is always shaped by positionality, unequal social relations, and the ways experience is interpreted and represented. In this sense, feminist methodology is not only a set of research methods. It is also a way of rethinking how knowledge is produced, who is authorized to speak, and how research can be made more accountable.

One important intervention in this debate is *Women Writing Culture* (Behar & Gordon, 1995). As Behar (1995) explains, this volume responded to earlier critiques of ethnographic writing developed in *Writing Culture* (Clifford & Marcus, 1986), but it also argued that those critiques were incomplete because they did not fully address questions of gender, race, and exclusion. Therefore, *Women Writing Culture* shifts attention from textual form alone to the politics of voice, authority, and exclusion in ethnographic knowledge production (Behar, 1995). This intervention is important because it helps show that ethnographic objectivity is not simply a matter of style, but is deeply connected to power relations within research and writing.

This theoretical article argues that feminist methodology should be understood as a critical practice of situated and accountable knowledge production. Although the critique of the detached observer, standpoint theory, situated knowledges, and poststructuralist subjectivity are well-established debates in feminist theory, they are often discussed as separate concepts. This article rereads these debates as a movement from representation to legitimacy, and from detached objectivity to accountable interpretation. The contribution of this article is to read these debates together as a connected argument about how feminist methodology can help Women's, Gender, and

Sexuality Studies examine how knowledge becomes legitimate. It argues that feminist methodology does not simply reject objectivity or replace it with women's experience. It offers a framework for examining how knowledge claims are produced, made accountable, and limited.

By reading *Women Writing Culture* together with feminist standpoint theory, Donna Haraway's concept of "situated knowledges," and Chris Weedon's poststructuralist understanding of subjectivity, this article brings these works into conversation. Read together, these works show that feminist methodology challenges the fantasy of detached objectivity while still defending the possibility of more responsible interpretation (Haraway, 1988; Weedon, 1987). This article first examines *Women Writing Culture* as a critique of conventional ethnography, then discusses the Self/Other divide and the limits of the detached observer, before turning to standpoint theory, situated knowledges, and poststructuralist feminism. Finally, it considers the implications of these debates for objectivity, reflexivity, research relationships, writing, and feminist knowledge claims.

1. Women Writing Culture as a Critique of Conventional Ethnography

Women Writing Culture was written in response to important debates in anthropology during the 1980s. As Ruth Behar (1995) explains, this book responded to the textual and political critique of ethnography developed in *Writing Culture*, edited by James Clifford and George E. Marcus in 1986. *Writing Culture* challenged the idea that ethnography reflects reality, and argued that ethnographic texts should be examined in relation to literary style and political context (Behar, 1995). This was an important intervention because it questioned the authority of anthropologists to speak for less privileged people without sharing authorship or power (Behar, 1995). In this sense, *Writing Culture* opened an important discussion about representation, writing, and authority in anthropology.

At the same time, *Women Writing Culture* argues that this critique remained incomplete. Behar (1995) connects this feminist intervention to *This Bridge Called My Back*, edited by Cherrie Moraga and Gloria E. Anzaldúa in 1981, which questioned not only who has the authority to represent others but also who has access to knowledge production in the first place (Behar, 1995). This tradition emphasized that race, class, sexuality, and nationality shape women's voices differently, and that feminist work must not assume a single female experience (Behar, 1995). Influenced by this perspective, *Women Writing Culture* includes diverse voices such as women of color, lesbians, immigrants, and scholars with mixed identities, all of whom call for an anthropology that does not exclude certain voices (Behar, 1995).

Therefore, *Women Writing Culture* expands the critique of conventional ethnography. It is concerned not only with textual representation but also with exclusion, hierarchy, and the unequal distribution of voice and authority. The problem with conventional ethnography is not simply that it hides the writer behind an objective style. It is also that academic authority has historically been shaped by gendered and racialized power relations, which determine whose knowledge is recognized as legitimate. This article reads *Women Writing Culture* as an important turning point in feminist methodology because it shifts the question from how others are represented to how authority and legitimacy are produced in ethnographic knowledge. In this sense, feminist methodology begins not only with a critique of representation but also with a critique of the unequal conditions under which some voices are recognized as knowledge while others are excluded.

2. Self and Other: Positionality and the Limits of the Detached Observer

In conventional ethnography, the relationship between researcher and 'researched' subject was often organized through a clear division between Self and Other. A useful starting point for understanding the Self and Other

divide in conventional ethnography is Laurent Dubois's (1995) discussion in *Women Writing Culture*. He argues that anthropology has often been shaped by a gendered and colonial tradition of 'travel,' in which the researcher leaves a secure 'home' to encounter people 'out there.' In this model, travel appears as a round trip. It begins from a place of security, assumes the researcher's right to move, and expects a return home with knowledge to be interpreted and written up (Dubois, 1995). This structure supports the image of the anthropologist as a knowing Self, while those encountered in the field are positioned as Others and turned into objects of knowledge. It also supports the positivist assumption that the researcher can remain neutral, objective, and detached from the field.

Dubois (1995) further suggests that this ethnographic model cannot be separated from colonial histories and male travel traditions. Travel was often imagined as a form of adventure, self-discovery, or intellectual transformation. However, these possibilities depended on unequal relations of race, gender, and mobility. For this reason, the detached observer is not simply a neutral methodological figure. Rather, it is a historically privileged position that hides the conditions that make such observation possible. As Dubois (1995) argues, there is no view from nowhere in travel or ethnography because the researcher always enters the field through already existing relations of power and representation. This critique is important for feminist methodology because it shows that the boundary between Self and Other is built into conventional ethnographic practice from the beginning.

However, *Women Writing Culture* blurs this Self and Other division by showing that women anthropologists do not easily fit the role of the detached observer. As Behar (1995) argues, anthropology has long been shaped by a 'traditional' structure of Self and Other. However, women themselves have often been positioned as the Other within patriarchal systems. In this sense, women anthropologists cannot stand outside the field as neutral observers. Their positionality shapes how they enter the field, how they relate to

participants, and how they produce knowledge.

This challenge can be seen in Janet L. Finn's (1995) discussion of Ella Deloria and Mourning Dove. Both of them were Native American women writers working during a period when U.S. policies aimed to 'civilize' Indigenous people. Their work challenged dominant and simplified representations of Native Americans, and sought to promote cross-cultural understanding through more complex forms of storytelling and representation (Finn, 1995). In this sense, they were not only describing indigenous life for outside readers. They were also writing against colonial forms of knowledge that attempted to erase indigenous histories and reduce Native peoples to fixed objects of study (Finn, 1995).

Finn (1995) shows that both women worked as cultural mediators while also negotiating unequal relationships with white male mentors and editors. Deloria contributed important cultural knowledge to Franz Boas's anthropological work, however, she was treated more as an informant than as a scholar in her own right (Finn, 1995). Mourning Dove faced similar inequalities in her relationship with Lucullus McWhorter, whose editorial influence shaped the publication of her work (Finn, 1995). These relationships reflect wider structures of gender, race, and class within anthropology and publishing. Although both women were positioned as Other within dominant academic frameworks, they also wrote as knowledgeable subjects from within their own communities. Therefore, their works unsettle the simple binary between Self and Other.

A similar challenge to the Self and Other division appears in Lila Abu-Lughod's (1995) essay in *Women Writing Culture*. In this essay, Abu-Lughod reflects on her own pregnancy and compares it with the pregnancies of Bedouin women among the Awlad 'Ali in Egypt, with whom she had lived during fieldwork. During her earlier research, pregnancy had seemed ordinary and did not appear to interrupt women's daily lives. However, she later recognized that many older women had experienced miscarriages or stillbirths,

which revealed forms of bodily vulnerability that she had not fully understood at the time (Abu-Lughod, 1995). This return to earlier field experience suggests that ethnographic understanding is partial and unfinished rather than immediate and complete.

Abu-Lughod's (1995) own pregnancy in the U.S. was shaped by a very different social and medical context. It was highly medicalized and supported by reproductive technologies such as hormonal monitoring and ultrasound, and it depended on financial resources and biomedical expertise. She describes her life as "double," moving between "home" in the U.S. and "the field" in Egypt, and her understanding of pregnancy was shaped by both contexts (Abu-Lughod, 1995, p.340). As her pregnancy progressed, she felt physically closer to the Bedouin women through bodily sensations such as fetal movement, and she came to see that personal experience itself is shaped by knowledge gained in the field.

Abu-Lughod's essay is important because it shows that fieldwork does not only produce knowledge about others. It also reshapes the anthropologist's own body, subjectivity, and way of understanding experience. The relationship between researcher and research participant is not one-directional. Rather than standing outside the field as a detached observer, the ethnographer is also transformed through the encounter. Abu-Lughod's essay reveals that the boundary between Self and Other is unstable, and that ethnographic knowledge is produced through ongoing, embodied, and relational processes rather than from a position of neutrality or distance (Abu-Lughod, 1995).

Therefore, these examples show the limits of the detached observer in feminist ethnography. Women anthropologists do not simply replace male researchers within the same structure. Their positionality reveals that ethnographic knowledge is relational and unstable from the beginning. The boundary between Self and Other is not fixed because both researchers and research participants are located within broader relations of gender, race, colonial history, and academic power. This article reads these examples as

showing that the detached observer is not only a methodological ideal but also a structure of authority that separates the knowing Self from the observed Other. From a feminist methodology perspective, objectivity cannot be understood as distance from the field. It must begin with an awareness of positionality and with critical attention to how knowledge is produced through unequal power relations.

3. Beyond Standpoint: From Women's Experience to Situated Knowledges

This critique of the detached observer can lead to a feminist argument: women's social position may allow them to see aspects of society that are often ignored or obscured by dominant perspectives. This idea is developed as 'feminist standpoint theory.' According to Brook (2007), feminist standpoint theory is both a theory of knowledge and a research method, and it encourages scholars to understand the world through the perspectives of oppressed women. From this perspective, women's marginalized social positions can provide important insights into social relations that dominant perspectives often overlook. This idea is described as "strong objectivity" (Brook, 2007, p.66).

From this perspective, research that begins from women's everyday lives as members of oppressed groups can produce less distorted knowledge than research that begins from the lives of dominant men (Brook, 2007; Harding, 1991). Feminist standpoint theory also argues that knowledge production is often controlled by dominant groups, so accepted interpretations of reality tend to reflect the interests of those in power (Brook 2007). Since oppressed women have fewer reasons to reproduce these dominant interpretations, their experiences may offer clearer insights into social structures. In this sense, feminist standpoint theory makes an important intervention by showing that knowledge is shaped by power, and that marginalized women's experiences can produce critical understanding of society.

However, feminist standpoint theory has also been criticized for its

tendency toward essentialism. If women are treated as a single group with a shared experience and a common epistemic privilege, important differences among women can be ignored. As Brook (2007) points out, treating women as a unified group risks assuming that all women share the same standpoint. This is also a problem highlighted by *Women Writing Culture*, which shows that women's experiences are shaped differently by race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, and history. For this reason, feminist methodology cannot simply replace objectivity with 'women's experience' as though that experience were singular and self-evident.

It is in response to these limits that Donna Haraway's concept of "situated knowledges" becomes important. Haraway (1988) begins with the problem of feminist objectivity and asks how feminist scholars can challenge positivist neutrality without falling into either relativism or a simple rejection of truth claims. She argues that feminists need an approach that recognizes the historical and political construction of knowledge while still remaining committed to producing better accounts of the world (Haraway, 1988). For Haraway, feminist objectivity is not a view from nowhere but grounded in embodiment and location.

Haraway uses vision as a key metaphor to explain this point. Rather than understanding vision as the "god trick" (Haraway, 1988, p.581) that sees everything from nowhere, she argues that all vision is embodied and located (Haraway, 1988). She criticizes the dominant gaze that claims universal knowledge while hiding its own position, and she describes this as the illusion of disembodied objectivity. Against this model, Haraway proposes the concept of situated knowledges, and argues that feminist objectivity means embodied objectivity (Haraway, 1988). Her central claim is that only a partial perspective can promise objective vision because knowledge is always produced from a limited location rather than from abstraction (Haraway, 1988).

Haraway agrees that there are good reasons to value the perspectives of the subjugated, and she suggests that vision may be better from below

than from positions of power (Haraway, 1988). However, she also warns against romanticizing these standpoints. The perspectives of the oppressed are not innocent, pure, or automatically true. They must also be critically interpreted and examined (Haraway, 1988). In this sense, Haraway moves beyond a simple version of standpoint theory. She does not reject the importance of marginalized perspectives, but she refuses the idea that any group, including women, can occupy a single and complete standpoint. There is no fully unified oppositional subject based on gender, race, ethnicity, or class (Haraway, 1988).

For feminist methodology, this shift is important. Situated knowledges allow feminist scholars to recognize the epistemic value of marginalized experiences without turning women into a fixed or universal category. They also avoid the false choice between positivist universalism and complete relativism. As Haraway (1988) argues, feminist knowledge should be understood as partial, locatable, and accountable, and rational knowledge should be seen as an ongoing, power-sensitive conversation among differently positioned interpreters. This article reads Haraway's intervention as a move from experience as a foundation to experience as situated knowledge. This does not mean rejecting women's experiences. It means recognizing that such experiences cannot serve as a single or self-sufficient foundation for feminist methodology, because they are always diverse, situated, and shaped by unequal power relations. In this way, feminist methodology can make stronger and more responsible knowledge claims without returning to either neutral and detached objectivity or an essentialist idea of women's experience.

4. Rethinking Subjectivity through Poststructuralist Feminism

This shift from women's standpoint to situated knowledges becomes clearer when it is connected to a poststructuralist understanding of subjectivity. Feminist standpoint theory makes an important contribution by arguing not only that knowledge is shaped by power and social position but also that

starting from the lives of oppressed women can reveal social relations that are often overlooked in dominant accounts. However, it can still suggest that women form a coherent group with a shared standpoint. Poststructuralist feminism challenges this assumption by questioning the idea of a fixed and unified female subject. Drawing on Chris Weedon's *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory* (1987), this shift can be connected to the work of Michel Foucault, especially his concept of discourse. Although Foucault did not focus directly on gender, his analysis of discourse and power provides feminist theory with important tools to challenge modernist assumptions about stable identity and truth.

Weedon (1987) explains that poststructuralism sees meaning as plural and subjectivity as unstable. Discourse is not simply a way of producing meaning through language. It is also a system that shapes knowledge, social practices, subjectivity, and power relations (Weedon, 1987). In this view, subjectivity is formed within discourse rather than existing before it. Discourse shapes not only consciousness but also bodies, emotions, and desires, and it offers particular subject positions through which individuals understand themselves and their social world (Weedon, 1987). This process continues over time and affects both conscious identity and unconscious structures. Therefore, the subject cannot be understood as stable or fully unified.

This perspective is important for feminist analysis of gender and sexual difference. Weedon (1987) argues that poststructuralist feminism does not deny biological differences, but it rejects the claim that biology has a fixed social meaning. Instead, feminist analysis should ask how biological difference is interpreted within particular historical and social contexts, and how these interpretations are used to justify political and social arrangements (Weedon, 1987). In other words, the category of 'woman' is not a natural truth but a discursive construction shaped by institutions, everyday practices, and relations of power. This argument also helps challenge earlier feminist approaches that continued to rely on fixed definitions of femininity.

According to Weedon (1987), liberal feminism sought equal access within existing structures, while some forms of radical feminism risked replacing one fixed definition of femininity with another. Poststructuralist feminism emphasizes historical specificity and examines how femininity and subject positions are produced and transformed in discourse (Weedon, 1987).

This poststructuralist extension also has methodological importance. If subjectivity is discursively produced, then neither the researcher nor the research participants can be treated as fully authentic and unified subjects whose experiences reveal truth. Weedon (1987) makes this clear in her discussion of literary criticism. She argues that reading practices are institutional practices through which meaning is produced and stabilized. Feminist criticism based only on women's experience may treat texts as direct expressions of authentic female life. However, poststructuralist feminism questions this assumption by arguing that experience itself is discursively produced and historically situated (Weedon, 1987). Interpretations of "true femininity" also depend on already existing assumptions about what femininity means (Weedon, 1987, p.137). Therefore, a poststructuralist approach sees texts, meanings, and identities as sites where gender is constructed within wider networks of power and knowledge.

Poststructuralist feminism does not reject feminist politics. It provides a more critical way to analyze how power works through categories that may appear natural or true. As Weedon (1987) argues, feminist analysis should not only interpret these discourses but also aim to transform the power relations that sustain them. This article reads poststructuralist feminism as extending feminist methodology from the analysis of social location to the analysis of discursively produced subjectivity. In this sense, feminist methodology must attend not only to where the researcher and research participants are socially located, but also to how their positions, experiences, and meanings are produced through discourse. This perspective strengthens feminist methodology by showing that accountable interpretation requires attention to both power

relations and the unstable character of the knowing subject.

5. Implications for Feminist Methodology

The discussions above suggest that feminist methodology requires more than a critique of conventional ethnography. It also requires a different understanding of how knowledge should be produced. If ethnographic knowledge is shaped by exclusion, positionality, and unequal power relations, then objectivity cannot be understood as distance or detachment from the field. Instead, feminist methodology redefines objectivity as a situated practice of knowledge production. In this sense, Haraway's (1988) argument is especially important. Feminist objectivity does not come from a view from nowhere but from a partial perspective that recognizes its own location and limitations. This means that stronger knowledge claims do not depend on neutrality but on being clear about the conditions under which knowledge is produced.

From this perspective, reflexivity is an important concept in feminist methodology. However, it should not be treated as a simple solution. Feminist methodology requires researchers to reflect on how their own gender, race, class, nationality, and institutional location shape access to the field, relationships with research participants, and interpretation. Reflexivity is important not only because it makes the researcher's position more visible but also because it can produce more complex understandings of the research process itself. As Hurd (1998) argues, reflexive research makes the interaction between researcher and participants more visible and allows the research process to become part of the data rather than something hidden behind the final interpretation. In this way, reflexivity can broaden the data set and challenge traditional ideas of objectivity as neutral and detached (Hurd, 1998). Nencel (2014) similarly argues that reflexivity is not only a methodological issue but also an epistemological issue because it shapes how knowledge itself is understood. When researchers make their assumptions and positionality

visible, the text becomes a co-constructed space shaped by both the researcher and the research subjects (Nencel, 2014).

At the same time, reflexivity is not just a matter of personal disclosure. It also does not automatically challenge unequal power relations. As Nencel (2014) points out, reflexive writing may still leave the researcher in the position of the one who ‘gives voice’ to others, and research relationships remain shaped by wider social, economic, and political inequalities. For this reason, reflexivity should be understood as a situated and critical practice rather than as a guarantee of equality or ethical representation. It remains valuable when it helps make visible the social and political conditions of knowledge production and encourages accountability for interpretation. Therefore, reflexivity is valuable not because it resolves inequality but because it makes the conditions of interpretation more visible and more accountable.

Because knowledge is relationally produced, this also changes how the relationship between researcher and research participants should be understood. Feminist methodology challenges the idea that research participants are passive sources of data waiting to be interpreted by the researcher. As the examples of Deloria, Mourning Dove, and Abu-Lughod suggest, knowledge is produced through unequal but relational encounters, in which both researchers and research participants are shaped by broader structures of power (Abu-Lughod, 1995; Finn, 1995). This does not mean that power disappears from the research relationship. Instead, it means that feminist methodology must pay attention to negotiation and the limits of representation. Research participants are not simply objects of knowledge. They are not automatically equal co-authors of interpretation. The point, then, is not to deny inequality in research but to analyze more carefully how knowledge is negotiated within unequal relationships.

A similar point applies to writing. *Women Writing Culture* shows that writing is not a neutral stage where findings are simply reported. It is part of the process through which authority is produced and some voices are centered

while others are reduced or excluded (Behar, 1995). This insight becomes even more important when read together with Weedon's (1987) poststructuralist argument that experience and meaning are discursively produced rather than fully transparent. From this perspective, feminist methodology must treat writing as part of knowledge production itself, rather than as a neutral record of findings. The question is not only how to represent others more ethically but also how to avoid reproducing fixed categories such as 'woman,' 'authentic experience,' or 'truth' without examining the discourses that give these terms meaning.

For this reason, feminist methodology should not aim for complete certainty. Instead, it should aim for careful and accountable interpretation. It should also remain open to partial knowledge and the idea that subjectivity itself is unstable. Weedon (1987) reminds us that subjects are produced within discourse and cannot be treated as fully unified or transparent. This has an important methodological consequence. Feminist researchers cannot assume that either they or their research participants speak from complete or fixed positions. Therefore, knowledge claims should remain careful, limited, and open to revision. This does not weaken feminist research. On the contrary, it makes it more responsible by recognizing that knowledge is always produced through power relations, historical conditions, and interpretive choices.

These implications are also relevant to Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies in Thailand. Although this article does not examine the Thai context empirically, its theoretical discussion suggests that feminist methodology offers a useful conceptual language for asking whose voices, experiences, and forms of knowledge are recognized as legitimate within academic knowledge production. Therefore, the debates discussed in this article are not only abstract methodological debates. They can also help scholars consider how feminist knowledge is produced, authorized, and limited within specific institutional and cultural contexts.

Taken together, these implications show that feminist methodology

is not only a method of doing research but also a critical approach to knowledge production. It asks researchers to examine the conditions under which knowledge is produced, interpreted, and made accountable.

6. Conclusion

This article has argued that feminist methodology is not simply a critique of neutral objectivity but a broader rethinking of how ethnographic knowledge is produced. *Women Writing Culture* shows that the problem of conventional ethnography is not only one of textual representation but also one of authority, legitimacy, and exclusion within academic knowledge production (Behar, 1995). The discussion of the Self/Other divide has further suggested that feminist ethnography does more than add women researchers to existing methods. Rather, it unsettles the model of knowledge built on the detached observer. The examples of Deloria, Mourning Dove, and Abu-Lughod demonstrate that ethnographic knowledge is embodied, unequal, and relational rather than neutral and one-directional (Abu-Lughod, 1995; Finn, 1995).

At the same time, this article has argued that feminist methodology cannot rely only on women's experience as its foundation. Feminist standpoint theory makes an important intervention by showing that marginalized women's lives can produce critical insights into dominant social relations (Brook, 2007). However, Haraway's concept of situated knowledges makes clear that such experiences cannot be treated as singular or universally representative. Feminist objectivity must be understood as partial and embodied (Haraway, 1988). Weedon's poststructuralist feminism deepens this point by showing that subjectivity itself is unstable and discursively produced, so neither researchers nor research participants can be treated as fully transparent subjects of knowledge (Weedon, 1987).

Overall, this article connects these debates to argue that feminist methodology moves the discussion from how others are represented to how

knowledge becomes legitimate, and from detached objectivity to accountable interpretation. These debates suggest a clearer claim about feminist methodology. Feminist methodology should be understood as a practice of accountable interpretation that remains attentive to positionality, reflexivity, unequal research relationships, and the politics of writing. Its value lies not in offering certainty but in making stronger knowledge claims possible through greater attention to power, location, and limitation.

This article also has limitations. As a theoretical article, it does not provide an empirical analysis of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies in Thailand. It also focuses mainly on classic debates in feminist methodology, rather than offering a full discussion of more recent approaches such as intersectionality, queer methodology, decolonial feminism, and transnational feminism. Further research could examine how questions of positionality, situated knowledges, reflexivity, and accountability are practiced and negotiated in specific Thai academic contexts. Such research would help clarify how feminist methodology can contribute to the development of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies in Thailand.

Despite these limitations, this article suggests that feminist methodology remains important because it provides a way to question how knowledge is produced, whose knowledge becomes legitimate, and how interpretation can be made more accountable. Its significance lies in showing that feminist methodology does not weaken knowledge claims by rejecting detached neutrality. Instead, it makes knowledge production more responsible by recognizing the power relations, historical conditions, and interpretive choices through which knowledge is produced.

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