

Positions through dialogue

MAYA OBER -

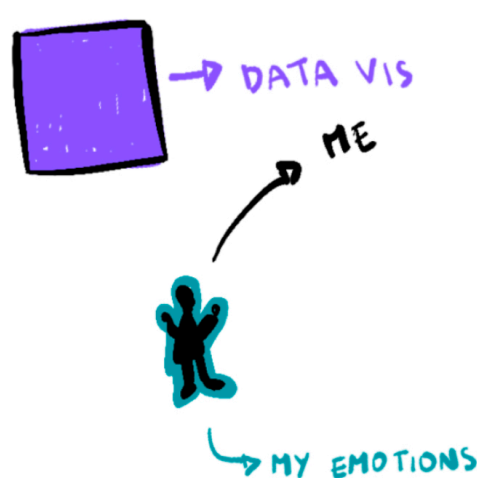
Maya's research on the feminist practices of design education gave me an outside perspective on my enquiry and made me aware of new contexts. She helped me go back to the start of my project, retrace my decisions and most importantly, ask myself questions that made me rethink my research and the direction it was going.

Why do I want to investigate emotion? Why do I want to talk about my feelings? What is my NARRATIVE? Does it originate in political subjects like racism, homophobia, being an immigrant, the patriarchy? Ultimately,

What do I want to say?

Early on in the development of this project, I briefly attempted to identify the sources of my emotions and what triggered my anxiety. However, I ended up focusing more on collecting the data itself rather than finding the source. Also, looking back I realised that even though the data collection side of my research worked as a therapeutic "release" or a way of talking about my feelings*, it became sort of generic and numerical. Maya helped me recognise the value of my research: the nature of the data I was collecting. I took a step back and saw that while my data was very raw and personal, the ways in which I chose to represent it had become quite impersonal.

*Talking about one's feelings allows one to acknowledge them and develop emotional awareness. In this case I found a way to "talk" about my emotions without actually talking about them at all. Unfortunately, the repetitive and abstract nature of my data collection experiments did not do justice or communicate the emotions I wanted to convey.



I began this project creating illustrations, animations and material that portrayed my emotional state in all its rawness and complexity, which my classmates and tutors also described as "ambiguity". Later on I fell into a more detached and formal way of recording my feelings as I was looking at it as just data.

Going back to my dialogue with Maya,

She made me think about the entire data vis aspect of my project. She said it made my work more impersonal as I was unconsciously treating my emotions as "events" or just numbers when in reality the whole intention of my work was to investigate my mental health and how my body and mind react to changes in my surroundings. So once again, I was reconsidering everything I had done previously.



Maya encouraged me to continue using alternative forms of journaling as forms of therapy but also reminded me that as a designer, I have to focus on the narrative. Asking me again, what do I want to say?



In essence, she recommended to give more value to the legibility of my compositions and experiments. As therapeutic as they may be, "it has to be readable", she said. We continued our conversation on legibility and ended up talking about code switching. That is, there are levels of legibility that may or may not be accessed. And, as a designer I can choose who I want to give access to my story. We then talked about slang, spanglish, and the ways in which a language can vary depending on where it is spoken or who it is spoken by. We then found ourselves exchanging our thoughts on being immigrants and queer women. "Think about the source of your emotion, **don't be scared of being political**", she repeated at least a few times.

To sum up, meeting Maya and hearing about her position as a designer and researcher was extremely beneficial for my practice. Her input and strong views on women's emotions allowed me to ask myself some questions I now realise I might have not wanted to answer before. She helped me open the door for new ideas and topics that I feel I can develop further going forward.

