

Mixed Methodologies in Emotive Research: Negotiating Multiple Methods and Creating Narratives in Feminist Embodied Work on Citizenship

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Abstract

In this paper I discuss the ways in which mixed method approaches may be applied, and justify the reasoning for using such an approach in connection with a feminist, counter topographical study on the subject of the citizen self. Stanley and Wise (1993) have suggested that although there is nothing inherently feminist about either quantitative or qualitative methods, our epistemological stance towards our methods and how we put them to use is often greatly influenced by feminist insights. The choice of appropriate methods, then, depends upon the research questions being asked. Focusing upon the key concepts of citizenship and identity within the field of migration, my research looks at how citizenship marks a sense of belonging to a specific group or community. My research question asks how individual female migrants form sense of belonging at various scales, and how they work through these to form aspects of everyday citizenship. Whilst the use of mixed method approach is not new to the world of academia, the different ways in which methods are brought together continues to evolve, transforming how we understand our findings, and how we present that raw data with reference to the wider research proposal. I argue that greater reflection upon mixed methodologies should not be restricted to the methods themselves but should also entail a reconsideration of the ways in which research field data is reproduced and represented through our writings.

METHODOLOGICAL ENQUIRY in human geography has come under increased scrutiny in recent years, drawing attention to interdependencies between theory and method and exploring the possibilities of mixed method strategies. However, the way in which mixed methods have been employed has yet to be discussed in great detail when considering particular epistemological standpoints. Whilst thinking through my doctoral thesis I began to question how I might approach sensitive and personal stories. I found that, as Elwood states “mixed methods are rooted in a unique hybrid epistemology, rather than a strategic collision between separate epistemologies” (2010, p. 98). No one research strategy could account for the multiple ways in which methodological enquiry could be laid out. Therefore, the question emerges of how do geographers go about negotiating research which is socially contingent, and based upon the experiential aspect of everyday lives? When beginning to think about research strategy, especially in the

context of migration study, Findlay and Li argue that, “methodological sophistication is required to explore the ways in which migrant geographies are both made by migrants, and at the same time embedded in wider social and economic structures which the migrants do not choose, and which in part define the conditions of their existence. The researcher must lay hold of methods capable of considering agency and structure and their constant interaction” (1999, p. 51-52). Conducting research in the field of migration studies, then, must be highly flexible, self-reflexive, and must take into account the complexities of the stories that are being told.

My work focuses upon the key concepts of citizenship and identity. Within this, I argue that citizenship marks a sense of belonging to a specific group or community, in the sense that it is based upon formations of identity, and how we feel that we identify with, or belong to, specific groups in society. Citizenship identities are relational in that we look to the outside, the world around us, to help form our internal make up, our identity formation. Citizenship is but one element of group identification; it is political, social, cultural and economic, affecting all areas of an individual’s life. In light of this my overarching research questions are:-

1. What are the coalescences around belonging and how do they work?
2. How do these intersect with a top down idea of what belonging should be?
3. What does this mean for a citizenship identity amongst migrant women?

I am interested, then, in specific, individualised, understandings of identity and belonging that transect with an emotive, everyday, and experiential account of citizenship in the modern female migrant’s imaginary. To engage with the research questions, and to approach the field, I worked with individuals who are part of women’s groups and organisations and informal networks in Singapore to gain a sense of understanding of what it is to live a citizenship identity on the ground, through the nuances of everyday life. In doing so, I adopted a feminist, counter-topographic understanding, that explores how these ‘smaller’ stories connect to wider geographies across time and space, and that affirms working with individuals and groups as a means of giving voice to otherwise marginalised subjects. My research privileges emotive methodologies, in that I want to acknowledge a ‘depth’ to their experiences, but also to provide nuance in regard to a presentation of their experiences. Emotive methodologies are methodologies that seek to go beyond the text, to draw out and explore the emotional realm of the participant; they allow the participant to feel a deeper involvement, often drawing on psychotherapeutic techniques. Mixed qualitative methods allow this emotive realm to be drawn out. Using interviews in isolation, for example, would not allow either participant or researcher to go deep enough into the emotional ways in which participants experience lived identities. Mixed qualitative methodologies are thus suitable for emotive research.

In this paper, I engage with existing literature on mixed methods before moving on to discuss how I have employed these in my own research. I then discuss the issues that arise from employing this type of approach, and how we might go about researching and writing up mixed methodological research.

Thinking about Mixed Methodologies

Using mixed methods is not an entirely new approach, but the way in which different methods are brought together can be highly individualized within different

research projects. Much of the literature on mixed methodologies has focused upon these methods as a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches (for example, Pratt 2000; Pain 2004; Mattingly and Falconer-Al-Hindi 1995). Focusing on this particular way of mixing methods has suggested a number of limitations in mixed methodological approaches. In some ways, knowledge gained through mixed methodology will always be partial, and it can be difficult to translate different types of data sets into one narrative.

However, the operationalities and particularities that come from mixing qualitative methodologies has been less explicitly discussed, with the exceptions of Farhana Sultana (2007) who investigates research reflexivity and positionality through ethical considerations, and Sarah Elwood's (2010) investigation into the ways in which mixed methods might be reconsidered within the geographical discipline. There are also intrinsic features of qualitative mixed methodologies which may lead to problems or limitations. The researcher needs to understand that triangulation is not the purpose here. Mixed methods seek out detail rather than depth, and those details need to be focused upon within the write up. The researcher might find that using mixed methods leads to a different form of field research, a different direction, or they may find that the 'answers' they were looking for simply cannot be obtained using different approaches in conjunction. Mixed qualitative methods, then, are about more than talking, more than textual conversation, and therefore negotiating them as researcher can be difficult and confusing. The way in which one chooses to present the data can also be confusing and one can find oneself questioning 'is this appropriate?'

As with 'traditional' approaches to mixed methods, the data that is produced from mixing qualitative methods is also problematic. Pratt's (2000) study into research performances highlights the difficulties the researcher has when faced with aspects of performative data. Pratt and Cahill et al's (2004) work here suggests that text-based forms of analyzing qualitative data may not be appropriate for analyzing performative practices, and in trying to interpret data in this way possible meanings and interpretations are lost (Elwood 2010, p. 101). There are also limitations of using narrative as a form of analysis and way of writing the research. All data, no matter how detailed the 'story' is, is partial. Mixed methods and narratives allow us to detail the experience of individuals but it is only a partial knowledge and this type of research is highly individualised.

I want to briefly highlight here my own interpretation of what mixed methods are. Sarah Elwood considers that, "mixed method refers to some degree of integration across data types and modes of analysis" (2010, p. 95). This suggests that any form of data collection that draws upon different positioning, knowledges, and methods, can be considered mixed method. In my own research, I do not draw upon traditional approaches to mixed methodologies; for example, I do not utilize quantitative data collection methods. Instead, I work with multiple techniques in the qualitative realm. Using quantitative methods within this type of study would not have any added benefit. My research focuses on individual feelings and emotions. Although, in using particular techniques, you may be able to quantify particularities of citizenship identities, these quantitative approaches would not engage with the experiential accounts, which are central to this research. There is an element of scale

within the research; here, I focus on the scale of the individual, on particular stories and experiences, rather than an aggregate or quantifiable generalisation.

To demonstrate the decision to use qualitative mixed methodologies, I want to draw here on feminist epistemology, which argues that mixing methods is important for in-depth feminist analysis. Mixed methods allow for proximity between the researcher and the research, and for forms of narrativity to be performed, practiced and understood. McDowell argues that feminist methodologies see the researcher becoming involved in some way with the researched and that their mutual emotions and experiences may connect them (1992, p. 405). This point is also stressed by Phoenix (1994) and Mullings (1999) who point out that the boundary between researcher and researched is highly dynamic and unstable. Their arguments outline the way in which it is the biographical moments within the research process that create connections. Therefore, the researcher becomes part of the research; they are not only immersed within the research, but their own emotions, connections and experiences become an active part of the research. This enables the researcher to become closer to the narrative of the research, with the data that is extracted becoming more entangled with daily life. Mixed methods allow questions to be asked without there ever being a formalised question; thus, using these methods in such a way allows the researcher to delve into the unconscious way in which individuals practice and perform on their everyday stage. It is the emotional realm that a qualitative mixed-methodological approach calls to in this instance.

My research looks into the ways in which individuals not only negotiate complex emotional fields of belonging, feelings attached to home and the ways in which they belong, but also focuses on the practices and performances of a communitarian aspect of citizenship. I argue that citizenship is more fluid in nature than traditional understandings, and is connected to individual conceptions of self-awareness and identity, played out through the performances that might be practices through ritual and in the everyday setting. Qualitative mixed methodologies allow the researcher to tease out those complexities, highlighting for individual participants the many different ways in which they can give voice to the research and the many different approaches they can engage with to tell their stories. I want to now turn to my reflections on the field, and how some of the issues with mixed methods that I have highlighted above can be seen throughout my field negotiations.

Mixed Methods in the field

In this section I want to focus on the way in which mixed method research can draw out the emotional realm of belonging, home and identity of female migrants in Singapore. Here, I will highlight the different methodologies that were employed in the field; I also look at the ways in which each method was applicable to answering particular questions in the wider research, and how that method used might inform a particular understanding.

On negotiating 'entry' to the field, I found myself overwhelmed with opportunities for ways to approach actually conducting the data collection. I settled upon a focus through women's groups and organisations, specifically set up to help migrants negotiate a foreign environment. In ontological terms, my objects of analysis were simply and loosely defined as 'citizenship groups'. As Dobrowolsky and Lister argue: "the essence of citizenship is about membership in specific

communities and the boundaries which get drawn that both bestow inclusion and give rise to exclusion of non-members”(2006, p. 150). Belonging is based upon formations of identity, and how we feel that we identify with, or belong to, specific groups in society. These are then bordered and formalised into specific contexts such as citizenship.

This leaves aside, however, the critical issue of the politics of location between researcher and researched. In order to reach the groups I wanted to work with I went through a number of gatekeepers whom I was able to identify from secondary source literature and web site material and who in turn identified possible groups, visible and relevant to their eye, for study. Negotiating access, and establishing more in-depth relationships with the women concerned, produced some interesting effects. After many rejections from various organisations, or indeed the silences that followed promising meetings, it could be quite easy to be drawn into a feeling that the research would not go anywhere. However, after commencing work with the various groups I found that individual, face to face meetings, and my efforts to be engaging as a foreign visitor who also felt ‘on the outside’ counted for a lot. What is more, I felt more intimately and personally connected with the small number of groups who said yes. The complex dynamics of feeling empathy with, and distance from, differed by group.

It was at this point I began to realise that each group of women, all with different backgrounds, not only needed to be approached differently, but that different methodologies would need to be employed in order to ask my ‘research questions’ in different ways. I began to negotiate multiple methodologies, exercising the self-reflexivity that my open-ended initial approach could afford me. I found that the expatriate organisations, for example, were particularly interested in the project. These women, who came from professional and educated backgrounds, clearly emphasised with and had re-envisioned my project and began to ask their own questions about the research. To engage with expatriate groups, I began to draw upon ‘traditional’ objects of enquiry, utilising focus groups, participant observation, and semi-structured interviewing. Engaging with these women was not difficult; I found that as a ‘western woman’ living in Singapore, I could identify with some of the experiences and challenges that they faced and there was thus a sense of camaraderie between myself and the women who were members of expatriate organisations.

The organisations I worked with included, but are not limited to, The Australian and New Zealanders Association (ANZA), the British Association (BA), the American Women’s Association (AWA) and finally PrimeTime, originally set up as a professional businesswomen’s network which had established many expatriate links. Although initially engaging with these groups was quite easy, I found it difficult to ‘decide’ on how I would approach the data collection. Much of the literature surrounding methodology, and working in the field does not address the difficulties faced when one’s research plan essentially ‘goes out the window’. Although I was armed with a list of questions and research themes I wished to explore with my participants, in hindsight these had been designed from the comfort of my postgraduate office, after successes in a pilot study in the UK. The expatriate groups I encountered in Singapore were more fluid and open and invited me to ‘get stuck in’, moving away from my research schedule. I decided that an informal

approach might be necessary and began to think about innovative ways in which I could glean information from people, whilst effectively participating in the community in which I was immersed.

Negotiating the field using mixed methodologies

I began my foray into the field with participant observation. I had been invited along to numerous events, coffee mornings, nights out and patriotic sporting events; I used my attendance at these to try to draw out the complexities of being involved with, and belonging to formal organisations that were based upon aspects of national identity and race. My 'insider' position served me well here and I was able to chat openly with the women about being involved in a group like ANZA, or the AWA, and how immersed in that culture they had become. I was able to employ aspects of auto-ethnography, drawing on my own experiences of living in a foreign country, in order to help individual participants chat freely with me about their difficulties and struggles, and their relief at finding an organisation 'for women like them'. This form of participant observation, although not an intended primary research method, proved beneficial to the overall success of the project. Here, I could observe individuals in more everyday settings, gaining insight into the constructions of social identities formed in and around the organisations.

I used these events, focusing upon auto ethnography and 'setting of the scene' to engage individuals in the research I was conducting. Interested individuals were invited for semi-structured interviews. I realised the importance of maintaining an informal air to the interviews. I engaged participants over coffee, or a glass of wine, I conducted interviews whilst shopping with groups, or over lunch dates with friendship groups. I found these interviews to be informative and yet something was held back. I began to get a sense that, however informal, the construct of the interview meant that my participants knew they were participants in a research project. I therefore had to become even more informal, getting rid of all sense of 'structured questions' and instead using an open ended, rather than semi-structured, approach. In this way, I was able to follow the themes of the research, rather than any line of questioning and, although analysing this kind of data is incredibly difficult, I found it led to much richer in-depth and detailed conversations in which I was treated as a friend, a confidant.

An interview with Mary¹ demonstrates how this approach was utilised. We had originally planned to meet for a coffee and 'a chat' where she agreed to answer questions for my research. She had become interested in helping me as I reminded her of her daughter, who was at university at the time. She wanted to help me, and thought that sharing her stories would enable me to advance further in my research. Upon meeting in the coffee shop, we settled back and chatted for a while, she talked about her family and it transpired that her sister lived in the same village that I had grown up in the UK. The 'interview' never happened; but what did occur was a three and a half hour coffee break, wherein Mary talked about her experiences, her feelings of citizenship, her own identity and how, as a 'seasoned expat over twenty five years or so', she found living in a foreign culture. This lends itself to a rethinking of the way in which, as researchers, we approach the field. We need to be open to mixed methods as an open and fluid way of conducting research; mixed methods allow us to ask different questions in different ways, rather than simply asking the same

question through different methods. I am not suggesting here, that semi-structured interviewing as method is not the way to approach research with lived participants; instead, I merely want to warn that it may not always be appropriate.

Some participants wanted me to meet them at home so they could show, as well as talk about, their experiences. At first I was apprehensive. I was already becoming aware of the length of tapes I would have to transcribe later, and yet I knew that without utilising these approaches I would not be able to attain the detail that I so desperately wanted. These rich, in-depth narratives became therapeutic, based on my (limited) knowledge of psychoanalysis to engage with participants, and allow them to take me into the history of their lives, their identities and the ways in which they felt they belonged in the world. One participant, Rachel, explained that it felt good to 'get these things off her chest'. And although she knew at the back of her mind that I was doing research, she found it incredibly liberating to be able to discuss this with me, a sort of 'insider/ outsider' who would be leaving in a few weeks. Rachel felt that her story was 'safe' with me.

I found that informalising the interview process presented more favourable, detailed and in-depth discussions, rather like a conversation with a friend. Whilst not a new way of approaching the interview method, I feel that sharing my own stories, and using auto ethnography allowed me to mix my own observations, experiences, and acts of participation, into the interview process. I also found it a rich source of data to reflect not only on what had been said during the interview, but that which was left unsaid, the way in which female migrants who share similar stories and positions, might begin to negotiate their own understandings through discussion and participation in reaching out to others.

Whilst semi-structured and open-ended interviews and oral histories allowed me an insight into the stories of these women's lives, I also wanted to find out more about the social interactions and connections that enabled participants to feel a sense of belonging within women's groups and organisations. I had begun to delve into this using ethnographic methods, but I wanted to explore the detail that bringing individual participants together could provide. I turned towards focus group discussions with women who were part of the AWA and the BA, and an informal friendship group that became an offset of ANZA and the BA. The focus group discussions gave me further insight into the lived aspects of a socially formed identity; we were able to discuss aspects of social gatherings, the intricate and multiple levels within the organisations, and how this led to disassociations and feelings of discontentment amongst some. As well as utilising the focus groups to discuss research themes, I engaged with methodologies that allowed me to go beyond words, utilising aspects of body language analysis to hear silences, discover untold stories about feelings towards particular groups and activities, and to ascertain the social relations amongst those within the group.

It is not uncommon for in-depth feminist research to employ the method of focus groups. However, it can often be used as a way of gleaning particular sets of information from a group, rather than a discussion tool. Focus groups are viewed as a notoriously difficult research tool (Hyams 2004). Difficulties reported have been varied, and include difficulties in directing the discussion (keeping on track), involving everyone in the discussion (when some participants remain silent whilst others dominate), discussing sensitive information and topics, and they might also be

a source of mixed power relations between researcher and researched. However, as Geraldine Pratt (2002) has observed, utilising this methodology can actually go some way to eliminate the hierarchical power structures that can occur in many other methods. She argues that, “one attraction of using focus groups is precisely that the relations between the researcher and researched are more open and ambiguous than in one on one interviews or survey research” (2002, p. 214). Although the words uttered in focus group may be argued to be power laden and rife with tensions, I was able to employ methods that sought to ‘go beyond words’ (see Hyams 2004). The focus groups, then, provided finer points of detail, giving an insight into the intricate relationships individuals had with each other, collective feelings towards women’s groups and organisation, and more generally their frustrations over limitations of their status. I found once again that being a part of the group, a female migrant who lacked citizenship rights, meant that I was able to negotiate the field as an ‘insider’ and, although there are ethical considerations here, I found this to be useful in facilitating detailed data that cannot be expressed through direct quotations, or representations, but through telling my participants’ story entwined with my own.

I finally want to focus upon the way in which performativity and practice as research methods might be brought into play with other methods in order to build a picture of female migrants and participation of informal citizenship. As well as expatriate experiences, I also wanted to engage with women who were given little, or few rights, as foreign residents in Singapore. To do this, I engaged with Foreign Domestic Workers (FDWs) who face mistreatment in Singapore due to their nationality and statusⁱⁱ. Many of the women had difficulty speaking English and so there were many profound ethical considerations in working with such a group. I once again had to rethink my research strategy. To engage this group, I had to rely on methods that were less linguistic, and more performative in nature. To achieve this, I volunteered with the Humanitarian Organisation for Migration Economics (HOME), who advocate on behalf of mistreated foreign domestic workers.

I volunteered for two days a week with HOME. The ethnographic research gleaned from this voluntary work enabled a ‘living with participants’ approach. The women felt comfortable in this setting and were able to engage with those around them which enabled them to articulate their own experiences (see Pratt 2007). Through engaging with ethnographic research methods, I was able to not only observe the women in this social setting, playing and laughing together, but I was also able to ‘capture’ something of their social identities through these performances (Whatmore 2003). The women were able to contribute on a very personal level, demonstrating their own identities in practice and their group identity collectively. Employing these research practices, I was immersed in the very community in which the girls were living; I was able to complement the conversations with the women with observations of how they practised citizenship and belonging within the community that they had themselves developed in this small space.

To compensate for linguistic issues with the women in the shelter, and to build upon the ritualistic engagement of citizenship (though song and dance), I also practised very informal focus group style sessions.. The women involved would discuss a key theme, draw pictures to give voice to their experiences, and then we would act out, in role play performances, the way in which they felt about that. I was allowed to participate in the daily lives of the participants. Graham (1995)

outlines the importance of this and highlights the fact that social life is characterised by disorder. She endorses a biographical approach that involves “conceptualising everyday life not as something in a spatial vacuum, but as situated in place” (Graham 1995). Whilst this method provided detailed insight into the performances of everyday life, conversations were somewhat limited and therefore it can be quite difficult to accurately present the stories expressed on paper. However, I found the sessions were not only enjoyable, but also incredibly informative, providing me a snapshot of the lives of the women involved, affording an experiential understanding.

I want to draw here on Butler’s (1990) insight that social identity is performative and the ways in which a performed identity can allow the researcher an insight that cannot be gained from ‘talking methods’. Latham argues that, “the notion of performance helps to deflect us away from looking at depth (in the sense of a single unified truth) and directs us towards detail (in the sense of a fuller and more variegated picture of the interviewee)” (2003, p. 2003). Thus, it is the detail that can so often be missed when using in-depth qualitative methods to conduct field research. I also want to draw on Divya Tolia-Kelly (2007), who suggests that “in multi-lingual research, participatory art can bridge the gaps in linguistic understanding. What a visual process can do is to make tangible and record experiences, meanings and views in alternative forms. This process creates visual texts that are a means to ground theory, policy and practice, through a process that allows space for an alternative form of expressing experience that builds bridges across difference”(p. 132-133). Tolia-Kelley here highlights the importance of constructing methods that allow for the barriers of language to be eradicated. Mixed methodologies allow for these performative methods to not only be employed, but to become an active, and important methodology for the overall research strategy.

Without mixed methodologies, I would not have been able to access these varied and differing groups of women. The linguistic barrier with FDW’s may have been too severe, and I would have not been able to include this group of women in the study. However, the participatory methods, coupled with some discussion, allowed me to gain an understanding of their everyday, lived experiences; I could give them a voice within the research. Without fluid, informal methods employed with expatriate women, I would not have had an insight into the oral history narratives that were so freely shared and without an overall engagement with participant observation, I might never have fully understood the complexities of the working women’s group or organisation. Mixed methods allow an insight that cannot be drawn from using methods in isolation, or from asking the same question using different methods. In short, mixed methods research allows us to build collages; in this instance I call my work ‘citizenship collages’, which demonstrate the lived reality, the everyday experience, that these women face.

However, as Elwood outlines, “an analytical or interpretive challenge in mixed methods research lies in deciding what to do when different data contradict one another... if all ways of knowing are partial, researchers are left with the problem of how to understand or interpret contradictions between different methods in theoretically and empirically productive ways” (2010, p. 106). We therefore need to think about the ways in which we present research material. The researcher’s critical reflection upon a range of possible meanings is the most productive approach.

Therefore, creating a narrative, wherein the different data, using different methodologies, can be brought together, rather than triangulated, can inform a different understanding of the data. I look now towards how this narrative form of analysis might be employed, and how it might begin to give us, as geographers, insight into lived realities of emotive fields of research.

Narrativising the research data

In the context of migration research, Findlay and Li argue that “there is a need to consider how researchers can present more effectively, to academic and non-academic audiences, the multiplicity of migrant voices and the diversity of meanings to be found through listening to and watching people changing places by migration” (1999, p. 57). Their argument highlights that we not only need to be considerate of the methodologies that we use, but also the way in which we present our research findings. I turn now to look at new ways of presenting data. I want to focus here upon narrative geographies, and using narrativity as an analytical method.

Somers argues that, “it is through narrativity that we come to know, understand and make sense of the social world, and it is through narratives and narrativity that we constitute our social identities...” (1994, p. 606). On reflection, Somer’s argument asks that research on identity, and the emotive responses it invokes, should be thought about and presented through narrative aspects of writing. Davies and Dwyer (2007) highlight this in their work, arguing that “writing up research ultimately returns researchers to moments of interpretation and representation. Yet fuller awareness of the emotional, affective and embodied dimensions of social life requires new approaches too. Geographers have turned to narrative analysis, insights from psychotherapy and other more performative repertoires for making sense of data” (p. 259). Narrativity as a way of interpreting and writing up data has become more widely known in geography. Vandsemb’s (1995) study focuses upon the use of personal narrative of a female rural migrant as the main instrument the contextuality of migration in Sri Lanka. King et al’s (1995) use of literature gives voice to migrant experiences, motivations, and feelings. Writing data using narrative has been accepted as a way of presenting the personal and emotional stories that participants share in the research process. Dyck and McLaren (2005), for example, highlight that some form of storytelling is the outcome of all research, whether through empirical observation and statistical data or through the narrative form of qualitative research. From these literatures, we can gain a sense that the use of narrative forms of analysis, and narrative methods more generally, have begun to inform wider geographical approaches and that this is important to the way we both think about, and present, research data. What we need to begin to seek, as a way of presenting data, is the way in which our communications are understood outside of the research process, to look at how we might shape our presentation of the research process.

Using narrative analysis to tell stories rather than to cherry pick through the data for the purpose of (re)presentation allows for depth and detail in the presentation of research data. Analysing and presenting data in this way, then, gives a wider imaginary of female migrants and **their** personal accounts of feelings of citizenship, identity and belonging. Through mixed methodologies, and the use of narrative analysis, we might be able to bring piecing together ‘participant stories’, profiling in great detail (and depth) the individual’s, rather than the researcher’s

choice of the individual's, experience. This connects to Katz's (2001) call for a countertopographical approach to feminist qualitative research. In essence, we are using the small stories to tell larger narratives, connecting people in, and across, space and place.

There is also a 'fairness' in (re)presenting participants. As researchers, we need to tell their stories as they were told in the research process, rather than trying to make the participant's contributions 'fit' the researcher's aims and objectives (and research questions). Therefore, there is a constant negotiation when using narrative methodology and analysis; there is a negotiation between what the researcher wants to achieve, and what the narrative stories of participants show. Aitken (2010) argues for the idea of mixed genre writing, of using narratives and poetry, as well as other methods, to display emotive responses and experiences. These can go some way to provide a more detailed (re)presentation for the audience. Narrative analysis and presentation of data allows for the emotions within the encounter, the emotive story of the individual, to be shared with the reader.

Combining the mixed method 'answers' found in the research enables the researcher to create detailed, in-depth (re)presentations of individual stories. I want to draw now on three examples from my own research. Although their narratives cannot be presented in full here, I want to use the notion of 'telling stories' to demonstrate the ways in which research participants may be written about. I first want to draw on the example of Rachel. My time with Rachel drew upon oral histories, interviews, focus group discussions and participant observations. In some way, this could be seen as a shadowing of her life. The encounters I draw upon with Rachel throughout my research write up are based upon a crucial point in her life; she had moved to Singapore only a month previously, and she was therefore grappling with a whole set of issues that I was interested in talking about with her. I was able to discuss with her the ways in which she negotiates her own identity- she was born and raised in Zimbabwe, moved to Canada for university, then settled in Australia with her husband (who is British). She now lives in Singapore with her husband and daughter and is trying to negotiate her own sense of self identity as being Jewish, white, of Zimbabwean origin, a wife, of no longer having a working identity, and of becoming a citizen of different countries. Her story speaks of an ongoing battle to find herself, and in the oral histories she explains that she feels as though she is talking to a therapist, which can be demonstrated by using excerpts from interview data.

Rachel: "I think.... it's hard for me to articulate how I think or feel about it because I have never really had to before and it's almost, I almost feel like this is a therapy session you know! I am sat on my couch I can talk about my deep and meaningful painful experience (laughs) it's like oh my god! I am trying to intellectualise a very emotional thing [...]"

I want to be able to (re)present the in-depth, detailed and rich history of Rachel's own negotiations into the write up. I want to be able to present **her** story, rather than take her story and bend it to how it fits my research.

Narrative ways of writing allow me to engage with the articulations, the utterances, her history, her family tree, to present the detailed discussions we had together. I want to briefly present here the ways in which a narrative can be told through the presentation of participatory and performative methods. Here, I focus on

lead to a citizenship identity, allows the researcher to not only be a research tool, but also to **feel** aspects of the research. This point is raised by Dyck and McLaren, who note that, “thinking through the scale of the body allows us to struggle with our own voices as researchers, embodying the social relations of research, and with our own subjectivities and spatialities deeply implicated in how knowledge is constructed” (2004, p. 159). Drawing upon feminist theory, the way in which we understand the world is embodied, derived from bodily social interactions taking place in the spaces of everyday life. It is these stories, these interactions, which we must seek to present through the data collected through using a mixed method approach. In order to present the data in the way in which it was collected, and to try to avoid the pitfalls of representation, the focus here is upon the ways in which stories can be told through narrativity. However, as Liz Bondi (2005) notes, we not only have to think of **Figure 1: Presentation of participatory methods in the HOME shelter**

our bodies as researchers, but also our emotions as researchers. Thus, emotion research is highly individualised; it is through a narrative, presenting our participant’s narratives and our own, that we are able to tell our stories, of the research process, and of the lives we enter. However, as researchers we must be aware of the limitations of even mixed method study. Thus, “knowledge is always partial and representations of knowledges produced through field research embody power relations that the researcher must be aware of in undertaking ethical research” (Sultana 2007, p. 382 see also Hyams 2004; McKay 2002).

Conclusions: on ‘living the field’, narratives from the fieldwork process

This paper has highlighted the importance of using mixed methodologies to conduct feminist, in-depth and emotive research with female migrants. The case study of Singapore highlights the complexities of using a mixed method approach. Here, I have shown that there are a number of considerations to navigate whilst in the field, including cultural and language barriers. Qualitative mixed methodologies allow us as researchers to become ‘part of’ our participant’s lives. Qualitative mixed methods enable the researcher to ‘live the field’ as it were, to engage with participants in new and imaginative ways, by drawing upon conversation, participation, and performance in order to gain an insight into our lived field. The benefits of using qualitative mixed methods have been drawn out, and I have highlighted that, in this context, qualitative mixed methodologies are crucial. Through utilising mixed methods, I was able to conduct research that focuses in on the lived experience of citizenship and identity for female migrants, involving women from different backgrounds, at different stages in the life course, and who have very different outlooks upon their futures. A mixed method approach, then, has allowed the detail, depth and richness that utilising one method alone, or multiple methods in conjunction (but separately) would not have afforded. This approach, in the context of the research outlined, worked together to create larger imaginative of the experiences of female migrants in this specific setting.

However, this approach has also revealed limitations. A qualitative mixed methods approach does not simply mean ‘more methods’, nor does it rely upon triangulation for analysis. Mixed method research is complicated and messy, and the researcher must be aware of this on entering the field. The data produced in utilising

qualitative mixed methods is rich and detailed, but this too is complicated; researchers must be prepared to 'get their hands dirty' and not be dominated by the amount of material that will be generated. There are also problems of representation, of creating particular stories about participants, although this limitation is true of multiple methodological approaches. Utilising mixed methods in the way I have detailed produces data that may not be replicated, and 'answers' that the researcher was not looking to find; thus, researchers must continue to be self-reflexive and open to the changing directions that the research might take. I found that utilising a narrative approach to the research data was appropriate, but this again spoke to the specific context in which the research was conducted, and might not be appropriate in all instances.

A final point to note is on entering the field using mixed method approaches. When using this approach to conduct emotive research, we need to think about the ethical considerations. This type of approach requires the researcher to 'live the field', to be continuously self reflexive and to take into account the unavoidable power relations. As participants enter and leave our lives, they leave marks on us, on our research, on our future writings. Our presence as researcher also leaves a mark and we must be considerate to this. There are also considerations of how much one reveals as researcher; presenting narratives means that we cannot 'leave out' information and participants need to be fully informed of the ways in which you intend to present your 'conversations'. As a researcher, one must also be aware of limitations of language, of misinterpreted signals from different methodologies, and of the way in which participants, too, have their own agenda; what do they want to gain from the research and how does this affect not only the overall project, but also your own understanding, of yourself and the research, and how can this too lead to different directions. On drawing upon my own personal experience, I hope to have highlighted the complex ways in which geographers have begun to navigate and negotiate mixed method approaches, and the benefits that this might have for potential research.

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Biography

Lucy Jackson is a doctoral candidate at the Institute of Geography and Earth Sciences at Aberystwyth University. Her research focuses upon the field of feminist geopolitics. Her PhD research project, entitled 'rethinking the relational citizen: space, place and belonging', focuses upon ideas of citizenship as a relational practice and recognises it's ever more social and cultural nature. This research looks not only into the everyday practices and performances of citizenship, but also seeks to understand how identities are formed and developed through different contextual considerations. This research focuses upon two cases studies: upon migrant groups in Cardiff, South Wales and Singapore. During the course of her research, Lucy has worked with a

number of voluntary and non-governmental organisations who work in the area of migrant politics and representation.

Notes

ⁱ All participants have been given different names to protect their anonymity and to comply with ethical considerations within the field.

ⁱ For further work on the treatment of FDW's on Singapore, please refer to Various works by Brenda Yeoh and Shirlena Huang, including Yeoh, B. and S. Huang (2003). Civil space in a city-state: foreign domestic workers in Singapore. *Migration in the Asia-pacific: population, settlement and citizenship issues*. Iredale: 341-355. Also, See Heyzer, N et al (eds) (1994). *The trade in domestic workers: causes, mechanism and consequences of international migration*. Zed books ltd; London

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