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‘We do General Policing’: Sexuality in the Gay and Lesbian Liaison Unit of the Metropolitan Police Department, Washington, DC

I would be happiest when this unit does not exist. How fucking crazy is that? Right? Give up this good gig and go back to work on the streets where he should be. But to me that's when we've succeeded. We've succeeded when people can look at this department and say 'what the hell do they need a gay and lesbian liaison unit for?' 'Look at this department. Everybody is embracing diversity. Everybody is respectful to everybody.' We're not there yet (smirks). (Brett Parson speaking, Poole and Crandall 2005)

1. Introduction

Much of the history of homosexuality contains intimate narratives of police abuse. As state agents, the police are in position to influence people's lives intimately. There are still deeply entrenched homophobic tendencies by the police towards homosexuals or those perceived to be homosexual.¹ For instance, 'in the U.S., LGBT people continue to be targeted for human rights abuses by the police based on their real or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity' (Amnesty International 2005, 3). In response to this the Metropolitan Police Department of Washington, DC, (MPD) created the Gay and Lesbian Liaison Unit (GLLU) to more effectively combat homophobia while promoting the MPD to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered (GLBT) communities. Even though the members of this unit go beyond hypermasculine and heteronormative readings of 'a police officer,' one may interpret their position as that. Are their positions as police officers and their ties to GLBT reinventing them as transgressive agents and,

¹ My use of *homophobia* comes from Leap (2004). In discussing homophobic formation in texts, he comments "a homophobic statement is something that expresses disdain, disgust or hatred for gay people, gay sexual practices, gay lifestyle or... for people who are believed to be gay and/or connected with gay lifestyle and gay sexuality" (2004). I believe that this can extend to how police officers might treat homosexuals.

if so, how might this inform their duties as police officers and their perceptions of homosexuality?

The purpose of this paper is to ascertain whether the GLLU is a transgressive agency. By analyzing literature on the police and homosexuality and presenting ethnographic data, I will discuss the intersections of their subject positions as police officers and as GLBT persons. As noted above, this project works with the contention that United States police forces are hypermasculine and heteronormative. Consequently, I will consider how these conflicts might influence the possible transgression of the unit.

To that end, I have divided my paper into five parts. First, *Research Methods* discusses the ethnography involved with researching police officers. *Police and the GLLU*, discusses the formation of the GLLU and how homosexual issues feature in police discourses. *Transgressive Sexuality* reviews the literature of transgressiveness and its applicability to the GLLU. *Intersections of the GLLU and Transgression* brings together the themes discussed in the first two sections in an effort to show the ways in which the GLLU reveals transgressiveness. Finally, the *Conclusion* discusses whether the Unit is a transgressive agency or not.

2. Research Methods

In relation to other anthropological (or even more broadly social scientific) materials, there is precious little on the relationships of the police officer subject position in the United States to homosexuality. Much of the resources reviewed in this paper are from international sources; I draw from mostly British sources due to their similarities to American law enforcement practices. While considering their perspectives is important, I do emphasize domestic sources more because of the uniqueness of United States police departments. This is evidenced in my attention spent on said resources in this project. Parallel to such research are the discussions specifically on transgressive sexuality. The research offered in this project does not exclude certain authors but rather emphasizes general themes evident in literature of transgression from a Foucaultian perspective.

My ethnographic data come from several encounters with GLLU members, with the first in May 6, 2004 and then July 22, 2005 up through the present. On August 24, 2005, I attended part of a GLLU monthly meeting at their Connecticut Ave NW Office, where all the officers and civilian staff come together to discuss issues concerning the unit. At this meeting, I discussed my broader research plans, offered my time as a volunteer and asked for support in my research. Despite some concerns with this project and my past research (i.e., Tobler 2005), I have moved forward with my project. In his research, Herbert (2001) found that police officers usually become 'friendly and helpful with time' despite earlier hesitation. From that I decided to focus my research right now on fewer individuals so I may build stronger relationships that might influence future encounters with both GLLU and non-GLLU officers. Working with a limited number at this stage in my research is also beneficial to the police officers, since it allows them the security my attention may offer. For the officers, knowing that I am working with them individually rather than casting an ethnographic net out simply to get all the data available reveals that I am sincerely concerned with their individual perspective. Indeed, in light of reports such as Amnesty International's (2005), it is absolutely critical that the police officers know that I am honest and trustworthy.

As such, I have concentrated my participant-observation at this time with fewer GLLU members rather than with all. This has primarily consisted of informal in-office interviews and then a *ride-along*. A ride-along refers to someone who accompanies an officer who is out on patrol. As with Herbert,

The ride-alongs proved more instructive than the interviews, for several reasons. First, (they) provided an opportunity to witness the actual workings of police geopolitics.... Second, (they) provided a focus for our interactions.... Finally, (they) provided time for me to develop rapport with the officers, a process assisted by my doing multiple ride-alongs with most of them (2001, 306).

Judging by officers' asking when I would ride with them again and willingness to do so, I presume that my presence was and is well received. If nothing else, my presence during an evening shift adds a good change to the work-day.

3. Police and the GLLU

3.1. General Background of Policing

It is the cop's job to use physical force... anyone who opposes cops must not, therefore, let them maintain the hypocrisy of disguising this force behind orders that have to be immediately obeyed. (Foucault as cited in Halperin 1995:23)

It is because of their conflicted positions and close proximity to most spaces² of peoples' lives that often make police officers contentious components of discourses involving the state. The United States' Supreme Court case of *Lawrence v. Texas* is a recent example of how police may enter a presumably private space and extend state authority vis-à-vis regulation of sexuality. Foucault himself had numerous encounters with the police through his activism; Halperin notes that Foucault even suffered a cracked rib during one such encounter (1995, 23).

Throughout the history of organized police departments there has not been a singular police force in the United States, unlike many other countries (Vago 2003, 129).³ While Foucault's encounters with police forces were most likely in European countries, North Atlantic perspectives on the police need contextualization in their respective nation-states. We have to be careful in over generalizing the thousands of police departments in the United States, especially when one discusses police discretion. Although discretionary power (power used intentionally) is an important feature of law enforcement, this essay does not presume that discretionary practices and policies are universal by any means. Vago observes that discretionary power is important not only to the police, but to 'the entire judicial process and the criminal justice system' (2003, 136). What informs an officer's discretion is not only their individual training and background but the context they work in; a police officer in Washington, DC, is most likely going to have a different perspective on discretion than an officer in a small town in Idaho.

² These spaces may be presumably public and private, social or physical, and so on. I would argue that the police are capable of directly or indirectly entering any space. Whether such entry is legal or not is another matter.

³ Vago (2003, 127) comments, 'The American colonists adopted the English system of law enforcement, and the first metropolitan police force was created in Philadelphia in 1833.'

One's experiences with race, ethnicity, and class will inform their relating to others, even in the 'black and white' world of policing (Field notes, May 6, 2004). For Sergeant Brett Parson, commander of the GLLU, 'Police officers are generally very polar people. It's either legal or illegal. It's either right or it's wrong. Yes or no. Good guy, bad guy. Man, woman, gay, straight. You're getting arrested or you're not getting arrested' (Intelligence Report 2003). Another observation by a GLLU officer during a ride-along was that the 'white community' uses the police 'to serve and protect' and the 'black community' uses the police 'for clean-up' (Field notes, December 9, 2005). Going along the racial lines, the officer also went on to comment, 'our cultures are different, man. It's funny but it's real. It's funny but it's real.'

Even with the GLLU, we need to remember that police discretion will affect how individual police officers relate to both the GLBT and non-GLBT communities. This is particularly evident in my ride-alongs with GLLU officers. For instance, during a ride-along I witnessed an officer's interaction with a driver and passengers who started to drive the wrong way on a one-way street (Field notes, September 24, 2005). Although the officer repeatedly honked and yelled at the driver to turn around, they did not. After a moment, the officer got out and asked why the driver was going the wrong way on a one-way street. Despite the clear lack of a reason why the driver drove in the wrong direction, the officer let them go. When I asked why, the officer said it was not worth the effort to ticket them.

Instances of discretion as the above officer's reveals the power the police have, whether it is in action or inaction. Davis states, 'the police are among our most important policymaking administrative agencies. One may wonder whether any other agencies – federal, state, or local – make so much policy that as directly and vitally affects as many people' (1975, 263). The selective power to enforce the law or not does put the police in a unique social position. When one considers the GLLU's additional mission – as liaisons to and from GLBT communities – we can begin to interpret the possible uniqueness of their relationships to these communities.

3.2. Literature Review of Gay and Lesbian Policing

3.2.1. International Research

All I want is a little more tolerance and understanding. I'm not dangerous to the community, but the community is dangerous to me – I know that because I've experienced it firsthand. And it's all to do with fear. I'm waiting for the day when this world is mature enough to deal with its fears instead of burning them at the stake. As for myself, if this group had been around when I was in the Job then I would probably still be in it now. I think it's a great idea. Especially for the young ones. Who else can a gay copper talk to? (Police Constable, Burke 1993, 219)

Researchers in the United Kingdom have produced much of the research on 'gay' and 'lesbian' cops.⁴ Burke's (1993) account of gay, lesbian and bisexual police officers' narratives provides an important source for such reflexivity, although these come from well over a decade old. The account above illustrates a constable's perception of the need for the Lesbian and Gay Police Association (LAGPA).⁵ Although such an organization offers more avenues of communication and support, it still does not incorporate active police work in with said avenues like the GLLU does. Additionally, Burke offers a variety of opinions of gay and lesbian police's takes on homosexuality and policing. Such accounts vary greatly; for instance, one states that

I think a fair amount of the criticism from the gay community is unfounded. Most of them don't have any direct experience with the police, be it good or bad, and they just share a handful of second-hand stories and experiences that are constantly passed around. It's kind of hand-me-down philosophy where gays coming onto the scene are taught that the police are homophobic and nasty before they've met one, which is analogous to

⁴ I say *gay* and *lesbian* intentionally because the following sources do not discuss bisexual or intersexual police officers in any meaningful way, which is unfortunate to the larger project here.

⁵ Formed in the early 1990s, the LAGPA sought "to work towards equal opportunities for lesbians and gay police officers, to offer support and advice for lesbian and gay officers (and) to work towards better relations between the police and the gay community" (Burke 1993, 212). They affirm this on their website as well (Gay Police Association 2006).

heterosexuals being taught that homosexuals are nasty, effeminate child molesters before they've even met one. (Police Constable, Burke 1993, 86-87)

This illustrates a generalized understanding of 'the gay community.' Indeed, it reminds us of Brett Parson's comments above (Intelligence Report 2003). Other narratives discuss how the police are to blame, whereas others note responsibility on both sides.

Cherney (1999) reviews relationships between Australian police officers and gay and lesbian communities. Albeit shorter than Burke's (1993) account, Cherney provides some insight into the Australian context. Here, we find gay and lesbian police officers reporting their concerns in voicing their sexual positions. For instance, a female respondent comments 'When hearing comments directed to other gay members I feel I'm unable to respond due to fear of either outing the individual or confirming what other members suspect. Responding can have adverse consequences' (Cherney 1999). Despite these concerns, we find that the respective police forces are making strides in bettering GLBT experiences on the job.

3.2.2. Research in the United States

There are a few social science studies of 'gay' and 'lesbian police' in the United States. In their surveys of gay and lesbian police officers in a large Midwestern city, Miller, Forest and Jurik (2003) suggest that such officers face both potential benefits and difficulties if they were to come out.⁶ With the former, their presence would 'challenge stereotypes' while the latter refers back to all the sufferings of said stereotypes (2003:379). It would appear that the onus to 'challenge' this particular heteronormative and hypermasculine stereotyping falls onto the gay and lesbian officers, as opposed to those who exercise such stereotyping. Similarly, Belkin and McNichol (2002) find that integration of gay and lesbian personnel did not adversely affect the San Diego Police Department. Perhaps because they are writing in a police journal, they frame their argument as to emphasize 'that the integration of open gay and lesbian personnel in law

⁶ The authors define "The concept of 'out' or 'being out'" as "that the respondent has personally acknowledged his or her own sexual orientation and that this status is known by others" (2003, 380).

enforcement need not undermine organizational effectiveness' (2002, 65). While they employ survey methodology, the authors do spend a great deal of time stating they did an extensive literature review.

Leinen's (1993) interviews of 41 NYPD gay police officers offer a more extensive analysis of the meanings associated with being a gay police officer. His research and analysis offers a much more in-depth look into the trials and tribulations of being a gay police officer. Like the previous two studies, Leinen (1993, 214) concludes that

The benefits of coming out, or at least increasing one's visibility as a homosexual, seem to reveal themselves throughout this study. Yet many, if not most, gay cops are pessimistic about what full public disclosure will bring. They tend to exaggerate the discomfort and social harm that would befall them should their secret sexual identity become known in their work world.... (In) the long run (disclosure) leads to both acceptance and integration into the police world for most gay cops.... (Not only for the individual) but to the larger gay and straight police population as well as to the wider homosexual community.

What concerns me about such conclusions is that they allude to conformity to *heteronormative* police communities. The burden is on the gay or lesbian police officer to come out for the benefit of themselves and others; this is quite similar to Miller, Forest and Jurik's (2003, 379) assertion of gay and lesbian officers 'challenging stereotypes.' While this does not mean that the authors imply that the gay and lesbian police officers need to either stay quiet or conform, there is a powerful political statement in not suggesting integration *with respect to one's sexuality*. Indeed, it allows for a view that there are *police officers* and then there are *gay/lesbian police officers*.

One of the recurring themes in discussions of the GLLU and recruitment (i.e., Hull 2005) is how to bring in a more diverse population (particularly gay black men). This is reaffirmed in a discussion with a GLLU member (Field notes, December 9, 2005). Buhrke (1996) provides various narratives of gay and lesbian police officers, including two MPD officers. Lynn 'Rosie' Rosenberg discusses her time in the military and then in the MPD. Although she provides some narratives of her struggling against homophobia, she ends her overall piece by stating, 'I think

the real issue for me was being a woman.... It's tough being a woman in a man's world; it's a cliché, but it's true' (Buhrke 1996, 57). In many aspects, her narratives are similar in their form to Coates (2002) in how she frames her heroic dealing with homophobia. She stands her ground and she calls out homophobia when she encounters it through others speech.

The other narrative in Buhrke (1996) is Sandy J. Austin's, at the time a 20 year veteran of the MDPC and her uncertainties of being a lesbian in the MDPC. Additionally, she discusses her reaction to Sager and Lewis' (1980) story detailing her filing a discrimination complaint with the MPD's equal opportunity office after her superior questionably removed her from undercover work. Sager and Lewis (1980) comment that 'She is the first acknowledged lesbian on the force (MPD), and has tried to contend with what she considers the fears and suspicions of fellow officers who do not know and cannot understand and of people who unfairly stereotype lesbians as hefty, bull-like women in denim jackets and army boots.' Allowing herself to 'come out' is for Sandy, 'the best decision I've made because I feel freer than I ever could've been if I wasn't out' (Buhrke 1996, 116).

While both narratives are well before the GLLU, they do reveal a general sense of the times for early open police officers. Their being women only compounded the matter, although I would imagine that many of the themes of isolation and uncertainty run parallel to their male counterparts as revealed in the non-MPD accounts above. Although there were gay and lesbian police associations to support gay and lesbian police officers, police departments had yet to bridge the gap that existed between GLBT communities and the police.

3.3. Overview of the GLLU

MW: What's different about being a police officer and being a police officer in the GLLU?

PARSON: The first thing I want to do is turn that question around and tell you what's not different. We're police officers just like any other police officers in D.C., with full jurisdiction and full investigative authority and arrest powers. We specialize in dealing

with the GLBT community. Other police officers may be assigned to the sex offense branch, the check and fraud unit, or school resource officers -- they each have a specialty and when issues come up in that particular subject area, they are called upon to assist. That's what we do in GLLU. We specialize in dealing with a community that has been traditionally under-served, disrespected and discriminated against. There are many ways that we serve that community, and probably the most important is that we do not just focus exclusively on community relations. We do general policing. (Bugg 2005)

In the above interview, we find a recurring theme in much of Brett Parson's public statements: that the GLLU is fully-functional police unit that 'specializes' in working with GLBT-communities. Certainly this is reinforced every time I ride with a GLLU member and I see their gun. The GLLU officially began in June 2000 (GLLU 2005) but truly became what it recognized today in 2001 when Brett Parson took command by a direct order by Chief Ramsey.⁷ Washington, DC's, GLLU is unique among police units throughout the nation in that it is really the only unit that will combine active police work and community-outreach. As through their mission, the GLLU will: provide training and education while supporting both the police and GLBT communities as to the others' positions, investigate crimes that are against and by GLBT persons, serve as a spokes-agent of the MPD and reach out to GLBT businesses, etc. throughout Washington, DC (GLLU 2005).

Let there be no question that GLLU members are busy. In my discussions with members, they are through and through police officers. However, it is critical that we not lose sight of the fact that they are positioned (whether it is 'true' or not) as either 'gay' or 'lesbian.' Brett Parson comments on this phenomenon in an interview:

Capital Pride 2001 was my first day on this job. I came into it with anxiety and hesitancy. Up until then, if you mentioned my name to anybody who knows law enforcement in the Washington area, the first thing they would say was, 'Man, he's a good cop. By the way, did you know that he was gay?' My fear, and it will continue to be my fear for as long as I'm in this job, is that that will change over the years to 'He's the gay cop. He used to be a

⁷ A more thorough history of the GLLU can be found in Ertner (2002).

really good cop.’ So I’m really fighting to make sure that this unit continues to do street level law enforcement and maintains the respect of our peers. (Bugg 2005)

Despite his notoriety as a police officer when he came to the unit, his narrative expresses the constant reminder that the perception of homosexuality might trump other facets of one’s self in the eyes of others. For instance, my research into homophobic formation in newspaper articles supports how public perceptions of homosexuality will often usurp an individual’s other ‘identifying’ conditions (Tobler 2005). In newspaper articles that report adult public sex between men for example, someone *is* a sexual deviant although that person *was* a good community member. The difficulty for the GLLU is exercising discourses that go beyond such stigmatized and ill-founded perceptions and offer both the MPD and GLBT communities subject positions for their benefit.

4. Transgressive Sexuality

Transgression is an action which involves the limit, that narrow zone of a line where it displays the flaws of its passage, but perhaps also its entire space in the limit it crosses.... Transgression does not seek to oppose one thing to another, nor does it achieve its purpose through mockery or by upsetting the solidity of foundations; it does not transform the other side of the mirror, beyond an invisible and uncrossable line, into a glittering expanse.... Its role is to measure the excessive distance that it opens at the heart of the limit and to trace the flashing line that causes the limit to arise. (Michel Foucault, *Transgressive Architecture* 2005)

In light of the discussions of police and the GLLU, now it is important to spend some time discussing the use of transgressive sexuality in this paper. Foucault argues that *transgression* is not an oppressive force or power. Rather, transgression is making aware the otherwise unaware. Not at the expense of the one’s agency, but to open a discursive space for readings that dominant agents seek to deny. This is not to imply that transgression is purely either a benevolent or

malevolent act. What we need to do is to contextualize the workings of transgressive sexuality so we can come to know what it means to a broader public anthropology project.

Problematizing the state is an effective place to begin in discussing the possible transgressiveness of the GLLU. Indeed, how the state influences discourses on sexuality are important as well. Before I do that, let me first comment further on my use of *ideology* above. Principally I turn to Althusser (1971) for understanding ideology. He comments, '*all ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects*, by the functioning of the category of the subject' (1971, 173). For the sake of brevity, I will simply observe that his example of hailing a man on the street (Althusser 1971, 175) serves to show how the unassuming nature of ideology reveals its power. The result of such ideological hailing is a subject and we 'constantly practice the rituals of ideological recognition' (1971, 172). Rather than passively absorbing ideology, the officers in the GLLU – as everyone in any position – are actively recognizing subject positions. The question is if they are transgressing in such recognition or whether recognizing a GLLU member subject position is parallel to any other individual recognizing a particular subject position (which I will return to below).

As it pertains to the police, Althusser views the police as a Repressive State Apparatus (1971, 143). This contrasts with Ideological State Apparatuses, which include churches and schools for example (1971, 143). As implied by the name the former functions by violence and the latter by ideology, although neither is absolute. Moreover, both have secondary functions of the other informing them. The police need to perpetuate their positions to exist as institutions, to which Althusser comments, 'For example, the Army and the Police also function by ideology both to ensure their own cohesion and reproduction, and in the 'values' they propound externally' (1971, 145). It is necessary also to consider the witness (or witnesses) in the overall ideological processes. As it pertains to the GLLU, various audience agents (i.e., the police chief, the media, GLBT communities, etc) validate their recognition. The audience will validate whether the GLLU is truly *being* a gay and lesbian liaison unit, using their own readings of 'gay,' 'lesbian' and a 'liaison.' Appreciating this also supports the *active* agencies involved throughout this process, as opposed to a perception that these agencies are *passive*.

It is important to consider how the GLLU developed as a state agency. Some of the justification in forming the GLLU was as a response to a series of murders of transgendered

people in Washington, DC (Field notes, December 9, 2005). Binnie states, '(in) certain polities the nation-state is increasingly asserting itself as the protector of the rights of lesbians and gay men' (2004, 20-21). Returning to my earlier point of a lack of a unified police institution in the United States, this 'protection' may occur at the local level rather than the national.⁸ With respect to the reasons offered for the creation of the GLLU, I would be remiss to take for granted that such protection is purely a response to 'human rights.' In a discussion of protecting urban, gay locales from homophobic attack, Binnie comments on the economic reasoning involved with such state intervention (2004, 130). Indeed, 'campaigns to combat homophobic hate crime in these areas must be seen in the context of making these areas safer for investment' (Binnie 2004, 131). Having said that, I have no doubt that the GLLU members' reasons are for only helping others and doing their job well.

Informing this process is hegemony. Williams comments that

A lived hegemony is always a process. It is not, except analytically, a system or a structure. It is a realized complex of experiences, relationships and activities, with specific and changing pressures and limits. In practice, that is, hegemony can never be singular. Its internal structures are highly complex, as can readily be seen in any concrete analysis. Moreover (and this is crucial, reminding us of the necessary thrust of the concept), it does not just passively exist as a form of dominance. It has continually to be renewed, recreated, defended, and modified. It is also continually resisted, limited, altered, challenged by pressures not at all its own (1977, 112).

There is support for Williams' comments when one couples them with the GLLU's discretion. As state agents, the GLLU does perpetuate state hegemony. The very creation and success of the GLLU does reveal that hegemony is a process. Moreover, that there is a clear relationship between hegemonic state and subaltern agents. This is particularly true in hegemonic perspectives on citizenship. Although her focus differs from this project, Ong (2003) recognizes the economic components of citizenship – and by extension – the state. By framing their arguments for a more complete citizenship, GLBT activists affirm their economic value (i.e.,

⁸ However, the governance situation in Washington, DC, does present a national/influence from Congress unlike other locales.

Ong 2003:267). Active protection of such communities reveals an appreciation such a position.⁹ Indeed, one might argue that for one to be in a position to transgress they will need some economic foundation so their transgression may have any political impact.

While it is necessary to remark on how economics may influence transgression, with the GLLU it is important to emphasize the central tenet of any possible transgression: sexuality. Relating regulation to sex, Foucault (1978:24-25) observes

Sex was not something to be judged; it was a thing to be administered.... In the eighteenth century, sex became a ‘police’ matter – in the full and strict sense of the term at the time: not the repression of disorder, but an ordered maximization of collective and individual forces.... A policing of sex: that is, not the rigor of a taboo, but the necessity of regulating sex through useful and public discourses.

From a Foucaultian perspective, we can surmise that the GLLU is merely the next step in such policing of sexuality and sexual deviants. By having those in ‘the community’ answer to the MPD, the police can in turn ‘regulate sex through useful and public discourses.’ However, this might imply that the GLLU members are basically pawns in this process. What does it say about their agencies and voices if they are mostly regulated by the state?

In observing the relationship between the state and subaltern, Gramsci (1971:182) writes ‘...the life of the State is conceived of as a continuous process of formation and superseding of unstable (on the judicial plane) between the interests of the fundamental group and those of the subordinate groups.’ These processes form an equilibrium by which the ‘fundamental group’ exerts on so much power onto the ‘subordinate groups’ (Gramsci 1971:182). As my larger project into the GLLU examines, there might be a possible conflict with the former group to be the police as state agents and the latter group to be the police as GLBT agents. The police officers are not passively regurgitating hegemonic discourses while unconsciously suppressing GLBT discourses. There are continual negotiations between these subject positions, whereby the

⁹ I use Ong (2003) to make a point of how the state acts to perpetuate economics resources that are of benefit to the state and I do not presume to imply the “white, upper middle class gay man” stereotype.

GLLU members recognize a particular subject position informed by police and GLTB discourses.

From Wilchens' perspective, the GLLU does not *repress* but rather *produces* discursive power (2004, 62). This production of 'discursive power produces specific kinds of individuals, with specific bodies, pleasures, and sexes' (Wilchens 2004, 62). The GLLU is now not only at the intersection of police agency and GLBT communities but it can enforce state power while being a voice of GLBT persons. Their position enables them to demarginalize the police to GLBT communities.) Moreover, their position if one of authority that can demarginalize GLBT voices. Such margins are necessary to discursive power. Wilchens (2004, 71) notes, 'To clearly see discursive power at work, we need bodies at society's margins. Margins are margins because that's where the discourse beings to fray, where whatever paradigm we're in starts to lose its explanatory power and all those inconvenient exceptions begin to cause problems.' The GLLU displays complex negotiations of one's hegemonic position exercising power onto marginalized groups while considering their own (possible) hegemonic positioning. Such negotiation does not result in a hybrid social position, but rather one that has its own discursive formation.

The multiplicity of understandings by individuals is multiaccentuality, which considers that any word or sign is going to have many different understandings by individuals rather than one static definition or meaning.¹⁰ Obviously, those in the GLLU are going to have different interpretations of their subject positions. What is important to consider is how such recognitions of the GLLU affects the members' actions and interpellation of ideology. This recalls my previous discussion of police discretion. While they are in sense just police officers, they are also very visible and occasionally vocal members of GLBT communities. This harkens back to Binnie's (2004, 25) pronouncement that 'Homosexuality threatens to destabilize fixed categories of identity, which are fundamental to the fixity of identity within nationalism. However... it may no longer be sustainable to frame sexual dissidents' relationships to the state merely in terms of exclusion and repression.'

¹⁰ For understanding multiaccentuality, I turn to Volosinov who states 'Class does not coincide with the sign community, i.e., with the community which is the totality of users of the same set of signs for ideological communication. Thus various different classes will use one and the same language. As a result, differently oriented accents intersect in every ideological sign. Sign becomes an arena of the class struggle' (1973, 23).

5. Intersections of the GLLU and Transgression

If we can abstract pathogenicity and hygiene from our notion of dirt, we are left with the old definition of dirt as matter out of place. This is a very suggestive approach. It implies two conditions: a set of ordered relations and a contrevention of that order. Dirt then, is never a unique, isolated event. Where there is dirt there is a system. Dirt is the by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter, in so far as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements. (Douglas 1966, 35)

Does the GLLU transgress the normativity of the MPD? In the opening narrative of this paper, Brett Parson expresses his hopes for the GLLU. At the center of his hopes are the MPD and GLBT communities. If the GLLU exists to serve both GLBT communities and the MPD, how might the GLLU be a transgressive agency when transgressiveness '(measures) the excessive distance that it opens at the heart of the limit and to trace the flashing line that causes the limit to rise' (Foucault as cited in Transgressive Architecture 2005). Can the unit be transgressive if it does not deviate from that position?

The scholarship regarding homosexuality and the police suggests that there is hostility by the police towards homosexuality whether it is within or out of the force. Bernstein and Kostelac (2002, 301) comment that 'the police are a particularly important group of social actors because of their roles as gatekeepers in the reporting of antigay/lesbian violence and because discrimination in a law enforcement setting can jeopardize the physical safety of lesbian and gay officers.' As gatekeepers, the MPD positions the GLLU as authorities of GLBT issues. There is a danger in this because it may allow state agencies to objectify GLBT communities under the guise of legitimate police authority. Indeed, this is counterproductive when it comes to this situation. Wilchens (2004, 62) observes that '(objectivity) is meaningless when it comes to gender and queerness because they very notion of queerness, the production of some genders *as* queer, and the search for their origin and meaning are *already* exertions of power.' If that is indeed the case and the GLLU is in place to check such 'exertions of power,' then there is a real danger if they deviate from their position.

The consequences of deviation can go beyond the immediate relationships between the police and GLBT communities. Additionally, non-MPD agencies (i.e., news media, community organizations) look to them as such gatekeepers into the police. Nodding to Althusser (1971), we see that these agencies recognize the GLLU as a police agency. The aforementioned legitimacy of the GLLU with GLBT communities only bolsters their position. Despite that, the fact remains that the unit is still a police unit. Wherever we go, the police officer subject position interpellates the officers. This interpellation comes through in their communication, observations and how they physically place themselves in any given public space.¹¹

As it pertains to sexuality, there is also a question as to how much the unit's officers recognize transgression. It would appear that the officers feel that have a connection with GLBT communities (Field notes, December 9, 2005). As the officer further explained, they share a common bond that simply exists from a shared experience. The officer commented that in a conversation with a GLBT person, they would 'get into their psyche' in an effort to help them. This is where discretion plays such an important role: the officer might not have to listen to the victim or offender. Amnesty International (2005) contains numerous anecdotes of ridicule or rejection of GLBT persons by police. Are the discretionary practices by GLLU members informed by their positions in the GLLU, or are more from their own personal experiences as a police officer?

Regarding the latter possibility, numerous sources cite Brett Parson's reaction to when someone posted a pornographic lesbian picture on his locker. (He retaliated by posting pornographic male pictures on the other 300-plus lockers in the room.) Occurring well before he worked with the GLLU, that appears to have been a transgressive act. With this particular contextualization, such an act is indicative of a transgressive sexual position. This act intentionally makes suspect hegemonic notions of not only what constitutes pornography, sexual and gender roles. In addition, it calls into question what makes an appropriate police officer and policing. Now with his command of the GLLU, his connections to sexuality are no longer restricted to his 'private life.'¹² With a presumed 'gay' sexuality out in public from a

¹¹ For instance, the officer will always position him or herself with a maximized view of the space. This is so they may watch others and so they can more secure themselves in that space.

¹² Although *private* and *public* are problematic, I use them from an assumed heteronormative position. Leap discusses that '(the) possibility of intrusion by police,... the pervasive presence of regulatory authority – all of these

heteronormative position, such an act might move from transgressiveness to one in line with his position. This has two important implications: first, the audience (heteronormative police agents) might not recognize actions by GLLU members as anything other than connected to their positions.

A particular situation from my field notes on December 9, 2005, illustrates this possible transgressive sexuality. The GLLU officer and I went to an African-American lesbian dance club in Northeast Washington, DC. Club Delta Elite is rather unassuming from the outside, although you can hear the thumping hip-hop music from the outside. We entered into a cramped enclosure where the officer exchanged pleasantries with the door staff, an older African-American man and a younger African-American woman. The club itself has various lights throughout the space and features a raised stage for performers. Truth be known, I feel it is safe to say that I was the only white person in the space and one of a few male-bodied individuals. The officer and I stood by the door, which did not surprise me given the officer's spatial-orientation practices (noted above). I am not sure whether anyone gave my presence any thought; indeed, most of the people looked past me as they entered. The most interesting part of the experience was the officer's actions throughout our time there. Lamenting that 'I can't drink,' visiting with friends and watching the dancing women at no time appeared to distract the officer from their position at that space: a police officer. Going to that lesbian space for a white, male-bodied person might be transgressive, however for the GLLU member it is part of their position. Any problematizing of the marginalization of the club by heteronormative discourses still fell under their position as a GLLU police officer.

6. Conclusion

During my ride-along with a GLLU member on December 9, 2005, I explained the topic of this paper. The officer replied quite abruptly that transgressiveness did not apply in their case. To paraphrase, 'being a police officer is the officer's job and the GLLU is their assignment' (Field

realities reframe the meanings of 'private' and 'privacy' as they apply to sites of sexual practice' and that 'all sites of sexual practice are public locations, and any claims to privacy which unfold there are fictional claims' (1999, 10-11).

notes, December 9, 2005). From the perspective of the police officer subject position, GLLU officers are not transgressive agents. Although the interjection of 'homosexuality' is in contrast with the hypermasculine, heterosexual discourses of said subject position, it is done so under the guise of a police officer's mission. However, this does not preclude that the officers do not transgress or exercise transgressive sexuality. Nor does this paper seek to ignore the aforementioned concept of multiaccentuality, whether it is from the GLLU position or not. Police exercising of discretion or having varying readings of a situation from a non-heteronormative subject position does not automatically mean that the discretionary act or reading is transgressive. While any given police officer or unit will exercise certain discourses surrounding discretion, this project contends that those of the GLLU do not qualify it as a transgressive agency even if 'its role is to measure the excessive distance that it opens at the heart of the limit and to trace the flashing line that causes the limit to arise' (Foucault as cited in *Transgressive Architecture* 2005).

To rephrase Douglas' (1966, 35) comment, we must be mindful that the GLLU is not 'matter out of place.' The officers in the GLLU are still police officers whose actions are informed by hegemonic discourses. While they might exercise transgressiveness at points and that broadens the potential of policing, it is not the hallmark of their positions. As they have pointed out (i.e., Poole and Crandall 2005 and Field notes, December 9, 2005), they perceive their positions in the unit as assignments that are finite. This does not appear to be a source of conflict, either. Here the officers are police officers who are openly GLBT or an ally, unlike many of the narratives of gay and lesbian police officers above. Moreover, there is a long list of applicants which suggests a certain hegemonic legitimacy (Field notes, December 9, 2005). This does not mean that the unit is completely appreciated by all in the MPD. As Brett Parson comments, 'we're not there yet' (Poole and Crandell 2005). Although there may be difficulty, the GLLU is now a police unit that can better serve both the police and GLBT communities with certain legitimacy.

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Considering Performance

Abstract

*This paper examines some of the ways in which performativity is being mediated. It locates this discussion within the spheres of performance theory (emphasizing Judith Butler's contributions) and postcolonial discourse to investigate how the performance of hybrid identities is being theorized. As means of an example the cultural practice of the carnival, as is discussed in Awam Amkpa's "Floating Signification: Carnivals and the Transgressive Performance of Hybridity" and Barbara Browning's "The Daughters of Gandhi: Africanness, Indianness, and Brazilianness in the Bahian Carnival" in May Joseph and Jennifer Natalya Fink's (1999) book *Performing Hybridity* is discussed. In conclusion, Susan Foster's argument to include body movement and choreography into theorizations of performativity is put forward as a more integrative approach to the study of hybrid performances.*

Keywords: Performance, performativity, hybridity, carnival, choreography

1. Introduction

Performance has recently become a popular site of analysis. Contemporary debates around the term performance and its cousin, performativity, are not necessarily discussed in terms of theatrical or dance experience, as was traditionally the case in Western theatrical disciplines, but rather as the interpretation of speech in action. The definitions of these terms and all that they entail remain unsettled. Just as the body is always in the process of formation and is therefore never a finished product, performativity remains a concept in the making that to some extent refuses to be fixed. This paper will discuss some of the ways in which performativity is being mediated. I will locate this discussion within the spheres of performance theory (emphasizing Judith Butler's contributions) and postcolonial discourse to investigate how the performance of hybrid identities is being theorized. I will also

discuss the difficulties, complexities, attributes, and contradictions that are part of performing hybridities. Furthermore, I will briefly touch upon the ways in which this contemporary discourse is applied to and manifests itself within the cultural practice of the carnival, as is discussed in Awam Amkpa's "Floating Signification: Carnivals and the Transgressive Performance of Hybridity" and Barbara Browning's "The Daughters of Gandhi: Africanness, Indianness, and Brazilianness in the Bahian Carnival" in May Joseph and Jennifer Natalya Fink's (1999) book *Performing Hybridity*. In conclusion, I will introduce Susan Foster's argument to include body movement and choreography into theorizations of performativity in order to propose a more integrative approach to the study of hybrid performances.

2. Performativity and Performance

Much of theorist Judith Butler's work centres on analysis and destabilization of the category of the subject. Butler (1990) asserts that all gender, rather than rooted in a fixity of being-ness or "essence" of the self, is performed and performative as it is determined through repetitive prescribed actions that constitute its reality. Rather than assuming that identity is a fixed category, Butler traces the ways in which subjects are constituted in language. The performance of gender, which Butler asserts pre-exists the performer, naturalizes gender by producing a fiction of gender authenticity. In other words, "...acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are performative in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are fabrications manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means" (Butler 1997: 119, italics in original). Although Butler asserts that all gender is performative, she reveals that gender norms can be destabilized through the form of performance undertaken. For example, in *Gender Trouble*, Butler (1990) outlines the ways in which drag functions as both a parody of gender while also revealing the imitative structure of gender and the constructive nature of heterosexuality. Butler maintains that drag is subversive in that it denaturalizes gendered meanings to reveal the imitative aspect and fluidity of gender (Ibid.: 120). However, Butler

also cautions that not all parody is subversive and notes that there are also instances of drag that reinforce the binaries of dominant gender norms (Ibid.: 193).

In *Bodies that Matter*, Butler (1993) clarifies that although gender is performative, it is not simply a performance and should not be reduced as such; a predetermined limited range of “scripts” dictates the performance of gender. In other words, people are not free to simply decide which gender they will enact. Attempting to discuss some of the distinctions Butler has made between performance and performativity Sara Salih clarifies by stating that “...whereas performance presupposes a pre-existing subject, performativity contests the very notion of the subject” (2002: 63). Gender, therefore, is not performed as an expression of an inner-self, rather, “...gender emerges from performances that disguise their constitutive role” (McKenzie 1998: 221). Butler’s distinction between theatrical performance and discursive performativity have often been confused as well as have created confusion, although they are more clearly differentiated in her later writings (McKenzie 1998; Salih 2002).

Jon McKenzie (1998) notes that despite Butler’s focus on performativity rather than performance, Butler has contributed significantly to the fields of performance studies by expanding the discipline of performance through the introduction of performative normativity. McKenzie argues that performance genres, as theorized by anthropologists Victor Turner and Richard Schnecher, stressed notions of performative liminality (Ibid.). Such theories conceive embodied performances (such ritual or theatre) as potentially subversive in that they create liminal spaces, in-between temporal places, where social norms are played with and, at times, inverted. According to McKenzie, rather than theorizing performance as simply transgressive, Butler draws from such theories of liminality and reinterprets them in a way that includes normative performance (McKenzie 1998: 222). Normative performances are evidenced when, through performative citationality, social norms are repeated rather than contested (Ibid.). Thus Butler challenges what McKenzie calls the ‘liminal-norm’ popularized by Turner and Schnecher (the norm being an understanding of performance as subversive) by emphasizing that performances can also reinforce or re-produce cultural hegemony (Ibid.: 223).

However, perhaps the transgressive aspects of liminality are too easily assumed by McKenzie. Turner (1982) does argue that industrial leisure art forms (in which dance is included) create a temporal space which, because of the element of play, has the potential to radically critique and subvert or, inversely, to strengthen or “...justify...prevailing social and cultural mores and political orders” (Turner 1982: 40, italics added). This suggests that Turner does account for the normative possibilities of performance and that perhaps Butler re-emphasizes and expands upon Turner’s notions of liminality, rather than reinterprets it, as it seems McKenzie suggests. Nevertheless, it is clear that some are quick to theorize performance as innately radical. Understanding performative normativity clarifies the ways in which parodic performances such as drag are not always subversive. McKenzie explains that, “Drag thus may further sediment gender identities by repeating and reinforcing the orbit of hegemonic significations, while also destabilizing those very significations through exorbitant, hyperbolic repetitions that give rise to political resignifications” (McKenzie 1998: 224). Therefore, the context of performance becomes imperative.

Although Butler attempts to configure discussions of race into her theories of performativity, many have critiqued Butler for her emphasis on gender and sexuality while marginalizing discussions of race. Although Butler states that she is not prioritizing sex and gender over race, some are not convinced. For example, Salih stresses that

Butler herself has been scrupulous in *not* suggesting that any one term takes priority over another, even though the organization of Bodies [Bodies that Matter] might suggest otherwise – if not the priority of sex over race, at least the separability of the terms. [...] We may be left with questions concerning the relationship between race and the lesbian phallus, or how Butler’s description of ‘girling’ might be applied to race, since neither the lesbian phallus nor interpellation/performativity are specifically discussed in the context of race (2001: 95, italics in original).

It is clear from Salih’s comments that the simple transfer of such a theory of performativity is perhaps complicated by the visibility of raced bodies. For example, In *Bodies that Matter* Butler (1993) explains that the statement ‘it’s a boy’ or ‘it’s a girl’ by a doctor when a child

is born is an act that constructs, through the declaration, the sex and gender of a child. This gender is assumed rather than reported from fact. Naming is performative because it discursively calls into being a process...

...by which a certain 'girling' is compelled, the term or, rather, its symbolic power, governs the formation of a corporeally enacted femininity that never fully approximates the norm. This is a 'girl', however, who is compelled to 'cite' the norm in order to qualify and remain a viable subject. Femininity is thus not the product of a choice, but the forcible citation of a norm, one whose complex historicity is indissociable from relations of discipline, regulation and punishment (Butler 1993: 232).

To further emphasize the performative process of this speech-act, Butler cleverly discusses a cartoon strip which plays with this authoritative naming process by exclaiming 'it's a lesbian' in relation to the birth of a child. Hence, the performative action that calls people into being is revealed. Nevertheless, from this example it is easy to see that a simple transfer of theory here, replacing sex with race, is perhaps troubled by the "visibility" of race for although race is a construct, visibility is one of the markers of which racism is reliant upon. Visibility is not, however, self-evident in terms of meaning.

What Butler's notion of performativity reveals are the processes in which sex and gender are discursively and socially constructed and also the ways in which such processes may be destabilized. Despite the critiques, Butler's concepts are useful for understanding the ways in which sex, gender, and race are constructed rather than being natural and fixed. In a similar vein, hybridity discourse points to the ways in which the myth of race is socially constructed as reality. Those who perform hybridity and who manage to draw attention to ways in which race is being performed (consciously or not), highlight, threaten, and also live the oppressive consequences of these constructions. Butler's suggestion that there is no essence to the self, only discursive acts whose citational repetition within regimes of discourse constitute an identity, is a theoretical concept that can perhaps be applied when examining other modes of normativity realised through performativity. For example, claims to citizenship are performative acts that, through repetition, serve to

reiterate, strengthen, and also define national borders and nationalistic ideologies. Butler's theory of performative identities and Homi Bhabha's theory of colonial mimicry have been periodically compared (Salih 2001:141-142). When reading Homi Bhabha's (1994) book, *The Location of Culture*, it is difficult not to begin to connect the ways in which his attempt to destabilize the fixity of identity and reveal imitative, mimetic behaviour echo some of Butler's theories... and vice versa.

3. Hybridities

The authors in May Joseph and Jennifer Fink's (1999) edited book *Performing Hybridity* speak to the various ways in which identities are performed, constructed, deconstructed, represented, and understood. In Jose Esteban Muñoz's (1999) discussion of Richard Fung's practice of queer hybridity developed within his performance work, Muñoz links practices of colonial mimicry with queer performativity. In Amkpa's discussion of the carnival, he varies from Muñoz in that he seems to equate colonial mimicry with queer performativity, layering the term performance to draw attention to how beings are constructed. Thus within Joseph and Fink's edited book the term 'performing' seems to allude to both Butler's concept of performativity, as producing identity, and in a more general performance sense, as a way of revealing or making apparent constructions of identity through performance. In their various ways, these authors draw attention to the production of identity and, in doing so, reveal the ways in which beings are produced under specific codified regiments, and within specific power relations. The disruptive political potential of performing hybridity can be revealed through performances which draw attention to the operations of power which structure how beings are realised in order to suggest possibilities of emancipatory change. According to Joseph (1999), new hybrid identities offer new conceptions of citizenship which challenge the limits of sovereignty because they acknowledge the transitional, cumulative space of hybrid identities by drawing upon multiple histories and multiple emerging conceptions of ways of being. In this way, Joseph contends that new

hybrid identities attempt to move beyond national and ethnic borders, being simultaneously national and international.

For many postcolonial cultural theorists, such as Hall, Gilroy, Bhabha, Trinh, and Ang, hybridity is a critical, political force which functions as an active intervention that destabilizes, subverts, and undermines established powers, blurring boundaries, binaries and “pure” identities (Ang 2001:198). Although there seems to be no singular definition of the concept of hybridity, what remains central to hybridity theory is that it acknowledges the impurity of all cultures and in doing so, also suggests the impossibility of essentialist claims to authenticity and purity (Ang 2001: 198; Lionnet 1989: 27). This has specific implications for white, Western identities, which were traditionally presented as hegemonic and singular, rather than diverse and heterogeneous. To many, contemporary hybridity theory suggests that through hybridization authorities and dominant discourses can be subverted, undone and/or challenged (Lionnet 1989: 22-25). Interestingly, although hybridity is everywhere, it is often seen as an obstacle or anomaly (Ang 2001: 200).

Nevertheless, the performance of hybridity is not always disruptive. Ang (2001) notes that uncritical conceptions of hybridity are often misconstrued and oversimplified into what she calls a “liberal hybridism” in which hybridity is reduced to fusion and synthesis akin to the rhetoric of multiculturalism, rather than a concept that stresses living “together-in-difference” (Ibid.: 195; 200). For example, Ang describes an article in the 1996 Australian magazine *The Bulletin*, which features people of visibly diverse origins on the cover (Ibid.:194). The article, Ang explicates, positively exclaims that the Australian population is becoming increasingly hybrid and describes this process of hybridization as a domesticated, harmless solution for overcoming ethnic conflict and difference through amalgamation (Ibid: 194-195). Ang notes that in relation to historical and contemporary Western racist anxieties concerning miscegenation, it is progressive for *The Bulletin* to refer to the hybridization of Australia’s population as a positive thing, however, hybridity here is celebrated as a means to erase difference. In this way the uncritical use of hybridity “...becomes simply a mechanism for overcoming difference rather than living with and through it” (Ibid: 194, italics in original).

More than simply being misconstrued or uncritically appropriated, hybridity has also been critiqued for multiple reasons. Just as the term performativity (in the Butler sense) misleadingly suggests an element of choice, the term hybridity can also be harmfully suggestive. Young (1995) reveals some of the problems inherent within the term hybridity, as it implies that humans are made up of different species; Brah (1996) notes that hybridity has implicit heterosexual politics due to the development of the term's referral to interracial sexual intercourse; while authors such as Stam, Muñoz, Amkpa, Browning, and Mootoo draw attention to the tensions that continue to exist between sovereignty and hybridity as well as national and international citizenship (Joseph 1999:16). What is most significantly implicated within the term hybridity, however, is that the emergence of hybrid identities has often developed within contemporary and historical contexts of extreme violence.

The violence of hybridity has been enacted through physical, political, economical, and environmental means, to name a few (Anzaldúa 1987; Foley 1999; Shohat 1999). Enforced miscegenation in the wake of European colonialism is the first example that comes to mind. Anzaldúa's (1987) discussion of the difficulties of negotiating the cultural complexities of enforced (non)citizenship due to the implementation of borders in the case of Chicanas/os is another example of enforced hybridity. Of course hybridity is not always caused by violence and it is dangerous to ignore the multitude of ways hybrid identities form. Ella Shohat reminds her readers that to deny hybridity is violent as well. Shohat (1999) reveals the ways in which national myths can function to both erase and recreate hybrid identities. For example, Shohat critiques Zionist historiography by noting that it subsumes, excludes and/or devalues the experiences of Sephardic Arab Jews, creating a homogenous past steeped in the Eurocentric, unequal binaries of the East and the West (Ibid.). Similarly, Amkpa observes the ways in which the English state denies its postcolonial subjects and communities individuality while simultaneously defining them as homogenous (1999: 98).

One of the contradictions of hybridity discourse that resonates is whether the overtones of colonialism and conquest so embedded within hybridity (a term that gestures, in opposition, towards the veracity of pure form and authenticity), can be effectively

reclaimed to circumvent, complicate or disrupt oppressor/oppressed dichotomies and global formations of authoritarian control, as is suggested by Joseph (1999). In this quote Robert Stam clearly outlines some of the intricacies and dangerous characteristics of hybridity, reminding his readers that hybridity is power-laden, asymmetrical and also co-optable (1999: 60,61).

But hybridity has never been a peaceful encounter, a tension-free theme park; it has always been deeply entangled with colonial violence. Although for some hybridity is lived as just another Derridean free play, for others it is lived as pain and visceral memory. Indeed as a descriptive catchall term, hybridity fails to discriminate between the diverse modalities of hybridity, such as colonial imposition...or other interactions such as obligatory assimilation, political co-optation, cultural mimicry, commercial exploitation, top-down appropriation, bottom-up subversion (Stam 1999: 60, italics in original).

Stam's sentiments are repeated by Ella Shohat in Ang (2001), where she also includes internalized self-rejection, creative transcendence, and social conformism as parts of the diverse modalities of hybridity (Ang 2001: 197).

As a result of this violent history there are many who refuse to identify themselves as hybrid. For instance, Ien Ang identifies Ian Anderson as a "Tasmanian Aboriginal descendant of Truganini," who affirms his Indigenous identity and disidentifies with his white heritage (See Ang 2001:195-196). Anderson stresses the political importance of resisting non-Indigenous Australian pressures to acknowledge white ancestry often imposed on those living with the history of miscegenation (Ang 2001:195). Ang refers to this strategic essentialism, which is often used as a political weapon, as "strategic anti-anti essentialism" (Ibid.:196). Those who have expressed dissatisfaction with the ambiguity of the concept of hybridity itself question the ways in which political force can be mobilized and the ways in which affiliated groups can find political leverage if there is no clear definition or boundary within this oppositional third space. Claims within social movements for territorial and cultural reclamation, citizenship and national belonging, as well as equal rights (demanded for example, by Mexican Americans (Anzaldúa 1987) and

Australian Aboriginals (Foley: 1999)), therefore, often strategically reduce “...hybridity in the interests of sovereignty” (Joseph 1999: 5). In such cases, essentialist claims to identity, rather than assertions of hybridity, tend to more easily facilitate mobilization towards the countering of oppressive politics. As Joseph (1999:10) notes, the term hybridity emerges out of a nexus of affiliated terms of possibly equal weight and value that are visionary yet, also embedded within oppressive and/or derogatory connotations (see for example Bhabha’s (1994) discussion of colonial mimicry, Brah’s (1996) discussion of the terms diaspora and minority, Hall’s (1996) discussion of new ethnicities, Lionnet’s (1989) discussion of métissage, and Young’s (1995) discussion of hybridity and diaspora). Nevertheless, hybridity is a useful term to invoke when theorizing identities as fluid and complex rather than fixed or stable. Understanding the performance of hybridity is one way to theorize how the cultural practice of the carnival, for example, can be potentially politically disruptive to dominant power formations, while also operating within these normative structures. Authors Amkpa (1999) and Browning (1999) both suggest that the performance of (and within) the carnivals they discuss draws attention to, and also troubles, the structures through which subjects are realised. In the case of these two carnivals, the performance of hybridity manifests itself in various ways, challenging centred dominant norms.

4. Performing Hybridity: English and Brazilian Carnival

Both Amkpa and Browning examine the performance of carnival in England and Brazil respectively and address the ways in which carnival creates a subversive space for performative identities. Through music, song, dance, masquerade, costume and a multitude of other celebratory cultural practices (such as cooking) that accompany carnival before, during, and after the event, the carnival enunciates a variety of subjectivities and consists of a variety of contradictory discourses (Amkpa 1999). Both Amkpa and Browning resist totalizing theories of carnival and instead stress the particularity of each event dependent on, for instance, national and regional locations and political climate. Therefore, as Amkpa

points out, what defines carnival is difficult to determine (Ibid.). Nevertheless, that carnival has a discursive role in identity formation (in all its variations) and is a performative space where alterity and hybrid identities are publicly paraded does not seem to be disputed, at least between these two authors. As well, as is noted by Amkpa, similarities in performance styles exist between Caribbean and English carnivals (Ibid.: 97).

Placing England's carnival in context, Amkpa points out that although carnival creates a time and place to assert and perform being, belonging, and becoming, memory and multiplicity, the event is isolated within imperialistic geographical, temporal and ideological frameworks (1999). Amkpa obviously draws from and pays tribute to theorists such as V. N. Volosinov (1973) and Mikhail Bakhtin (1981) who have noted the contestations of normative ideologies and reversals of social hierarchies evidenced in carnival. Amkpa, however, attempts to avoid their universalizing approaches to the study of carnival by highlighting the particularity of the event as it takes place in England (Ibid.: 97-98). Although carnival in this case is a summer event, which transpires on the public streets of major English cities such as London, Leeds, Bristol, and Birmingham, the location of the parade is restricted to inner-city neighbourhoods rather than more central public space such as London's Hyde Park (Ibid.:100). The narrow movement of the parade limits the celebratory performances of fluidity and hybridity, subjectivity and citizenship, to black and working-class communities therefore making a minor impact on the dominant white culture (Ibid.). State sanctioned police forces that regulate carnival not only structure the boundaries of possibility but also become part of the performance (Ibid.: 98).

Carnival also creates a space for tourist spectatorship, for the white scopophilic and exoticising gaze, and this too becomes part of the performance as an embodied spatial practice. In her article *The Metropolitan Gaze: Travellers, Bodies and Spaces*, Vera Mackie (2000) highlights how tourist and host practices as well as discourses of desire are linked to larger global issues such as globalization and economic inequalities between countries. Articulating the interconnectedness of the colonial gaze and the tourist gaze which both function on systems of displacement which are reinforced by racial, gendered, sexual, and ethnic culturally and spatially specific hierarchies, Mackie argues that spatial displacement is integral to the production of illicit desires as it maintains the binary oppositions of

contaminated and uncontaminated spaces. Mackie explains that contaminated spaces are places where illicit desires can be fulfilled and are produced in colonial situations, within specific contexts of domination and subordination (Ibid.). Tourist spectatorship and desire take place not simply within specific nationally geographic colonial spaces but also within specific metropolitan spaces, such as the London carnival, where power inequalities also exist.

To some extent the celebratory nature of the event of carnival obscures the realities that the hybrid identities emphasised within the carnival are in many cases the consequences of the violent colonizing processes, enforced mixture, forced migration, and systemic racism as well as a reaction to the non-belonging of postcolonial subjects absent within England's singular notion of citizenship which persists throughout the rest of year. This reality is emphasized by Robert Stam's poignant words; "For oppressed people, artistic syncretism is not a game but a painful negotiation, an exercise...both of "resistance" and "surrender" (1999: 61). On a more positive note, Amkpa states that, "Recognition of the enforced hybridity of identity politics and the proactive willingness within such communities to create affiliatory politics is central to the hybridity in carnivals and other cultural practices such as popular music, dance, and fashion" (1999: 100). So while dominant, white, English subjects may be oblivious to the political origin of hybrid performances, many of the carnival participants, Britain's postcolonial subjects and communities, are conscious of the performativity of their own hybrid identities and the ways in which carnival questions "...the singularity of identity that the English state implies and denies them" (Amkpa 1999: 98).

Drawing on some similar concepts as Amkpa, Barbara Browning's (1999) detailed and complex essay, "The daughters of Gandhi: Africanness, Indianness, and Brazilianness in the Bahian Carnival," describes the various identity politics that are represented, performed, and played out within the context of the Brazilian Bahian carnival. As the title suggests, Browning relates the syncretism that exists between various African traditions, as well as European and Indigenous traditions within the context of the carnival. Browning contends that carnival blurs the distinctions between expressions of the sacred and the secular, the profane and the solemn (Ibid.). With her emphasis on carnival's blurring of

social boundaries Browning, similar to Amkpa, appears to also be strongly influenced by Bakhtin's theories of carnival, however, because she does not reference him directly, such a connection may be lost on a new reader.

According to Browning, the Bahian carnival is extravagant, in that it is the site of utopian fantasies, yet it is also "explicitly political," in that expressions of Africanness and Brazilainness remain central (Ibid.: 81). In the midst of what Browning calls a "participatory street party" of extreme political and sexual expressivity there exists intimate inversions of racial and economic hierarchies, cannibalistic inversions (in terms of sexuality), as well as fantastical performances of gender play (Ibid.: 81). Within carnival community affiliations are asserted and also more explicitly revealed to spectators, particularly Western spectators. Browning draws attention to the physical, sexual, and cultural encounters and exchanges that take place during carnival and their expressions in terms of economic, sexual, and racial politics (Ibid. 83).

Browning contends that one of the places that hybridity is realised and performed is through the samba dance and music which dominates the carnival. Samba was popularized by the blocos afro (African bloc) and is part of a movement towards Africanness that has been part of the Brazilian carnival's inclination since the 1980s (1999: 81). The political nature of the samba is examined by Browning who notes that women who dance samba are sexualised in various ways while representing "racial mixing and cultural syncretism" (Ibid.: 82). For instance, women who dance the samba are called "mulatas" regardless of visual markers such as skin colour (Ibid.: 82). Samba dance emerges from a long tradition and history of choreographies which structure the ways in which the body moves and the ways in which the moving, dancing body represents itself and is represented in the context of the carnival. That the movement of samba is stereotyped and over-simplified as simply an erotic expression serves to efface the complex cultural and historical significations within this non-linguistic movement tradition (Ibid.: 83).

Aided by musical composers, Brazilian carnival offers a re-telling of the history of Africa that articulates pan-African affiliations as well as specific affiliations between Indigenous and black Brazilians, a history that is non-linear. As Browning notes, "The brilliance is in balancing African Nationalism with attention to cultural specificity..."

(1999: 89). Browning discusses the ways in which samba music played at the carnival incorporates various forms of African diasporic music while asserting a Brazilian national identity (Ibid.: 89). Drawing on Richard Parker suggestion, Browning observes "...that the carnival itself cannibalizes Brazilian society's myth of miscegenation as a sexual and racial fusion, spitting it back out as a 'juxtaposition of differences'" (Ibid.: 93). Browning concludes that the Bahian carnival expands national, and physical boundaries, complicates easy national, cultural, racial, economic, spiritual, and sexual classifications and resists any attempts to fix notions of Brazilianness, Indianness, and Africanness.

Browning investigates Bahian carnival as not only a subversive site where notions of true, fixed identities are exposed as imitative and fluid but also a site where repetitive discursive acts are performed within normative structures. That carnival is understood here as a transgressive performance, but not only as such, is representative of the more nuanced theorizing of performance that McKenzie (1998) attributes to Butler's influences. Drawing a link between drag, as discussed by Butler (1993) in *Bodies that Matter*, and the unfixed demarcation of the sexual body in Brazil, Browning responds by noting that in Candomblé "...the body itself is both their formative precondition *and* their dispensable artifice" (1999: 87, italics in original). According to Browning, although transvestism surrounds carnival, it is not integrated into the specific "bloco" groups or within the specifically stylized choreography performed. However, a small space for shifts in gender roles does exist, a space that is "temporally bracketed and therefore unthreatening" (Ibid.: 88). The temporal play with gender in terms of transvestism celebrated at carnival is contextualised with the reality that there is a lack of tolerance for such gender configurations during the rest of the year. What Browning reveals are not necessarily the processes in which sex and gender are revealed as discursively performative, but the ways in which such processes are occasionally destabilized. Carnival provides the space for an element of play in the liminal sense described by Turner, but also allows for slippages and inversions that reveal the parodic structure of identities, as is theorized by Butler. Browning notes the theatrical element of performance within the street party but also draws attention to the ways in which racial categories are revealed as performative.

Browning and Amkpa effectively articulate how the performance of hybridity within carnival: troubles fixed notions of identity, counters stable notions of national boundaries through transnational affiliations while also asserting specific subjectivities, and allows for new conceptions of ways of being that draw on multiple, re-configured histories which suggest a non-heterogeneous past. While one way to understand carnival is through the conceptualization of the performance of hybridity, dance theorist Susan Leigh Foster (1998) argues that performative discourse is too discursively based and argues that it is imperative to assess body movements as well as speech acts. This suggestion is significant because it suggests a more thorough understanding of the cultural practice of carnival in that it also accounts for the physicality of the body. Because body movement is more than present in carnival it is important to theorize in a manner that takes this into account.

5. Theorizing Performance: Performativity as Choreography

Within Foster's (1998) article *Choreographies of Gender*, she discusses the new use of the terms "performance" and "performativity" within disciplines outside of theatre, dance, and performance studies. She comments that the new appropriation of the term/s draws from a linguistic tradition for the purpose of enlightening textual and cultural studies and does not particularly refer to body movement, as is common practice within theatre, dance, and some performance discourses. Foster sites speech-act theorist J.L Austin's (1962) studies of the performativity of language as one of the primary sources drawn upon by later performance-act theorists such as Butler (for example in Butler's studies of gender as performance in *Gender Trouble* (1990)) (Foster 1998: 3). According to Foster, the focus on the textual rather than the physical aspects of performance and performativity reinforces masculine/feminine and linguistic/non-linguistic binaries as well as the primacy of the verbal over the physical. "Only by assessing the articulateness of bodies' motions as well as speech, I would argue, can the interconnectedness of racial, gendered, and sexual differences within and among these bodies matter" (Ibid.: 4). Foster argues that the

inclusion of body movement within interdisciplinary theories of performance would provide a fuller analysis.

Although I agree with Foster that Butler is overly textual, it must be noted that Butler does recognize that the speech act is also a bodily act. Butler places importance on the body by stressing that it is the relation (and/or disjunction) between what the body does and what the body says that is significant. In *Excitable Speech*, Butler states that “In speaking, the act that the body is performing is never fully understood; the body is the blindspot of speech, that which acts in excess of what is said, but which also acts in and through what is said” (1997:11). Because of the body, “The speech act says more, or says differently, than it means to say” (Ibid.: 10). This locates the body as a powerful location of performativity (although in somewhat negative terms) that could be further expanded upon, which is something Foster attempts to do.

Foster stresses the interconnectedness of racialized, gendered, and sexual differences yet it is important to observe that her argument is primarily centred on gendered differences (as is implicated in her title). Foster does not provide examples or attempt to fully examine the ways in which the inclusion of body movement could interconnectedly be made manifest. As well, class is never discussed, although, as both cultural theorist Angela McRobbie (1998) and sociologist/dance theorist Helen Thomas (2003) note, body movement is a primary signifier of class differences.

Foster builds upon her initial argument to reveal that a concept of choreography rather than one of performance would provide a more complete and comprehensive understanding of gendered identities. Foster explains that “Although Butler emphasizes that performativity can be located only in multiple rather than single acts, the focus on reiteration stresses the repetition of acts rather than the relationality among them” (Foster 1998: 5). Foster stresses the importance of, for example, how meaning is maintained or transformed within the organisation of acts and notes that while choreography is informed by a long history of cultural values and practices, performance acts as a more singular interpretation or representation of these. While performance primarily focuses on the skill and articulation of the physical, Foster argues that choreography encompasses both the verbal and the physical, thus challenging a corporeal/verbal divide (Ibid.). As well,

“Choreography also focuses on the interrelationality of various set codes and conventions through which identity is represented” (Ibid.: 5-6). This is an extremely interesting and potentially useful concept that suggests some of the ways performance theory could also enhance theories of discursive performativity, just as McKenzie has noted Butler’s theories have influenced performance theory.

Foster’s theory seems relevant to the study of carnival in that it prioritizes body movement as well as speech-acts, however, it seems to be somewhat underdeveloped. Alternately, hybridity discourse seems to point more completely towards the ways that identities, in terms of race, gender, sex, citizenship (rather than simply a gendered identity) are constituted by the performative. Consequently, hybridity discourse is perhaps a more realised model than that proposed by Foster. Nonetheless, I believe the integration of both models would more adequately serve analyses of performing hybridity.

Theories of performativity, performance, hybridity, and choreography, provide a lens to understand cultural practices such as carnival. The two carnivals examined in this paper are demonstrative of cultural practices which allow for the representation and affirmation of identity politics asserted through specific communities and nationalisms. Although particularistic group identities are asserted, affiliated politics are also emphasized. Carnival thus provides an excellent example of the performance of hybridity in which tensions of sovereignty and hybridity coexist in a complementary way, representative of, in Ang’s words, living together-in-difference (1999: 200). Identities are performed in the theatrical sense yet the extravagance of the performance also draws attention to the performativity of various identity constructs such as race, class, and gender, allowing for possibilities of slippage within dominant codified scripts. As well, the paradoxical assertion of individuality within the context of mixing (hybrid identities) draws attention to the various ways in which markers are discursively performed and physically choreographed. Through performance, performative norms can be both reinforced and/or destabilized. Through inversions, extravagant juxtapositions, and the mixing, occasional blurring and proximity of various communities, the upper and lower classes, the oppressed and those that oppress, the sacred and the secular, those that perform conventions and those that reveal the parody of such conventions, carnival temporarily undermines hegemonic

ideologies which attempt to fix hierarchical distinctions. This blurring of boundaries through the performance of hybridity consequently offers alternate conceptualisations of reality.

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Battlegrounds of Marriage: Conflict Experiences of Filipino Wives in Intercultural Marriages

Abstract

Intercultural marriage as a subject of research remains unpopular despite its rich history. With this scarcity of literature base, most studies regarding the topic described the general aspects of marriage while specific issues of it such as marital conflict leave much to be investigated. Such research gaps warrant the writing of this report.

This report aimed to describe the conflict experiences of Filipino wives in intercultural marriages. Specifically, this report looked into the sources, experiences, and typologies of conflict as perceived and experienced by 15 Filipino wives in intercultural marriages.

Keyword: marital conflict, intercultural marriage, Filipino wives, marriage

1. Introduction

Intercultural marriage, also known as bicultural marriage, has a rich history (Schmidlechner, 2003; Shute and Spitzberg, 2003). However, studies on the subject, particularly in the Philippines, only gained popularity among scholars in the 1950s. One of its earliest research accounts was the study conducted by Hunt and Coller (1957) on Filipino-American intercultural marriages.

In the Philippines, the statistics of intercultural marriages reached 7,742 cases in 1989. The following year, the number significantly increased to 13, 782. A majority of intercultural marriage cases in the Philippines often involved Filipino women. Most of them married Americans, Chinese, Japanese, and Australians. In 1991, the Filipino-Japanese marriage was the most popular type compared to other intercultural marriage combinations (1992 Statistics of Filipino Women, cited in Medina, 2001).

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Most researches on intercultural marriages involving Filipino women tackled the general aspects of married life rather than focusing on specific issues such as marital conflict. Although there are already studies on intercultural marriages such as those conducted by Bauzon (1999), Chua (1994), Cahill (1990), Samonte (1986), Pierce (1983), and Hunt and Collier (1957), marital conflict as the focus of research remains unpopular. Even in Filipino monocultural marriages, this subject is still not thoroughly explored. Such research gap warrants the need for this study.

This article, which is an offshoot of the author's master's thesis, is an attempt to look at the marital conflict experiences of Filipino wives in intercultural marriages. It specifically aimed to describe the following: [1] typologies of marital conflict among Filipino wives, [2] the sources of marital conflict, and [3] experiences of marital conflict. Moreover, this report wanted to answer the following research questions: [1] Are the sources of marital conflicts in intercultural marriages similar to monocultural marriages? [2] Are marital conflicts among intercultural couples more intense compared to monocultural couples? Lastly, [3] Do cultural differences significantly escalate marital conflict episodes?

2. Marital Conflict and Its Sources

Like monocultural marriages, intercultural marriage also has its tribulations and ordeals (Romano, 2004). As what the conflict theory of the family asserts, conflict is part of marriage and family life. Such conflict, however, may differ in terms of its sources and the nature and extent of expression (Strong, DeVault, & Sayad, 1998). Marital conflict as defined by Giles-Sims (1983) is "a mutually antagonized discrepancy between idealized expectations and the reality of insufficient resources, different personal goals and values, and impulses between the couples."

Marital conflict, as many studies suggested, are primarily caused by various factors such as domestic-economic, personal, and socio-biographical factors (Mitchell, Bullard, & Mudd, 1962; Gianopoulos & Mitchell, 1957). More specifically, a number of quantitative studies asserted that economic factors (income and household expenditures), differences in gender role perceptions and expectations (Madden & Bulman, 1981),

socio-biographical factors (social background and education), and personal factors (personality traits) are the most common sources of marital conflicts.

Although a few studies have looked into this aspect, cultural differences also stimulate marital conflicts particularly in intercultural marriages. In fact, the quantitative study of Takano (2002), pointed out that 19% of the marital discords in interethnic couples involved in his study are attributed to cultural differences. In intercultural marriages, the differences in culture play a crucial role in facilitating marital discords between the couples encompassing the other sources of marital conflicts within monocultural marriages.

Cultural differences, according to Falicov (1995), are associated with the dysfunction of the intercultural couples' inability to develop a symmetrical view of their differences and similarities. In addition, couples in intercultural marriages usually enter the process of cultural transition that allows them to adjust toward an adaptive and flexible view of cultural differences, thereby making it plausible to maintain individual values and to negotiate conflicting areas.

3. Typology of Marital Conflict

There are various types of marital conflicts as studied by Noller and Fitzpatrick (1990). According to them, there are three common types of marital conflicts, namely constructive conflict, conflict avoidance, and destructive conflict. Based on their typology of conflict, constructive conflict involves open discussions and arguments to resolve problems. Conflict avoidance entails the tendency of any of the couple to retreat and to avoid arguments as a solution or as a mode of conflict management. Destructive conflict, considered as a severe form of conflict, on the other hand, involves the infliction of physical and emotional harm as a means to solve the problem or as a form of conflict confrontation.

Like Noller and Fitzpatrick, Patten (2000) also reported a typology of marital conflict based on her interview with E. Mark Cummings. Such classification is quite similar to the previous typology explained in the preceding paragraph. According to E. Mark Cummings, as narrated by Patten there are three types or categories of marital

conflict: destructive, constructive, and productive. Destructive conflict involves aggression, be it verbal or physical, in which resolution is hard to accomplish. The second type is the constructive conflict in which problems are resolved and are instrumental to the improvement of marriage life. The last category of conflict as classified by Cummings is the productive conflict in which problems are shared and discussed but are not necessarily resolved.

Homes (2002) in Richardson, McKeown, and Thomas (2005) presented a typology of marital conflict that highlights conflict avoidance and conflict engagement. In conflict avoidance, a couple may avoid issues as an expression of loyalty to one's partner or as a manifestation of an individual's tolerance. The author further characterized each of the categories. In conflict avoidance, one partner will minimize if not, stop negative reaction. However, the problem with this type, as the author asserted, is that conflict avoidance may result in shaky relationships as resentments continue to build up until it will reach the perturbation point, hence will explode. Conflict engagement, on the other hand, is a type of conflict in which couples confront the problems so they can be resolved, thus will increase trust and intimacy.

4. Method

4.1. Participants and Procedure

The data of this report emanated from the in-depth interviews conducted by the researcher for his master's thesis. Fifteen (15) key informants were chosen through a non-probability sampling, specifically the purposive and referral sampling. A set of criteria guided the researcher in the selection of the key informants to wit: [1] Filipino woman married to a foreigner of any nationality for at least 3 years, [2] with at least one child, and [3] has been staying in the Philippines for at least a year. As the criteria suggest, the informants of this study are Filipino women married to foreigners of any nationality. The key informants are all mothers, with at least one child, and have been

residing in the Philippine provinces of Misamis Oriental or Camiguin for at least one year.

Generally, Filipino wives (15) in the study are relatively young. In fact, slightly more than half (8) of them are below 40 years old. The age range is 27-65 years and the median age is 36 years. Most of the Filipino wives are highly educated. Suffice it to say, two obtained a master's degree while six of them achieved an undergraduate degree. Three had some college schooling while one finished a vocational course. Moreover, almost half (7) of the Filipino wives are economically productive as manifested by their occupation, be it self- or company employment. A majority (13) of the Filipino women's foreign spouses are Caucasians while only two are Asians. Of the 13 Caucasians, five are Swiss, three are Germans, two are Americans, and the other three are Scottish, Danish, and Norwegian. For the Asian spouses, one is a Sri-Lankan and the other is a Palestinian.

The researcher designed an interview guide, which was drafted in English and was later translated into Cebuano (local language). After this translation, the interview guide was then translated into English to ensure consistency and validity. The translation of the interview guide from English to Cebuano language was not translated literally; instead, it was contextually translated in order to capture the real meaning of the statements. After this, the researcher edited a few statements to ensure that informants will understand the questions. During the actual interviews, some of the questions were both addressed in English and Cebuano due to the inability of the informants to comprehend despite the fact that they are Cebuano (local language) speakers.

Actual interviews were audio-recorded so that answers will be fully documented and in order to overcome non-recording problems. On the average, the interviews lasted for about 50 minutes. The longest interview recorded was about 1 hour and 20 minutes. Transcription of the interviews followed after every interview per area was conducted.

5. Results

5.1. Typology and Associated Concepts

The Filipino wives involved in the researcher's study identified several terms or words to refer to marital conflicts both in English and Cebuano (local language). During the interviews, the term marital disagreement was used interchangeably with the term marital conflict in which most of the Filipino wives recognized and understood.

Five English words namely argue, misunderstanding, confrontation, quarrel and disappointments and six Cebuano words namely *gira*, *dili pagkasinabtanay*, *sumpaki*, *bingkil*, *away*, and *lalis*, were used to refer to by the Filipino wives to connote marital conflict. Filipino wives professed that the English terms argue, misunderstanding, and disappointments denote light disagreements while the term confrontation denotes either light or intense disagreements.

They also attributed the Cebuano terms *lalis*, *away*, *sumpaki*, *bingkil*, and *dili pagkasinabtanay* as light marital disagreements while the terms *gira*, *lalis* and *away* as intense disagreements. While there are various local terms for marital disagreements, the most frequently used are *away* and *lalis*. Both *away* and *lalis* could be perceived as intense or non-intense disagreements depending on the viewer. Among the 11 key informants (n=11), seven of them asserted that *lalis* and *away* are two different terms while four informants argued that they are similar.

The six informants, who thought *away* and *lalis* are different, argued that the term *away* has a heavy connotation, which could mean marital disagreements involving the infliction of force or violence and emotional harm. *Lalis*, on the other hand, which could either be light or intense but without physical or emotional harm, may involve healthy discussion, argumentation, and avoidance (light) or it can also involve verbal arguments characterized by exchange of heavy words, not talking to each other for days, or if not withdrawal, walk out and leave the house (intense).

The four Filipino wives who asserted that both *lalis* and *away* are the same terms, described that *lalis/away* can be both intense and light disagreements. One Filipino wife argued that *away* and *lalis* have the same meaning. She contended that

away and *lalis* are the same although *away* is not really that deep. The other three informants described that in *away/lalis*, some disagreements are light while some disagreements are intense. Light disagreements based on their illustration may involve discussion and withdrawal while intense disagreements for them may involve intense arguments (shouting and yelling), withdrawal, and the infliction of violence.

5.2. Comparison of Marital Conflicts in Intercultural and Monocultural Marriages

Are the marital disagreements in intercultural marriages the same as those in monocultural marriages? Most (9) of the key informants claimed that there are differences. These Filipino wives provided three reasons namely, arranged from the most to the least frequently mentioned, the cultural differences as instigators to marital conflicts in intercultural marriages, the differences between foreigners and Filipino men in terms of values, lifestyle, and attitudes, and the differing areas of conflict between monocultural and intercultural marriages.

The first reason, which would distinguish the marital disagreements in intercultural marriages different from monocultural marriages, is the differences in culture as a factor that stimulates marital discords that four Filipino wives asserted. For example, Fe, 42, married to an American, described that culture plays a consequential role in the marital relations among intercultural couples.

The second reason, as asserted by three informants, is the differences between foreigners and Filipino men in their values, lifestyle, and attitudes. One key informant cited that Filipinos are alcoholics, gamblers, outgoing, and *babaero* (womanizers). According to her, Filipinos are quite opposite to her husband and to most foreigners she knew. Two other key informants attributed the differing areas of conflict as the third reason why disagreements between monocultural and intercultural marriages differ.

The remaining six Filipino wives, however, asserted that marital disagreements in intercultural marriages are the same with monocultural marriages. All the six

informants claimed that the areas or sources of conflict that intercultural couples disagree on are the same with that of monocultural couples.

5.3. Sources of Marital Conflicts

The areas or sources of marital disagreements experienced by the informants in their marriages maybe classified into five major categories. The categories, arranged according to the most to the least frequently mentioned, are personality/attitudinal clashes, economic-related issues, differences in cultural practices, differential gender role expectations and behavior, and communication problems.

The Filipino wives reported 12 various personality traits/attitudes, which they claimed had caused the occurrence of marital disagreements in their marriages. These personality traits, arranged from the most to the least frequently mentioned, include domineering, friendly/*(barkadista)*, bad tempered, irritable, frank/outright, disorderly/untidy, not forward looking, dishonesty, sensitive, procrastinator, judgmental/*(hinawayon)*, arrogant/stubborn, and passive.

Aside from personality issues, the Filipino wives in the study also attributed economic-related issues (finances) as sources of conflict. Most of the Filipino wives (9) who had marital conflicts over finances did not have employment or sources of income at the time the conflicts occurred. The 11 Filipino wives provided five main reasons to such disagreements namely, arranged from the most to the least frequently mentioned, spendthrift, inability to decide money matters, giving money to one's kin or friends, lending money to friends, and jobless.

Six key informants attributed their inability to decide on money matters as the reason of conflict over finances. These women claimed that because their husbands are the ones who handle their finances, they hardly had a chance to decide on what and when to buy. Another area in the conflict over finances in which six Filipino wives identified is the issue of being a spendthrift. Five of these key informants declared that their husbands complained about the way they spend their money.

Cultural disparities are another source or area of conflict experienced by the intercultural couples involved in this study. Nine key informants narrated their experiences of marital conflicts that are traceable to cultural differences. Most (6) of the cases of marital conflicts involving cultural disparities were associated to the differences in child disciplining and child rearing while three other specific cases were linked to certain cultural practices of varying cultures.

Six Filipino wives identified culturally determined child disciplining and/or child rearing practices as sources of marital conflicts. As asserted by five Filipino wives, it is culturally well known for Filipinos to inflict punishment to children as part of disciplining while Caucasians in particular, do not want to inflict punishment. The same five Filipino wives who claimed that child disciplining is an area of squabbles in their marital relationships accepted that in several occasions they had inflicted punishment to their children, which consequently caused marital disagreements.

Few Filipino wives (3) identified the differential gender role expectations and behavior as another source of marital disagreements. Issues as regards how men and women should behave, who should work outside, cook, or who should play with the kids, who dominates, and reproductive right (woman's desire to have a child that the husband denies) were considered by the three key informants as sources of conflicts.

Communication problems became a source of marital discords among five intercultural couples in this study. Three of the Filipino wives who attributed communication as a problem have relatively low education while two other Filipino wives had some college schooling. As the responses of some informants (5) would suggest, communication is an area of disagreement in intercultural marriages particularly because of the differences in language. Some of their disagreements were due to the inability of the wives (2) to translate local language to the language their husbands can understand.

Four Filipino wives argued that language differences sometimes accelerated conflicts with their husbands because of misinterpretation of either the statement or the action. For instance, Maggie, had instances where she was talking to their workers in Cebuano suggesting a proper and effective way to finish their work and her husband misinterpreted it as if she was interfering and deciding like the boss.

5.4. Experienced Marital Conflicts

All the Filipino wives (15) have experienced marital disagreements in various forms. Slightly over half (8) of the key informants claimed that they had experienced both light and intense marital conflict, while the remaining seven asserted that they only had light. Of those eight who claimed they have had intense conflict, three of them claimed that they also experienced violence.

All the key informants described similarly how light disagreements differ from intense disagreements. As they previously defined in their typology of conflicts, light disagreements involves healthy discussion or avoidance of conflict; while intense disagreements involves heated arguments, nagging, swearing, yelling, shouting, or withdrawal. Violence, though it is an intense disagreement, was treated by the key informants separately as *away*.

While 12 key informants reportedly did not experience violent conflicts, about three Filipino wives who are comparatively highly educated openly shared that they have had violent conflict experiences. However, contrary to popular conceptions, the women themselves were not the victims but the aggressors. Their violent expressions during conflict are different from popular conceptions because when they inflict violence they do not direct it to their husbands. Their violent behavior only served as an expression of intense anger without harming their partners.

6. Discussion

Do cultural differences really spark marital disagreements? Results showed that some of the key informants have had marital disagreements traceable to cultural differences. These Filipino wives recognized that disagreements in monocultural marriages are different from intercultural marriages because of cultural differences that obviously would not be applicable to couples in monocultural marriages. Like this study, other scholars have already attested how cultural differences may affect the marriage life of intercultural couples. For instance, Falicov (1995) asserted that the differences in

culture play a crucial role in facilitating marital conflicts in intercultural marriages due to the couple's inability to balance their similarities and differences.

Differences in cultural practices, as already pointed, triggered marital conflicts among a few intercultural couples in the researcher's study. The differences in child rearing and disciplining became an area of disagreements and such differences were attributed to the [1] issue of corporal punishment in which the foreign husbands disagree, and [2] the room assignment of infants in which the husbands disagree with their spouse's preference to sleep with their infants. Such finding is similar and is supported by Beiver's (1998) and Romano's (2001) assertions that culturally different parenting styles can become a potential conflicting area in intercultural marriages.

Unexpectedly, the issue of finances in relation to the financial support extended to the family of the wives did not become a major issue. This is contrary to what Romano (2001), Hunt and Coller (1957), and Moran (1992) claimed. One of the assumptions of the researcher's thesis is that cultural differences will determine the conflicting ways in the handling of finances among intercultural couples due to Filipino wives' deep sense of responsibility to financially support their family. Despite this cultural background, Filipino wives in intercultural marriages involved in this study did not experience such conflict.

So why did conflict of this nature not occur? Living arrangement and length of stay in the Philippines could have affected the minimization of the conflict. The fact that the intercultural couples in this study have been staying in the Philippines for quite a long time already, their husbands must have adapted the culture of the Filipinos over the years so that it now becomes part of their consciousness that helping the families of their wives is also part of their responsibility. Unlike those intercultural couples living abroad, the husbands of the informants have quality relationships with in-laws and wives' relatives, especially those closely residing with them. Thus, whenever these people ask for assistance, the husbands will likely help them given that they have a direct if not close connection.

Although cultural differences were attributed by some Filipino wives as sources of conflict in their marital relationships, it appears that cultural issues remain insignificant. Such result attest that cultural conflict aside, conflicts among mono-

cultural couples are quite similar to that of intercultural couples. As pointed in the review of literature, couples may have conflict traceable to personality, economic, and gender issues.

The key informants considered personality issues as the most crucial area of conflict. For instance, a majority of the key informants considered the issue of dominance as the major cause of personality disagreements. While dominance is the major cause of the occurrence of conflict, this at the same time affects the degree of conflict. Thus, couples will not only disagree on a particular source of conflict but will also disagree on the way couples handle or resolve conflicts. The conflict over the conflict process in effect also determines the occurrence of conflict. This is similar to what Homes (2002) argued that couples would also experience what he calls, metaconflict or the “conflict over the conflict process”.

Economic-related issues were also identified by the informants as one of the strains of their marriages. Conflicts of this nature can be explained partly due to the absence of work among the wives. Of the 11 informants who had disagreements over finances, nine of them did not have work when their narrated cases of marital disagreements emerged. The absence of work among the key informants, specifically the housewives, partly explains why marital disagreements of this sorts will likely to emerge.

Although not as crucial as personality and economic conflict, gender issues were also described as sources of marital conflicts among the couples in this study. The occurrence of marital discords over gender issues as claimed by the three wives were due to unmet/failed expectations. Although it is specific to the division of household work, the study of Kluwer, Heesink, and Van de Vliert (1997) is similar to the findings of this study to some respect. The authors contended that wife’s discontent with division of labor was associated with wife’s demand so that it will eventually result in conflict.

The discords over gender issues may have been affected by the differences between how man and woman perceive gender roles rather than differences in culture. Although there are only two non-Christian Asians in this study, it is significant to note that both of their Filipino wives reportedly experienced conflict over gender issues

compared to other intercultural marriages between Filipino women and Caucasian husbands.

With these various issues of marital relationships in intercultural context, couples in the researcher's study, however, did not experience intense conflicts. Results of the aforementioned study showed that a majority of the 15 key informants only experienced non-violent conflicts. Why is this so? Seven of the 15 informants' spouses are divorcees. These spouses have had unsuccessful marriages and must have experienced frequent marital disagreements. Since they are now in another marital relationship, it may be presumed that the foreign spouses would rather make their marriages work this time. Thus, when disagreements come their way, they preferred to solve these as much as possible or prevent their escalation.

Some of the foreign spouses (6) are not permanently staying with their wives due to the nature of their work. When these husbands return home after a long absence, their wives tend to pamper them as if they were on vacation. Instead of sparking conflicts with their spouses, the wives savored the moments with their husbands around to compensate for the times they were separated.

The length of marriage can also explain why marital disagreements experienced by key informants reportedly were non-violent in general. It should be noted that their median length of marriage is 10.6 years. According to the informants, through the years, they were able to adapt, understand, accept, learn and correct whatever differences they had with their husbands so that if disagreements come their way they can decide what to do with them.

In summary, the sources of conflict in intercultural marriages are quite similar with monocultural couples, although, in the former type of marriage, couples may have marital conflicts traceable to cultural differences. Since cultural differences did not play a crucial role in the escalation of marital conflict, discord experiences among Filipino women involved in the researcher's study is not generally intense as previously assumed. Thus, couples in both monocultural and intercultural marriages may have the same intensity of conflict.

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The Highs and Lows of using Case Studies in Student Research Projects: practical problems versus dynamite data

Abstract

The case study is a key tool for qualitative researchers, facilitating the in depth exploration and understanding of participants' views, experiences and perspectives. It can provide rich contextual detail, generate bottom up in vivo concepts, and help unravel the layers of complexity that can obscure research questions. A cheap and manageable option especially for student researchers, case study research is not however problem free. It is a time consuming approach, which relies on good relations between the researcher and their participants, an organised approach to time and work management, and a persistent approach to securing access to potential cases. Above all, the onus is on the researcher to provide a transparent and reflexive account of their methodological approach so that the reader might be convinced of their arguments. Based on the author's personal experience of case study research via current doctoral research on the Glasgow housing stock transfer, this paper aims to discuss and illustrate both the merits of adopting a case study approach and also the potential practical problems and difficulties that may be encountered.

1. Introduction

Case study research has been popular across the social science disciplines and throughout the ages, memorable twentieth century examples of which include classic sociological studies such as Whyte's *Street Corner Society*, Holdaways' *Inside the British Police Force*, Patrick's *A Glasgow Gang Observed*, and Fielding's research on the *National Front* (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995). Yet whilst case study research has proved the basis for some of the most in depth, detailed and vivid accounts within the social sciences, especially within the qualitative tradition, it remains a disparaged research method that takes second position to the more elevated and rigorous statistical approaches of the quantitative tradition. This imbalance, and indeed the criteria on which case study

research is judged is one that needs addressed. The purpose of this paper is therefore to discuss the highs and lows of case study research drawing on my own live experience as a doctoral researcher studying changing governance relations following the Glasgow housing stock transfer in 2003. This is not the place for an in depth discussion of the findings of my own research and indeed is not necessary to understand the discussions that follow (such discussions do however exist elsewhere – see for example McKee 2006).

In order to provide practical advice and a realistic account of ‘doing’ case study research this paper will address the following issues: selection of the case(s) and negotiating access; field relations, including data collection, relations with gatekeepers, and ethical concerns; and the organisation, management and analysis of data, with an emphasis on producing a reflexive and documented account of the research process. Whilst case studies are a popular method within the social sciences (especially amongst students who do not have vast financial resources or teams of researchers at their disposal) practical advice on conducting them is of variable quality, comes with different theoretical baggage and is spread across a number of disparate sources. Therefore I hope this paper can serve as an orientating device and provide practical advice for those new to this research design.

2. Case Study Research: the verdict so far

Case study research has been presented by some commentators as a distinct research method in itself (Yin 2003). Yet as Stake (1998) proposes, it is perhaps better considered more of an approach that poses the epistemological question: what can we learn from the single case? As a heuristic tool, and conscious element of research design, the case study draws on a variety of data and mobilises a plethora of research methods from participant observation, through documentary analysis and in depth interviews, to statistical surveys. Although often confused and conflated with qualitative methods in general, case study research need not be non-quantitative and indeed can adopt a mixed-methods approach

(Yin 2003; Platt 2006). Having been in decline from its height in the 1950s and its elevated position within the Chicago School of Sociology (Mitchell 1983; Stoecker 2006), the revival of qualitative research in recent decades has also seen the increased popularity of the case study (Platt 2006). Whilst it has long been a staple research tool across the social sciences, as Platt comments its precise use and definition has varied within different disciplines, making it a slippery concept to define:

...writers tend to have in mind, even when making quite general statements, the sort of case and the sort of method most salient in their own intellectual settings. Psychologists think first of individuals in treatment, anthropologists of events in whole small societies, and political scientists of polities (Platt 2006: 277).

The precise form of what constitutes a case(s) may alter, but what unites competing definitions is a focus on the unique, the particular and the specific within a bounded real-life context (see for example, Stake 1998; Yin 2003). Whilst the case may have an 'instrumental' purpose: simply an illustration of a more abstract phenomenon, it may also be 'intrinsically' interesting in its own right (Stake 1998: 89). A familiar aspect of research and teaching within the social sciences the case study remains however discussed in disparaging terms: ranging from a 'second best practice' and little better than 'journalism' (Stoecker, 2006: 325-7) to the more pleasant jibe of an 'attractive nuisance' (Miles, 1979: 590).

Critics of the case study have focussed primarily on issues relating to bias and the lack of generality (not to mention the time, costs and workload involved particularly for lone researchers). With regards to the former, concern is expressed about the lack of distance between the researcher and the researched, especially the possibility of the researcher *going native* (Stoecker 2006); this problem is of course grounded in the belief that objective and neutral scientific research is both an achievable and desirable goal. In terms of the latter the common question posed is how can we infer more generally and answer questions about external validity? As Mitchell (1983) argues, only probability

samples meet the high standards of representative criteria; consequently the case fails to attain this level of rigour as Stoecker elaborates:

These problems stem from the 'N of 1' problem – that there is only one case and, therefore, objectivity is difficult to maintain, falsifiability criteria are more difficult to meet, and generalization is impossible...The attempts to meet the standards set by quantitative scientific sociology do little more than emphasize the inability of case study research to live up to those standards (Stoecker, 2006: 327-329).

Yet if case studies were as limited and useless as some commentators would have us to believe surely they would not have survived across the decades to become a mainstay of social research, particularly in the qualitative tradition. Not only do case studies offer the potential for rich, detailed, persuasive accounts (Miles 1979; Miles and Huberman 1994; Platt 2006), but the critics who lambaste their lack of representativeness would do well to consider that the laws of statistical sampling are irrelevant and of little concern in the qualitative tradition where purposive sampling and the advancement of theory reign supreme (Silverman 2005). As Stake remarks: 'the purpose of the case study is not to represent the world, but to represent the case' (1998: 104). This position is reinforced by Mitchell (1983) who stresses it is the strength and quality of the analysis that matters most when making the creative link from the one to the many.

What is clear in this muddled and divided debate is the case study confers both potential advantages and also inherent problems as compared to other research designs. Drawing on my own research experience I will aim to take these debates forward and further discuss the highs and lows of using case studies.

3. Selecting the Case and Negotiating Access

Selecting the case(s) to be studied is a critical event when conducting case study research, yet this difficult process is unaided by the fact proponents of case study research offer conflicting advice on correct procedure. For example, whilst Yin (2003) perhaps the leading authority on case study research advocates the extensive screening of cases through an intensive piloting process involving data collection, this has been challenged by proponents who argue the ‘opportunity for learning’ (Stake, 1998: 101) and the ‘explanatory power’ (Mitchell, 1983: 203) of the case are of greater importance. Here ease of access and hospitality are elevated as more important attributes than whether the case is typical of some wider population (Stake 1998), especially as inference relies upon a sound theoretical framework opposed to statistical significance and random sampling:

We infer that the features present in the case study will be related in a wider population not because the case is representative but because our analysis is unassailable (Mitchell, 1983: 200).

This does not imply we should select cases on the bases of simple ease and convenience but that we should keep in mind practical considerations whilst also thinking critically about the wider population from which our case is to be drawn. Employing purposive or theoretical sampling may be useful here. What differentiates these latter two concepts is the presence of a theoretical rationale at the outset, yet both encourage us to select cases on the basis that they possess a feature or process that is of interest to us and will help answer our basic research questions (Mitchell 1983; Silverman 2005; Stake 1998).

In my own research into how housing governance arrangements have changed in Glasgow following the city’s housing stock transfer¹ in 2003, case selection was initially a daunting prospect. Following the transfer of ownership of the housing stock from the city council to the newly formed Glasgow housing association (GHA), sixty Local

¹ Within housing, stock transfer refers to the sale of assets out of the public sector (e.g. local authority or Scottish Homes) into the private or independent sector (e.g. housing association or co-operative).

Housing Organisations (LHOs) were established across the city responsible for delivering housing services on a daily basis through a delegated management structure (for further discussion see, McKee 2006). The LHOs offered a vehicle for understanding the dynamics of change post-transfer: not only could they provide insight into housing governance at the local level, but through their relations with the GHA and other external agencies could also enhance my understanding of relations of power at a citywide level. However, as there were potentially sixty organisations from which to choose narrowing down my options was a difficult first step. Consequently I opted for an ‘exemplary case’ approach - providing a strong and positive example of the phenomenon of interest (Yin, 2003: 13).

I achieved this by concentrating my attention on the high performing LHOs already involved in a pilot programme to devolve ownership as well as tenant control to local communities (see table 1 for details). Those involved in the pilot had to meet a range of criteria to participate in the process: meeting key performance indicators; having established governance/tenant participation mechanisms; and possessing housing stock with a long-term sustainable future.

Table 1: GHA Second Stage Transfer Pilot Programme

No	LHO type	Area of operation in city	LHO stock size ^a	Existing stock size	Total stock size
1	Partnership	East	185 (290)	358	543
2	Partnership	North-West	137 (629)	702	839
3	Partnership	South	625	1593	2218
4	Partnership	North-West	1119	2207	3326
5	Partnership	North-West	804 (1985)	2004	2808
6	Partnership	East	899	1507	2406
7	New	East	2535	N/A	2535

^a Figs in brackets refer to LHO stock dispersed in different sites from that one involved in the pilot (i.e. existing organisation may be partnering more than one local area committee).

By selecting my cases from the pilot programme my options were quickly narrowed from potentially sixty organisations to seven. Within the seven, my desire was to introduce variety by incorporating the two main types of LHO: those operating in partnership with

existing organisations, and newly formed organisations that had emerged out of the city council’s tenant participation strategy² (see table2 over leaf).

Table 2: LHO Types within the GHA

LHO types	No.’s within LHO network	% of GHA stock	No.’s on pilot prgme
New Organisations (e.g. forum LHOs)	31	73 %	1 of 7
Partnership Organisations (e.g. CBHA LHOs)	25	24 %	6 of 7
Tenant Mgt Co-ops	5	3 %	0

As table 1 indicates this selection process further narrowed my options, as there was only one newly formed organisation involved in the pilot, therefore making it an automatic choice. From the other six, I tried to select an organisation of a broadly similar stock size and which operated in a different area of the city (using the GHA’s own crude division of areas into North-West, South and East). The size of organisation is a key factor as it can influence the degree of tenant involvement, a critical issue I was interested in finding more about; selecting a different area was simply to avoid the research being skewed by localised factors. This narrowed the choice again to two potential options, with the final decision driven as much by practical concerns relating to access and sponsorship as to sampling decisions.

The next challenge was selecting a comparator organisation out with the GHA and LHO network, in order to allow a judgement to be made about whether changes in housing governance were in fact due to the stock transfer. The difficulty I faced was two-fold: there were few established community housing organisations operating in the city out with the GHA context, and my LHO cases were large in size compared to the majority of Glasgow’s housing associations: sixty-five percent of which have less than 1000 units (Communities Scotland 2005). To narrow my options I referred to annual statistics produced by the housing regulator Communities Scotland. After selecting out those organisations based in Glasgow, because of the large size of my pilot organisations

² As per table 2 a third category of LHOs formed from amalgamating existing Tenant Management Co-operatives were discarded from case selection due to their small size.

I preceded to rule out those with a stock size of less than 1000 units³; using information supplied by the GHA I then ruled out those housing associations who were LHOs which left me with four potential options.

Much time (too much time in hindsight) was spent deliberating between these four options for a comparator. Statistical information was collected in order to compare their characteristics with my LHO cases; two were ruled out immediately because a) they had no community basis, but had a dispersed stock across the region and b) because they operated in an affluent area with little council housing. Of the two cases that remained either would have been a viable option, with the final decision instigated by practical issues: I opted for the organisation from which I received the most positive interest and timely response to my invitation to be involved in the study. What would have been disappointing would have been to spend so much time selecting the *best* case only to have the door slammed in my face as it were and access denied. Practical concerns therefore deserve as much attention as methodological or theoretical issues. This brings us back to Stake's (1998) advice that what is important is not having the most typical case study, but the one that offers the greatest potential for learning:

My choice would be to take that case from which we feel we can learn the most. That may mean taking the one we can spend the most time with. Potential for learning is a different and sometimes superior criterion to representativeness. Often it is better to learn a lot about an atypical case than a little from a magnificently typical case (Stake, 1998: 101).

Even when cases have been identified along purposive, theoretical or practical grounds gaining access is no easy task and can itself be a protracted and difficult process, which requires much patience and diplomacy (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995). This is especially true of student research projects, and in my own case I had few professional networks to draw upon on in order to sponsor or assist my access to the organisations I

³ This figure was arrived at by amalgamating the smallest three of the six size categories used by the housing regulator Communities Scotland; whilst not equidistant it is easier to work with existing data.

was keen to observe. The reluctance of organisations to become involved in social research is perhaps not unexpected – senior staff will be concerned that the organisation may be presented in a negative fashion, and there may be little in the way of return for the hours of (unpaid) staff time that may be required to satisfy researcher’s lines of enquiries, or the inconvenience of having them ‘hanging about’. Here impression management may help. As Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) emphasise, potential research participants are more likely to be concerned about the type of person a researcher is than what the research is actually about; thought should therefore be paid to initial introductions in terms of demeanour and dress (see also Silverman 2005). Yet even when initial access to a private setting is granted issues remain – consent is not a one off process but needs to be continually renegotiated during the life of the project. Physical presence in the setting does not guarantee the availability of all the people you may wish to speak to, all the records and documents you want to read, or all the situations and settings you wish to observe (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995; Silverman 2005). In my own research, the key contacts in all my cases were with senior management. Not surprisingly front-line staff were often sceptical of my presence in the setting and were initially guarded when speaking to me: concerned their comments would be relayed to management. Eventually my extended presence in the research setting and efforts at sociability convinced participants I was a ‘reasonable person’ and trust was developed. These relations however take time and trust to be built.

4. In the Field

A further important facet of case study research is to provide a documented and reflexive account of the choices made during the research process, or what Yin identifies as a ‘chain of evidence’ (1981: 63). Qualitative research is not experimental in nature and therefore not easily replicable: the path one researcher would take is not necessarily that which would be adopted by another. Yet by making clear what was done, how it was done and why, this enhances the readers’ trust in the analysis and provides helpful

guidance for other researchers who may be entering the field with similar data of their own (Silverman 2005; Seale 1999).

4.1. How I collected my data

Each of the case studies was visited approximately two-three times a month, normally for a half day, with regular email contact also maintained with the key informant. In total field contact for the case study phase lasted approximately six months from August 2005 -January 2006⁴, although as previously indicated several months were spent making contact and negotiating access before fieldwork formally started, and even after it ended good relations maintained. Within the case studies a range of qualitative methods were employed (see table 3 overleaf). The purpose of this was not ‘triangulation’ in the sense of corroborating participants’ meanings and understandings (Yin 2003), that is, there is no single fixed reality to which all the data refers, rather it was a means of gaining insight into how the same phenomena can be interpreted and understood in different ways, and ensuring the inferences made of the data valid (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995).

⁴ The tenant focus groups were conducted later in the year (March-April 2006) to avoid the dark, cold winter months and therefore maximise participation.

Table 3: Volume and Types of Research Methods

	Case Studies		External to Case Studies		Total
	Interviewees	Nos.	Interviewees	Nos.	
<i>Semi structured interviews</i>	Housing Officers	13	Housing Practitioners	10	54 ^a
	Housing Managers	6			
	Committee members	15	Housing Policy-Makers	10	
<i>Documentary analysis</i>	Internal documents (e.g. TS surveys, governance docs, outcome reports, newsletters).	19	External documents (e.g. pre-transfer, CS R&I, GHA/SE).	16	35
<i>Observation</i>	Management committee meetings, sub-committee meetings, AGMs, other TP events.	24	External events (e.g. GHA COP events, external housing/SST events, training).	6	30
<i>Tenant FGs</i>	Involving tenants out with the management committee				36 ^b

^a Reflects number of interviewees not interviews per se (e.g. 3 interviews involved 2 people)

^b Reflects number of individuals involved: were five focus groups across three sites in total.

Prior to the commencement of fieldwork a quota guide was drawn up and consideration given to the types of individuals or groups who needed to be interviewed (see figure 1 over leaf). Furthermore as both table 3 (above), and figure 1 (over leaf) indicate, the case study research was complemented by external key-actor interviews, observation of events and documentary analysis; this was to facilitate analysis at the citywide level as well as locally within the LHOs. The actual number of interviews etc carried out was dependant on how quickly ‘saturation’ was achieved (Strauss and Corbin 1998), however this was mediated by practical issues such as access and available time/resources.

Figure 1: Quota guide: within case and external

Total sample size across the 3 case study sites:

- 18 people who have experience of being local representatives on the management committee;
- 18 housing practitioners of varying grades within the case studies (e.g. management and front line);
- 15 direct (non-participant) observations of management committee meetings, and where possible other relevant events;
- 6 focus groups (size 4-8 participants) involving non-active tenants (e.g. out with the committee);
- Analysis of relevant internal documents (no quota applied);

Also externally:

- 6 housing practitioners from organisations including the: Glasgow Housing Association, the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations, SHARE, the Tenant Participation Advisory Service, and the Tenants Information Service;
- 6 local/national policy-makers from organisations including: Glasgow city council, Communities Scotland (and Scottish Homes), and the Scottish Executive;
- Observation of relevant external events (no quota applied);
- Analysis of relevant external policy documents (no quota applied)

For transparency purposes it is also worth elaborating here on the way particular research methods were employed in relation to the research design:

- *Interviews* – interviewing is by far the most popular research method employed in the social sciences, yet this is not to under estimate the importance of simply talking to people and placing their personal accounts at the centre of the research (Legard *et al* 2003). In this design the interviews were of the semi-structured variety and a topic guide was used to ensure some comparability across the cases. An effort was made to make the interview as ‘naturalistic’ as possible (i.e. like a normal conversation) in order to put participants at ease. Yet as Legard *et al* (2003) emphasise the success of interviewing as a research method hinges greatly on the personal and professional capabilities of the researcher; a skill that only comes through practice and experience.
- *Observation* - was a useful complement to the other research methods because when considering relationships between different actors, non-verbal communication can be just as illuminating as the detailed and rich responses constructed during the interview process. To use one case as an illustration, despite interviewees presenting staff-committee relations as generally positive observation of the meetings suggested otherwise. Whilst no formal seating plan was in place participants continually sat in the same seats next to the same people, with a clear divide and physical barrier of empty

chairs between staff and tenants. Although it is logical to assume that my presence may have influenced the way individuals behaved at these meetings (whether for the better or worse), it was hoped my extended stay within these organisations would enhance participants' familiarity with me, and my 'observer' presence forgotten. Indeed, I did succeed in building a good rapport in all my cases resulting in amongst other things, me being invited to Christmas parties and lunches, with this informal contact also written up in field notes and coded as 'data'.

- *Documentary analysis* – qualitative content analysis was employed in order to identify key themes and facilitate interplay between conceptual frameworks, data collection and analysis; unlike quantitative content analysis which adopts a rigid coding structure this is a more reflexive approach (Bryman 2001).
- *Tenant focus groups* - without a doubt the most difficult aspect of the research. At all stages, whether it be their organisation, management or analysis I vastly under-estimated how difficult and time consuming these processes could prove. The most difficult aspect by far was getting tenants involved and interested enough to turn up. Whilst raffling a prize helped, it could not overcome the problem of small numbers with two of the five focus groups consisting only of four individuals, and one group in the comparator area having to be cancelled due to lack of interest. Yet there was also blissful moments where I could sit back and listen to participants debate the issues I was interested, and they would challenge and correct each other with little need for intervention or steering from myself.

4.2. Field relations: the importance of critical space?

The gate keepers I initially made contact with when trying to negotiate access to the organisations remained vital contacts throughout my fieldwork. As alluded to earlier, gaining access is not a one-off event but requires continual re-negotiation. These gate keepers facilitated this process whether this be encouraging other members of their organisation to give their time to be interviewed, or simply helping with the practicalities of having a quiet space in which to conduct the interviews and cups of tea on hand. Furthermore when the time came for me to leave the field and begin organising

interviews with key actors at the citywide and national level, these gate keepers again proved invaluable in vouching for me in order I might secure an interview with an important but unknown stranger, and recommending to me people who would be worthwhile talking too. Whilst Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) warn of a potential conflict of interest between the researcher and their sponsor/gate keeper, my own experience was much more positive. Once access to the organisational setting was secured, all requests for access to particular individuals, settings and documents were granted and no obvious blocking or steering was encountered.

Critics of case study research (and qualitative research in general) often denounce these close personal relationships and rapport as a lack of scientific distance. Yet this ignores two critical factors. Firstly, neutral research may not be an attainable or even desirable outcome of qualitative enquiry: the social world is not something out there waiting to be measured as the researcher is ultimately part of that which they are investigating. Secondly, it is precisely because of these personal relations that participants' respond to the researcher in the way that they do (Stoecker 2006). Here the ascribed characteristics of the researcher are important, and certainly in my own case I felt these worked to my advantage. Firstly, as a young, female student my presence on site was non-threatening and my endless questions tolerated and even expected; indeed many participants commented to me that they had children or grandchildren my age at university and were keen to help me in my studies. One advantage of being a young aspiring academic is that it is easier to adopt the role of an 'outsider' or 'incompetent' necessary for understanding and asking questions about an unfamiliar organisational setting; the relations I was able to strike up with my participants may have been very different to that of a middle aged professor for example (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995: 97). Secondly originating from the West of Scotland and having been a tenant of social housing all my life, as well as a university graduate with an interest in housing, I had common interests and talking points with the participants I was interviewing and observing whether they be local residents or housing professionals.

Whilst these inter-personal relationships are important for the success of not only the current research project, but also potentially future projects, it is important to retain

some element of critical space in which to conduct analysis. Spending so much time with my local level case studies it was near impossible for me not to empathise with their plight post-transfer and the powerless position they felt they were in, but I was also mindful of the need to maintain some level of distance and be open minded to the views and experiences of other key groups and actors involved in the stock transfer process. Here the second external phase of the research proved a useful balance and complement. Yet it is not going native itself that is the problematic process here, for example in my own research my close relations with local actors resulted in me being invited to amongst other things lunches, Christmas parties and other social occasions all of which provided rich, detailed insights that would not have been accessed by straight forwarding interview techniques. Rather it is being caught unaware and not recognising that this process of adopting participants' perspective is happening which can have detrimental effects on the research; maintaining some kind of balance in terms of the range of stakeholder involved is therefore critical in order to ensure multiple views on the topic as opposed to over identification with one particular group.

4.3. The importance of ethics

Glasgow's stock transfer at the time of data collection was a very politically sensitive issue with different stakeholders having a lot invested in the process and not all of them entirely happy with the outcomes so far. As the focus of my research was ultimately relations between different stakeholders both at the local and citywide level within Glasgow's social housing scene, care had to be taken to avoid inflaming what were already tense relations. In such a context attention was given to issues relating to confidentiality and anonymity, especially as some respondents (particularly external key actors) expressed concerns about being directly quoted, with one organisation even refusing to have the interview on tape. The decision was therefore taken to not use individual names but only to refer to the organisation from which the individual was from (e.g. a senior council official was simply referred to as *senior representative, Glasgow*

City Council). In smaller organisations where a lean structure made individuals easily identifiable the organisation's name was also omitted and a descriptor used (e.g. *Housing association/tenant training and support agencies*). I deemed this commitment to confidentiality and anonymity as a reasonable trade off for rich, insider accounts which individuals seemed more happy to give following assurances their name would not appear in print. As Stake emphasises researchers are 'guests in the private spaces of the world' (1998: 105), and therefore must have a strong sense of ethics and good manners to avoid harm for participants: a real prospect given reputations, relations and potentially jobs were on the line. All participants were consenting adults and once the interview began, they had ultimate control over what information they wanted to divulge and what they wanted to remain private. As a request was made to tape-record all interviews (which was denied on only two occasions) all participants were asked to sign a consent form to confirm that they understood what their involvement in the research required and that they consented to their information being quoted. To further reassure participants' copies of transcripts were offered to allay in any concerns, allowing them to further block any comments they wished to remain private (which none of them did incidentally). I considered the potential loss of direct quotes a lesser evil than not having their insightful comments to draw on at all. Furthermore at the local level draft copies of interim findings were offered to key contacts in order to have their input into the accuracy of the description and interpretation of settings, events and relations. This not only positively enhanced field relations by building trust, but also provided further useful data in terms of the comments received. Whilst participant validation can be a difficult and nerve-racking process it is not something to be feared or shied away from. In fact it is a useful test to determine just how grounded researchers' accounts are.

5. Organising, Managing and Analysing the Data

The huge body of field notes collected from observations and documentary analysis, coupled with the mass of transcripts generated from the audio-recordings of the

interviews and focus groups were extensive. The 'time cost' here is important (Miles, 1979: 592): the only way to record qualitative data is through extensive field notes and the transcription of tape-recorded interviews both of which involve laborious processes to transform the raw data into a form ready for analysis. Therefore when I was not collecting data, I was either transcribing it, summarising it or coding it. Miles and Huberman (1994) estimate this stage takes two to five times longer than data collection; if anything this is perhaps an under-estimation. Overload must therefore be guarded against at all times by a proactive approach to work management.

Yet this time and effort does pay dividends: the positive adjectives applied to qualitative data and research are all true. It does facilitate rich, insider accounts with an emphasis on context, process and the preservation of participants' voices.

Qualitative data are sexy. They are a source of well-grounded, rich descriptions and explanations of processes of identifiable locations...good qualitative data are more likely to lead to serendipitous findings and to new integrations; they help researchers get beyond initial conceptions and to generate or revise conceptual frameworks. Finally, the findings from qualitative studies have a quality of 'undeniability' (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 1).

To avoid becoming overwhelmed by the sheer mass of data two key principles of data management were adopted at the outset of the project: generating contact summaries, and entering the data into the Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) package Nvivo (see for example, Richards 2000). Firstly as Miles and Huberman (1994) advocate, a field contact was written up following every interview, field visit, document reading or focus group. This provided an immediate summary of the emergent issues and themes as well as a description of what was actually happening, and proved a key tool not only in guiding planning for the next contact but also for enhancing familiarity and sensitivity with the data. Secondly, from the outset of the project all data was entered into and managed electronically from within Nvivo. Given the sheer volume of paper collected this was a critical time and space saving device,

allowing data to be easily and quickly coded, retrieved and manipulated. Whilst CAQDAS packages cannot replace the analytical and creative work of the researcher, they can aid the analysis process in terms of data reduction, organisation and management.

Analysis is not a separate phase of the research that begins when all the data is gathered but must occur simultaneously so that it can shape and guide data collection in an iterative process, energising fieldwork and avoiding the scenario described below.

...coding is hard, obsessive work. It is not nearly as much fun as getting more good stuff in the field. Trying to do coding all at one time tempts the researcher to get sloppy, resentful, tired and partial. This attitude damages the robustness of the data and the quality of the analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 65).

Data was coded as soon as it started coming in, vital given the volume and type of research methods being employed. A small list of about half a dozen pre-conceived codes were derived from the broad research questions, with the overwhelming majority emerging from the data in a bottom up fashion some of which were in vivo in nature (e.g. tenants described tenant participation prior to the transfer as the setting of *wish-lists*). This allowed analysis to remain grounded, and for myself to gain a good understanding of what was actually happening. Codes were initially descriptive in nature, although as time progressed became more interpretive. Whilst some commentators propose case study research should be guided by theory from the outset (see for example, Mitchell 1983; Silverman 2005) my preferred approach is to get a basic grasp of what is actually happening before introducing and developing concepts. It is an approach to analysis influenced by grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin 1998), but not in a slavish uncritical fashion⁵. Whilst CAQDAS can help with analysis, particularly in terms of data reduction and organisation, it is no substitute for the creative and interpretive thought processes of the researcher. It is therefore an aid, not a mechanical substitute, for reflective analysis.

⁵ Grounded theory is an approach to analysis that emphasises the interdependence between data and theory, whilst there is no scope to elaborate here such discussions do occur elsewhere (Seale 1999).

The software provides no automatic coding process. It always remains the task of the ethnographer to exercise his or her intellectual imagination to decide upon the analytically relevant codes to be used. Conceptually speaking, therefore, the task of coding for microcomputer applications is no different from manual techniques (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995: 198).

The coding structure underwent a process of constant revision with the definition and content of codes constantly revisited. I was further mindful not to get too carried away with this revision process and over prune my coding structure: the relational structure of the codes must always be maintained if they are to make any sense or serve a useful analytical purpose.

Figure 2: Screen Dump of Nvivo Codes, PhD Project version 1 (August 2005)

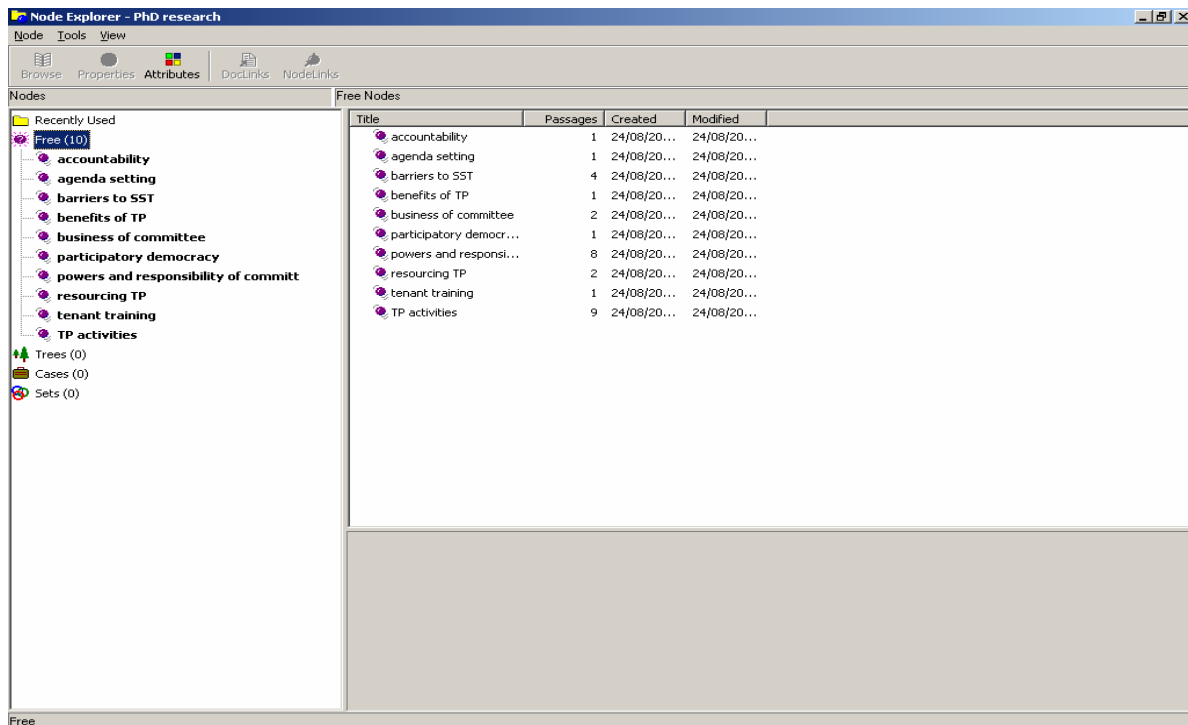
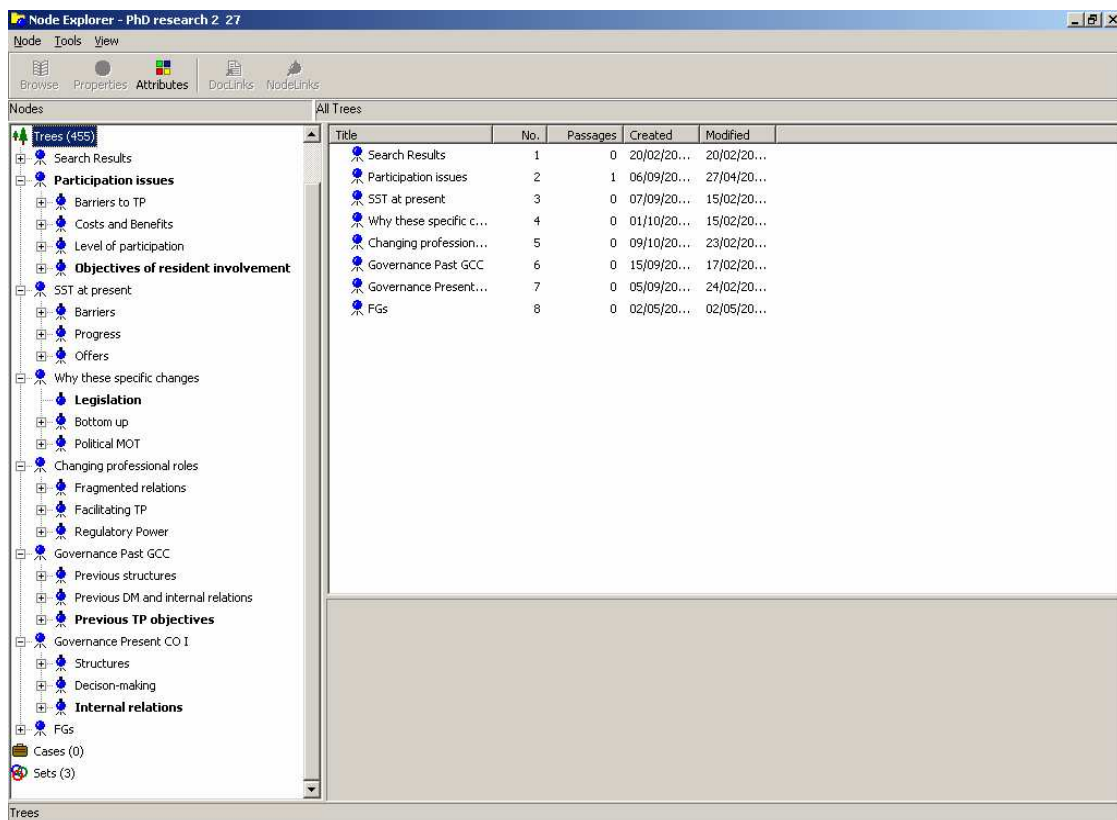


Figure 2 (above), and figure 3 (over leaf), highlight how the coding structure changed and ultimately became more sophisticated, from the outset of the project to the present day.

The data became more saturated with concepts, and the coding schema (or nodes as they are called in Nvivo) became more differentiated and organised in a tree-like relational structure. The next step in analysis is to take these largely empirical and grounded codes and think about them more conceptually in terms of a key organising theme (Strauss and Corbin 1998) – this has been identified as *fragmentation*, and derived from this the sub-themes of: centralisation; the mobilisation/regulation of tenant involvement; ownership of assets.

Figure 3: Screen Dump of Nvivo Codes, PhD Project version 2 27 (May 2006)



Other key steps in the analysis process were the acts of memoing and the production of interim findings reports. The former was initiated at an early stage and represented an attempt to generate ideas and think more conceptually about my data as the excerpt below from the memo ‘ownership of assets’ illustrates (see figure 4). Such insights should be made immediately when they occur, with no need to produce them in polished form.

Figure 4: Excerpt from Memo

12/12/2005 - 10:45:16 INITIAL FINDINGS DEC'05

No one size fits all as LHOs all coming from different starting points and have different ends on their sights e.g. forum v area committee. TP: unsure whether can be maximised post-transfer. LHOs want to emulate success of CBHAs that much is clear but does ownership equate with control, evidence about regulatory framework would suggest not.

The latter (interim reports) were produced at the end of each key stage in the fieldwork timeline (e.g. case studies, external setting, tenant focus groups) and they proved a useful means of documenting initial impressions and addressing blind spots in the data collection and early analysis that perhaps needed revisited. The analysis process is therefore not limited to the coding and memoing that occurs within Nvivo, but is also embodied in the act of writing up. The traditional approach of separating a PhD into planning/literature review (year 1); data collection (year 2); and data analysis/writing up (year 3) is therefore narrow and unhelpful. The key to avoid stress, panic and being drowned in a sea of data is to start fieldwork as early as possible and begin analysis of it almost immediately (see for example, Hammersley and Atkinson 1995; Silverman 2005).

6. Conclusion

Whilst case study research requires a conscientious and organised approach to work management and can be a stressful research design given the potential danger for overload at every stage, it is nonetheless an extremely rewarding approach, which can produce excellent results. The richness of the data and holistic understanding of the context under study cannot be under-estimated, especially as cases provide in-depth insights into research problems that more superficial research designs can only aspire to. Perhaps the maxim to remember here is it is better 'to say a lot about a little' (Silverman 2005: 80); it is not surprising therefore that after a period of decline the resurgence of case study research is now firmly under way.

I would suggest the key to doing case studies successfully is four-fold: a) think critically about cases, whilst theoretical and methodological issues have to be balanced against practical constraints do not just select any case and hope it will suffice; b) when on site good field relations are critical: sociability and impression management can go a long way here; c) document all the steps involved in sampling, data collection, and analysis – a transparent account is necessary if readers are to be convinced of the strength and quality of the analysis; d) begin data analysis as soon as possible, delaying the inevitable will simply result in a veritable data mountain which will be very time consuming and disheartening to analyse all at once.

Whilst methodological textbooks and qualitative research methods papers such as this are a useful guide and orientating device prior to the beginning of the research, the only way to learn is through doing – therefore the skills discussed in this paper are best cultivated through practical application and research experience.

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Documentary analysis of the press: Problems of Involvement and Detachment for inexperienced researchers

1. Introduction

The purpose of this brief paper is to analyse from a figurational perspective the process involved in conducting a newspaper content analysis, and briefly comment on some of the main points concerned with problems of involvement and detachment. It is not the aim of this paper to provide a detailed examination or critique of figurational or process sociology, or indeed Norbert Elias's concept of involvement – detachment. However, given that Elias himself was keen to reject the traditional subjectivity/objectivity approach to providing explanations of one's understanding of the social world, it is necessary to briefly touch upon the involvement–detachment concept, given the often ideological complexities encountered when conducting a newspaper content analysis.

2. The emergence of the problem

The problem that this paper is going to discuss arose during studying under the supervision of a number of leading figurational sociologists, and more specifically in the context of writing and researching a Masters thesis on 'Media Portrayals of Male and Female Athletes: A Text and Picture Analysis of British National Newspaper Coverage of the Olympic Games Since 1948'. This case study relates to an attempt to utilize Norbert Elias's (1987) concept of involvement-detachment, and the occurring difficulties for 'new' or 'inexperienced' researchers who wish to adopt this theoretical approach.

3. Background to the study

It would seem logical to argue that research starts from a research problem, and in the quest for obtaining information research does not simply happen, it involves a detailed and systematic collection of data that has followed a carefully planned research design (Fulcher and Scott, 2003). Once a topic has been identified the researcher must select the most adequate method of investigation in order to address the problem (Fulcher and Scott, 2003). It has to be pointed out however, that research is never straight forward and many difficulties have to be overcome, and at times, initial ideas have to be scrapped due to problems with respondents, accessing data or material or even reaching the location to where the research needs to be carried out. Once the research process starts it can be argued that the key to sociological research is to not only ask questions such as 'What is going on here', but seek to explain why events or situations occur in the way that they do. Researchers may also wish to place a theory or concept under critically (re) assessment. Indeed, Elias and Scotson made reference to this when writing:

Once built up, one could examine how far such a model was consistent with the observable facts, could revise it or abandon it if it failed the test, and could hand it on for further tests, for revision or demolition, as the case may be, to others engaged in related enquiries (Elias and Scotson, 1965: 22).

Sociologists therefore may decide to engage in sociological research for a number of reasons. Given that research often involves investigating complex social situations, it is vital that the researcher selects the most adequate method of investigation for their project (Bryman, 2001). Often, academic research is carried out to fill a gap, test or (re) assess, as previous studies may have offered unsatisfactory explanations. In respect to the research within this case study, a detailed analysis of text and picture images of male and female athletes competing in the summer Olympic Games since 1948 in two British newspapers was conducted. Previous research surrounding this subject matter had been undertaken largely by feminist scholars. Such work had reported that female athletes were often trivialized, undermined and thus denigrated in terms of their image and performance. Although results differed from country to country and from different media outlets, the argument put forward

by many feminist researchers was that negative media coverage impacts on the current and future structure of female sport and sporting involvement.

4. Involvement and Detachment

It is fair to say, that from a figurational standpoint the content analysis used for the purpose of this study required a relatively detached and coherent breakdown of text, whether it be photographic imagery or printed commentaries. The concept of Involvement and Detachment is a central theme that runs through all figurational sociologists work. From this respect, it is of the utmost importance that researchers working from within this paradigm seek to distance themselves as much as possible from their own socialization or personal beliefs. In a sense one must rid themselves of 'ideological baggage'. As Maguire (1988) has noted "the sociologist-as-participant must be able to stand back and become the sociologist-as-observer-and-interpreter. In achieving this, it is argued that the research will wiled a more reality-congruent understanding of the subject matter and issues surrounding the research topic. Previous feminist work on this subject matter has received wide, but at times, uncritical acceptance. Although such research had provided valuable data and analysis, the debate often assumed a highly emotive and a heavily value-laden charter, thus resulting in some work neglecting to adequately appreciate the difference between 'how things have come to be the way they are' and judgmental visions of 'how things should be'. Therefore, by testing the exploratory power of the figurational approach and more specifically Norbert Elias's notion of involvement-detachment, the research used in this case study attempted to overcome difficulties concerned with emotional involvement.

Although figurational sociologists clearly strive to step back and distance themselves from their subject matter, it is an often difficult balance to strike between the two concepts. This is especially true in the research presented for this case study and for previous studies that have investigated media imagery or representations. An added complexity when examining newspaper imagery or text commentaries is the role or influence, or dare one say it, the involvement of the journalist. From a figurational perspective it may be suggested that the person writing the article or selecting photographic imagery is too involved, and would therefore provide a distorted reflection of the event based on personal or media interest. This

is a point raised by Dunning *et al* (1988: 8) who have argued that the press are not ‘neutral agents’, and therefore the researcher must be aware of what messages are being conveyed through either text commentary or photographic imagery. Although potential value-laden analyses of this kind are not confined to journalists or those working in media production, it makes it especially important and also at times challenging to put one’s own values, at least temporarily, to one side when engaging in research of this kind.

As noted then, figurational sociologists believe that placing practical and personal concerns to one side will result in a relatively detached and realistic analysis of the situation. It is claimed by many figurational sociologists, including Bloyce (2004: 149) that this approach will facilitate a better, more reality-congruent understanding of the issues related to our area of research. Furthermore, Waddington (2000: 7) has stipulated that this approach will also provide a more adequate basis for the formulation of relevant policy. In direct contrast, the research within this case presented here, encountered debate of a ‘highly emotionally charged situation’ whereby mainly feminist scholars sought change or attempted ‘do something’ or ‘change something’ based on individual ideological or emotional concern.

5. Problems of Involvement and Detachment in the work of ‘new’ or ‘inexperienced’ researchers

Until very recently figurational or process sociology and the work of Norbert Elias has been relatively neglected. However, in recent years a number of ‘figurational schools’ have arisen that have provided valuable contributions to the sociology of sport and exercise. Figurational sociology however still remains alien to many sociologists or those studying the discipline, and although attempts have been made to piece research fields other than those concerned with sport, exercise and health very few mainstream sociology academic textbooks incorporate the work of Norbert Elias or those figurational sociologists who have followed. Part of the problem for new researchers wishing to adopt the figurational approach is that many of the concepts and theories are ‘new’ and at times confusing. For example, the notion of Involvement and Detachment and finding the right combination is crucial and central to all aspects of figurational research. Yet achieving this balance between involvement-detachment is difficult, as figurational sociologists have not attempted to define how much involvement

or indeed detachment is required when engaging in sociological research. This is a point raised by Rojek (1986: 584-596) who notes, “Elias and other figurational sociologists have failed to outline the ground-rules so to speak, for the researcher wishing to adopt the appropriate level of detachment in their writing”. This illuminating statement perhaps implies that it is not just ‘new-comers’ to figurational sociology or indeed individual researchers who have initial problems of striking a balance. Having said this, figurational sociologists have duly responded, by suggesting that merely being aware of the sensitizing issue of ‘involvement-detachment’ is enough to ‘sensitize’ the researcher (e.g. Bloyce, 2004: 150). That given, it still may leave new researchers confused to where exactly they should be on the continuum between involvement-detachment, and in addition how does the new researcher know if their too involved, or indeed too detached?

Although Elias himself recognized that total detachment is unachievable and not altogether desirable, nor is it desirable to be completely involved, it still leaves the ‘inexperienced’ researcher with many questions when engaging in a newspaper content analysis that clearly requires a certain degree of involvement given the qualitative nature of the project. Without clear boundaries or goal posts it leaves those adopting the approach open to criticism like that initially leveled by Chris Rojek (1986). One way of avoiding such problems is to perhaps adopt the approach suggested by Maguire (1998) and Dunning (1992: 252), who have argued that by adopting ‘a long-term developmental perspective’ a more detached way of thinking can be achieved as ‘we avoid the retreat to the present’. In respect to this, Norbert Elias often criticized those researchers who, as he put it ‘retreated in to the present’ (For a more detailed discussion see Elias, 1987).

It is clear however that the key to producing more reality congruent research, from a figurational perspective at least, is to maintain an appropriate balance between these two roles of involvement-detachment (van Krieken, 1998). Furthermore, notions of the “ultimate truth” or “complete detachment” have no place in figurational research (Murphy, Sheard and Waddington, 2000: 104). Therefore, research that combines the two will result, it is argued, in relatively realistic outcomes that will enable action based on knowledge and not prejudice. Yet, to some inexperienced researchers controlling their emotional involvement when researching a topic that triggers great interest and sparks enthusiasm or intrigue is challenging, although evidently necessary if adopting the figurational approach.

6. Concluding points

In conclusion, this case study has attempted to outline some of the main problems of adopting a figurational approach, or more specifically applying Norbert Elias's notion of Involvement and Detachment to a documentary analysis of the press. It has highlighted some of the main concerns or difficulties that a 'new' or 'inexperienced' researcher may face when employing this concept. The problems outlined resulted from personal struggles with involvement-detachment, and thus it is not intended to act as a comprehensive discussion or critique of figurational theories, but merely a discussion paper for future researchers wishing to adopt this approach. The paper has also briefly attempted to highlight the often complex difficulties with conducting research as a whole, in doing so rejecting some of the regimented discussions that take place in some texts that suggest research is uncomplicated and without problems.

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Zielonka, J. (2006). *Europe as Empire: the nature of the enlarged European Union*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 293p.

Abstract

Eager to provide an alternative explanation to the process of European Integration, Jan Zielonka revives the concept of empire by making the argument that the EU is a neo-medieval empire in the making. A book that is very much welcomed in times of doubts and reflections on the future of the European project.

In the aftermath of the French and Dutch referendums, many are those who cast some doubts on the future of the European Union (EU) both politically and geographically. At the time of this review, politicians have been thinking about several ways to revive the constitutional text, through a ‘mini-treaty’ or some ‘flexible integration’. 2006 being described as a period of pause, it is hoped in academic and political circles that 2007 will bring about some clear orientation for the European project, probably at the occasion of the anniversary of the Treaties of Rome. It is in this context that *Europe as Empire* offers an original contribution to explain the ongoing changes which have occurred since the 2004 enlargement. Mixing adequately theoretical and empirical investigation, *Europe as Empire* endows the ambition to propel an innovative way of thinking about the EU and European integration; an optimistic book that will be welcomed by any person who has some faith in the European project.

Relying on two theoretical models, the Westphalian model and the neo-medieval model, Jan Zielonka argues that it is towards the latter that the EU is increasingly turning to. It must be stressed though that the concept of neo-medievalism is not a novelty and has experienced a regain of interest in the last decade. Originally, Hedley Bull resorted to this idea in the seventies, when describing a post-Westphalian order in which loyalties were multiple and where “no ruler or state was sovereign in the sense of being supreme over a given territory” (Bull, 1977). Close to the post-modernist and governance approaches, academics reused it to apprehend the new reality of the post-cold war period (Minc 1993; Kaplan 1994; Cerny 1998; Kobrin 1999; Rengger 2000; Friedrichs 2001). A reality in which citizens enjoy multiple loyalties, at local, regional, national and supranational levels, where

the state borders are fuzzier due to transnational activities, where jurisdictions overlap, and in which heterogeneity and divided sovereignty predominate. However, none of these attempts have been able to offer a systematic analysis; an objective aimed at by the Czech scholar who provides us with evidence from the latest enlargement of the EU, but also from the fields of economics, democracy and foreign affairs.

Before plugging in the analysis of the book itself, two preliminary criticisms need to be made. First, one would contradict the author when he argues that the current European integration theories are biased by a state-centric vision and downplay the impact of the 2004 enlargement. This is indeed going very hastily over the extensive literature produced in the recent years which has made huge efforts to overcome the inherent flaws of the discipline of International Relations. The governance literature is in particular, a very valid attempt to overcome this state-centric bias and has revealed successful in apprehending the fuzzier and complex realities of regional integration in Europe (see Kohler-Koch and Rittberger 2006 for a good overview). Perhaps this distorted vision of the literature is the result of the approach of the author itself, which is in reality very close to the governance approach. Second, on a methodological level, by conceiving the EU as a Middle Age empire, unlike the nineteenth century versions of the French and British colonial empires, the author made the choice to adopt an ideal-type methodology in constructing his paradigm. Although this method is a very useful heuristic device, it is the opinion of this reviewer that the author is running the risk of oversimplifying historical reality. Any historians would indeed point to the difficulty to compare the Empire of Charlemagne to the Ottoman Empire.

Turning to the structure of the book, the author devotes the first three chapters to the 2004 enlargement, which has supposedly reinforced the neo-medieval character of the European empire. The enlargement to Central and Eastern European Countries (CEEC) constitutes the 'prototype of imperial politics' (p.13) through which the EU has led an 'aggressive export' of its norms and values. A behaviour that lead the author to maintain that the EU is not a typical empire which usually disregards values, and relies only on military power. In a way, the EU is close to what used to be the 'just' war of the medieval times, which attributed ethic and morality to the aggression of a neighbour. In fact, the recent European Neighbourhood Policy which aims at securing a 'ring of friends', abound in references to European values in its policy documents. But to what extent is this expansion of European values 'aggressive' is yet to be demonstrated; as it is often more due to the

preservation of power asymmetries and interdependences that the EU is able to export norms. Usually, on the contrary, due to the famous ‘capability-expectation gap’, the EU is not always able to play a very efficient ‘carrot and stick’ game, a point that the human rights’ situation in the Mediterranean neighbourhood would confirm without much difficulties and thus downplay the argument of the author.

The three following chapters broach three aspects of the plurilateral governance that is at the heart of the European empire. In the field of economic governance, borders are becoming fuzzier and economics is now characterised by flexibility, devolution and delegation. The keywords are facilitation and coordination, as exemplified by the Open method of coordination (OMC). The same goes for EU democratic governance which relies on non-majoritarian institutions that are the executive agencies which evaluate, inform but also implement EU law. Zielonka argues not mistakenly that the public sphere is weak, fragmented and with a lack of *demos* (p. 138). The author encourages scholars and politicians to innovate and find new ways of thinking democracy, beyond the Westphalian paradigm. Ways in which solidarity among citizens would be secured, and in which society would be based on three pillars: pluralism, individualism and multiculturalism.

Then, moving to EU’s external relations, the Oxford’s academic insists on the neo-medieval character that defines the EU’s relationship with its periphery. Like for economics and democratic governance, actors and loyalties of its foreign policy are multiple. Referring to the values that define EU’s foreign policy, Zielonka would certainly agree with those who defend the vision of a normative power Europe, which influences its neighbourhood through conditionality, rather than through military power. A conditionality that is exemplified by the prospect of membership during the 2004 enlargement, or by the prospect of taking part into European programmes for the Wider Europe. At a time of the heavily debated question of Turkey accession, *Europe as Empire* defends the thesis that enlargement will continue. Maintaining that the last enlargement has challenged the view that membership could only be offered to rich and politically stable countries, geopolitical considerations will drive further offers of membership. Because of the neo-medieval character of the European empire, it is conceivable, for the author, that North African countries such as Lebanon or Israel, could accede to membership. A view that is very much at odds with the current situation and omits the public opinion variable.

The medieval analogy offered by the author should trigger concerns on chaos and anarchy to any reader but also on democracy, which historically is in dissonance with medievalism. Notwithstanding the inherent problems that such a system entails, Zielonka sees two answers to these issues. First, the EU must improve its 'plurilateral' system of governance which encourages flexibility and differentiation. It should not only be efficient but also legitimate. For that purpose, relying on the work of Robert A. Dahl, Zielonka suggests that the EU should concentrate on education, public health, town and city planning in order to prevent the 'feeling of apathy, alienation, banalization and introversion' too often generated by the European project. To circumscribe the lack of democracy usually associated with the notion of medievalism, participation of citizens should be reinforced at the local and nation-state level (p. 187). In addition, access to organised groups of citizens as well as civic and political rights of citizens must be reinforced. Only then, by offering alternative channels of contestation, some legitimacy will emerge.

Concluding on an optimistic note, Zielonka argues that the road towards medievalism 'represent a recipe for chaos and conflict', and will allow the EU, relying on its pluralism and diversity to be better armed to cope with the challenges of globalisation. *Europe as Empire* is an interesting contribution to the current debates on the EU and the enlargement process, providing an attractive alternative and optimistic answer. In order to create a paradigmatic change in European integration studies, it is nonetheless fundamental to define a research agenda and a methodology, two necessary elements of a good recipe to operate this 'scientific revolution' dear to Thomas Kuhn.

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