Embodying Feminist Research: Learning from Action Research, Political Practices, Diffractions, and Collective Knowledge

ALEXANDRA ZAVOS¹ AND BARBARA BIGLIA²

¹Manchester Metropolitan University, Discourse Unit
²Universitat de Barcelona, Spain

In the past three decades, feminists and critical theorists have discussed and argued the importance of deconstructing and problematising social science methodology to question normalized hierarchies concerning the production of knowledge and the status of truth claims. Nevertheless, often, these ideas have remained theoretical propositions not embodied in research practices. In fact, there is very little published discussion about the difficulties and limits of their practical application. In this paper, we introduce some interconnected reflections starting from two different but related experiences of embodying feminist activist research. Our aim is to emphasise the importance of attending to process, making mistakes and learning during fieldwork, as well as experimenting with personalized forms of analysis, such as the construction of narratives and the story-telling process.

Keywords: activism; anti-racism; feminist research; embodiment; diffractions; migration; social movements

Introduction

Starting from the challenges we each encountered while trying to engage consistently in feminist activist practices during the process of doing research for our PhDs, we introduce some interconnected reflections starting from two different but related experiences of embodying feminist activist research. Far from wishing to introduce yet another series of guidelines for research, our aim is to emphasise the importance of attending to process, making mistakes and learning during fieldwork, as well as experimenting with personalized forms of analysis, such as the construction of narratives and the story-telling process. We attempt to write in what usually gets left out of research accounts, namely the moments of tension, disagreement, conflict and sometimes also personal and collective breakthrough. Drawing on a common theoretical background, we each outline and reflect on the methodological choices, contradictions, and possibilities engendered in and through our respective research experiences. Using particular aspects and examples of the research processes we engaged in, we comment on each other’s approach in relation to specific issues highlighted in the theoretical debate. We believe that through this exchange we can profit from each other’s particular insights and challenges.

How is research constructed (legitimized, contested, represented) in different collectivities (antiracist groups, migrant communities, women’s groups), locations (different cities,
countries), contexts (academy, social movements)? How is gender a constitutive relation in
the conception and practice of research, fieldwork and analysis? How do gender, class, sexual
preference, political points of view, and culture/ethnicity intersect in the construction of
the researcher as a particular subject working in different contexts? These are some of the
questions informing our shared preoccupation with the practice of feminist research.

Theoretical Signposts

In the past three decades, feminists and critical theorists have discussed and argued the
importance of deconstructing and problematising social science research methodology in
order to question normalized hierarchies concerning the production of knowledge and the
status of truth claims. The pioneering work of Evelyn Fox Keller (1983, 1985) clearly
shows how what we call “science” has been historically constructed on sexual and gen-
dered metaphors and how Baconian analysis offered the language to justify the sexual
domination of scientific metaphors. According to her, the sacralization of science has
made it taboo for any attempts to analyze “hard” science with the same categories that it
has created to analyse realities.

Following Harding (1986) we briefly approach some feminist proposals to deal with
the sexism of science. First of all, from an equality perspective, one of the major problems
is the scarce presence of women in the spaces of science production. It is believed that in
order to improve this situation women scientist role models have to be shown to girls
(Alemany 1996; Colectivo Hipatia 1998; Jhonson 1997; Moreno 1993; Piussi 1997;
Woodward 1998). However, the sole increase in the presence of women¹ within an arena
constructed on heteropatriarchal values has proven insufficient to subvert its discriminating
patterns. In fact, without criticizing the alleged objectivity of science how would
women’s presence in science make a difference? Responding to these concerns, stand-
point theorists (such as Harding 1986), influenced by a Marxist analysis of social relations,
argued that women’s inclusion in science could make a difference because minoritised
groups would bring to science a less ideological point of view. Yet women, as
any other marginalized people/collective, do not necessarily produce more subversive
knowledge. While the new point of view introduced in the arena of science by marginal-
ized discourses is extremely enriching we must be careful not to idealise it. According to
Haraway (1991), we must recognize that any analysis is always situated, impure, contest-
able, and partial. For that reason, in consonance with the epistemological turn proposed by
social constructionism, it is important to subvert power relations involved in any endeavour
of knowledge production (Cabruja 1998). Nevertheless, the fashionable aspect of postmod-
ernist analysis has also brought about the institutionalization of some of its relativist claims
in the academy as shown, for example, by Alexander & Mohanty (1997). Following
Roman’s analysis, these authors denounce how “the rapid institutionalization of a particular
brand of postmodernist theorizing in the U.S. academy [. . .] ‘relativist postmodernist’ [. . .]
has led to a certain kind of racial relativism or white defensiveness² in the classroom. [. . .] It
is this sort of defensiveness that prevents teachers from taking critical antiracist pedagogical
positions” (Alexander & Mohanty 1997, p. xviii). To avoid these pitfalls it is vital to empha-
sise the accountability involved in any research practice or knowledge production and to
engage with what Haraway (1991) has called “feminist objectivities.”

¹Much more space would be needed to debate the essentialist and homogenizing conception of
womanhood that lie behind that theory.
²By white defensiveness, Roman means “the relativistic assertion that whites, like ‘people of
color,’ are history’s oppressed subjects of racism.”
Criticizing universalizing Western academic narratives, postcolonial and critical feminists (e.g., Ong 1988; Spivak 1988; Mohanty 1986) have argued that knowledge production is not a Western (or white, or male) privilege. Different knowledges are produced in multiple locations and these need to be acknowledged and engaged with if we are to challenge existing relations of inequality. This is precisely what a situated, reflexive analysis can offer towards a politicization of research. The specific position of a “situated” researcher (e.g., Greek), with the privilege of transversing multiple, if unequal, intellectual and material spaces (e.g., Greece and the United Kingdom), can be both resource and challenge. In fact, in itself, this position articulates the tensions between the local and the global and, if attended to, reveals the sometimes implicit and obscured hierarchies of social scientific knowledge production. For example, developing a “critical” analysis of migrants’ positions in Greece necessitates attention to the intersections of gender, class, race, and ethnicity, as they manifest in their historical, geopolitical specificity but are also articulated in global economies of privilege, in the production of “entitled insiders” and “threatening outsiders,” as well as a global migrant proletariat. However, such analysis simultaneously calls into question the usefulness, relevance, and implications of these analytic categories and their ideological baggage. This points to the problem of transferring, imposing, or adopting conceptual and linguistic categories, and their content, across intellectual, linguistic, relational, and social spaces, which are not equal, similar, or interchangeable but rather hegemonically ordered in and through linear hierarchies of knowledge production, which reflect economic and political hierarchies, with Eurocentric and Anglo-Saxon social science at the apex (Tuhiwai Smith 1999). For this reason, rather than consigning dominant legitimizations of what counts as knowledge and who produces it, as well as common sociological representations of Greece as a panting late arrival to dominant scientific and cultural trends, we are concerned to explore how to develop conceptual tools specific to this context, acknowledging the debts and influences of various other traditions, such as Western and postcolonial feminism, as well as their incommensurability.

Some of these concerns have been expressed in recent debates on the meaning and uses of reflexivity (Lather 2007; Stanley & Wise 1990, 1993; Wilkinson 1988), the dynamics of diffraction (Haraway 1997), the problems/possibilities of assuming insider/outside positions (Watts 2006), recognizing the situated production of knowledge (Haraway 1991; Rose 1997), and emphasising that knowledge is always collectively constructed (Sandoval 2000). Nevertheless, often, these ideas have remained theoretical propositions not embodied in research practices. In fact there is little published discussion about the difficulties and limits of their practical application. While criticality has become a fashionable catchword, it seems that it usually implies using qualitative methods and/or specifying the gender/class/race of the researcher, as if that were more than enough in order to assume a political stand within the research project. Moreover, huge attention has been paid to describing in detail the methods of collecting information but this has not been accompanied by a similar sensitivity and rigor toward the technical aspects of engaging with the material collected, that is, with the process of analysis.

In the account we present we will try to show how we have embodied in our practices a feminist epistemology and used it in order to deal with the tensions, conflicts, and political doubts we faced in our research process. In other words, how feminist knowledge and debates have influenced our experiences of methodologies on and in practices.

Shared Tensions in Planning Research

Alexandra Zavos’ contribution begins with her reflections on doing ethnographic fieldwork on gender and migration in the anti-racist movement in Athens, where she positions
herself as, simultaneously, researcher and activist, enabled (or hindered) in the assumption of different roles and political initiatives. She discusses the construction of migrants as “others” to the nation, selectively visible and/or invisible in particular contexts, such as the antiracist movement, whose dominant political repertoires (discourses and practices) inadvertently reproduce hierarchies of power and participation based on gendered and racialised assumptions regarding national identity and belonging.

Barbara Biglia draws on her work on women activist narratives on gendered relations within social movements, politics, feminisms and transformation. She particularly highlights how working on the borderline between insider and outsider made her realize that the responsibility for dealing with ethical issues involved in the research was basically in her own hands. This brought about a redefinition of the epistemology and methodology of the research project during the process of researching.

After an initial brief presentation of the research on which we are basing our reflections we proceed to organize our discussion around four issues that emerged as particularly critical and tense in the research process. First, the selection of the topic of study, a point sometimes not explicitly considered as sensitive and contradictory. We reflect here on our experience of ambiguity and discomfort in defining our research topics as situated between personal and political engagements. Second, we address the political contradictions that we faced in our politically committed research. While negotiating the conflicting demands of our research, political engagements proved to be sometimes destabilizing. Nevertheless this destabilisation also became a useful resource for working on our personal, political, activist, and academic prejudices. Third, we consider the dynamics of our overlapping positionalities: as academic researchers and political activists, as foreigners and natives, as feminists involved in a basically sexist social movement, as insiders and outsiders, and so forth. Through some examples, we outline our reasoning for assuming a borderline position. Finally, we explain the way in which we addressed the need to reconfigure feminist theory, theoretically (Alexandra) and methodologically (Barbara), in relation to the specific challenges posed by our research practices.

**What was it About? Introductory Notes**

*Alexandra Zavos. Moving “Between”: Research as Activism, Activism as Research*

My research on gender, migration, and antiracist activism in Athens developed after several adjustments into an ethnographic project documenting my involvement in antiracist mobilizations on gender and migration issues. My study addressed the intersection of gendered and racialised dynamics that underlie activist discourses and practices drawing on my experience of setting up a campaign on women migrants’ problems and demands in the context of the activities of a leftist antiracist collectivity in Athens called the Network for the Social Support of Refugees and Migrants (henceforth called Network), which represents one of the oldest and most active political groups in the antiracist and migration movement in Greece.

While feminist and/or gender-informed approaches to migration/activism are not part of the public and explicit profile of the group, or of any other antiracist group for that matter, it was still, in my estimation, one of the more “open” political spaces in which to introduce such an initiative, which I proceeded to do over a period of eight months, and in collaboration with two other women members of the Network. Feminist activists in Greece have tended to focus on trafficking and the sex industry, representing migrant women as helpless victims of (local, national, and transnational) networks of exploitation. Little or no political work has been done on the conditions of women migrants’ participation in the labour market
Barbara Biglia. Shifting from Researching Gender Relations to Developing a Feminist Research Process

My starting point was the idea of analyzing gender discrimination within *mixed social movements* (SM) and the activist practices that deal with this. However, as my research developed these initial topics began to lose some of their importance and were gradually replaced by others. As such the aims and objectives of my study became much more complex. The considerable amounts of tacit knowledge my participants shared with me went much further than the single topic of “gender relations” and opened up spaces and possibilities for further exploration. Also, the methodological and political decisions I had to take in order to deal with the ethical tensions I faced during the research process needed to be addressed. With these issues in mind I took the decision to restructure my study as an unfinished process of narrative creation (on politics, (im)possibilities of changes, feminisms, etc.) rather than producing a closed piece of research.

My fieldwork was carried out by means of an on-line informative survey and 31 in-depth interviews with women activists who lived in Spain, Chile, and Italy. For the purposes of this article I will utilise a diffractive analysis (Haraway 1997) to focus on the ways in which the contradictions and difficulties I encountered influenced the epistemology and methodology of my work. Haraway writes

> “Reflexivity has been much recommended as a critical practice, but my suspicion is that reflexivity, like reflection, only displaces the same elsewhere, setting up the worries about copy and original and the search for the authentic and really real. [. . .] What we need is to make a difference in material-semiotic apparatuses, to diffract the rays of techno-science so that we get more promising interference patterns in the recording films of our lives and bodies.” (Haraway 1997, p. 16)

With this tension in mind, I focus on the methodology born out of practice to complement the methodology in practice which Alexandra’s account explores.

The Topics of Our Studies

Alexandra Zavos. Engendering Antiracist Politics on Migration

From a social movement perspective, the migrant emerges and is claimed as a political subject and agent of social change (Marvakis et al. 2005a, 2005b; Mezzadra 2004a, 2004b; Moulier Boutang 2003; Papadopoulos & Tsianos 2007). Yet I would argue that the construction of migrants as particular kinds of subjects capable (or incapable) of (certain kinds of...
agency is always situated and, rather than reflecting actual potential, in some cases represents attempts to police the borders of (particular national) political imaginaries and activism, even within the antiracist movement itself, so as not to destabilise established practices of political representation (Zavos 2007). In other words, migrants are recognized as political actors in so far as they accept and enter the field of politics as it is cast, where they are placed primarily in the polarised, yet commensurate, positions of “victim” and/or (national) “threat.” Mobilizing around gender and migration offers a vantage point from which to question and juxtapose both the politics of public political representation and of national sovereignty.

Barbara Biglia. When Personal Experience Informs the Selection of Research Topics

My involvement in this research really started as a response to a tension I had been experiencing between being, at one and the same time an activist in mixed social movements (basically among autonomous and libertarian groups) and a feminist. Far from this being a personal feeling of queerness, my sensation was shared by the other members of the feminist collectives I was involved in. As feminists involved in mixed social movements (of the “left”), we have continuously experienced contradictions between our feminist political standpoint and the relations we developed in our day to day political practice. As a result gender relations within the groups and, more specifically, the reproduction of gender discrimination within them, were topics frequently discussed both within autonomous feminist collectives and in interaction with other activist groups.

The need for an in-depth analysis focusing on this normally unrecognized situation to stimulate/activate dynamics leading to the disarticulation of sexism became clear to me as a result of a number of factors: articles published in DIY collections or by non mainstream publishers, from specialised Web sites, and through various practical activities and debates in academic-activist feminist mailing-lists. Indeed, with the naïve energy of a young (and somewhat inexpert) researcher, I decided (in 2000) to embark on this investigative voyage without any formalised plan and with no reference models. This lack of a reference point forced me to redefine my own epistemological approach and techniques of analysis, as I will explain in the last section of this article.

Pitfalls of Attempting Explicitly Political Research

Alexandra Zavos. Migration as a Force of Social Change?

To return to and problematise my initial proposition, one of the leading questions framing our understanding of migration is whether or not it really is, by default, a force of social

---

5As shown in the debate developed in August–September 2004 within the Social-Movement list (http://www.iol.ie/~mazzoldi/toolsforchange/sm.html), there is no agreement between theorist-researchers on the inclusion/exclusion of movements of the “right” within the category of SM. In accordance with the definition of the activist I worked with, I use the term SM solely to refer to movements of the “left.”

6Even if social movements researcher frequently claim that they work with (or on) a specific Social Movement it is really difficult to address more then a portion of the SM due to its indefinite contours. This has been the reality within the so called “new social movements” and is even clearer in the actual conjunction of the so called “movement of movements.”

7Animalhada 2004; Anonyma 1998; Blue 2002; Manchester Women’s Network 2004; Modica 2000; PGA 2004; Raven 1995; Subbuswamy Patel 2001; Thiers-Vidal 1998.

8Between them: http://www.tmcrew.org/sessismo; http://www.antipatriarcat.org.

9For example the itinerant workshops on sexism (Italy, 2003).

10NEXTgenderation and 30something.
change; whether or not it engenders processes of hybridization and multicultural diversity; and whether or not it calls forth a redrawing of cultural, social, and national boundaries that organize relationships of entitlement, privilege, and sovereignty and the differential distribution of resources and legitimacy. I learned through my research practice that researching and mobilizing on migration issues does not automatically place us on the other side of dominant conceptualizations and practices, but reproduces them within our “radical” contexts. In order to confront this contradiction, we need to understand that what is at stake here are not only global relations of power conceived in the abstract but also the material and ideological parameters of our own investments and locations. I, too, found myself caught up in, suffering from, and reproducing gendered and racialized dynamics of power, becoming on occasion a “victim” of sexist discrimination and masculinist repression, a “rebelling” subject, or a “patronizing” and “authoritarian” coordinator. In fact more often than not, I found myself feeling overdetermined by these discourses and subject-positions, unable to produce new meanings, perspectives, or interactions.

What became obvious to me during my fieldwork is that gender—so absent, so present—needs to be inscribed in our discourses and practices not as a tribute to political correctness as is usually done, but through a foundational re-conceptualization of the ways in which implicit gender assumptions and practices legitimise, naturalise, and obscure dominant hierarchies of power, be they articulated in the Greek antiracist movement itself or toward migrants. This, among other priorities, could perhaps affect a much needed re-evaluation of antiracism, premised not only on what “we” do for those “others” who are marginalised, discriminated against, and prosecuted, but primarily how we can question our own established identifications and investments toward a proliferation and blurring of subject-positions between “us” and “migrants/others” and the subsequent development of new kinds of relationships, mobilisations, and objectives.

**Barbara Biglia. Politics in What Sense? For Whom?**

As an activist, approaching the studies of SMs in the academic literature and attending conferences immediately made me feel uncomfortable (Biglia 2003b) about the way of working *on* such movements, as an object of study, instead of *with* them, as active subjects of knowledge production (Biglia 2007a). When I was planning my research I initially thought in terms of action research as a way of stimulating changes in the sexist dynamics of SMs. Nevertheless I soon began to reflect on the limits of action research for invitation as initiated by a researcher as opposed to stemming from an explicit demand from interested communities (Biglia, Bonet & Marti 2006). Even if some feminist autonomous groups were formulating certain kinds of expectation about the kind of research I was planning I had not been explicitly asked to do the research by any collective or SM. Indeed, I needed to keep constantly in mind that the research was more of a personal project, one in which other activist women were being invited to participate, than a real piece of participative action research. For example, participants were not involved in the design of the research. Partly because the research began as an individualistic academic project (for an analysis of the contradictions involved in this model, see Noy 2003); partly because the activists I contacted encouraged me to continue but did not consider that becoming actively involved in all the steps of the research process was their priority. This caused me to slightly change my initial plan, and instead of centering my attention on creating an active process of sexist disarticulation, I decided to produce encounters and narratives that could be used by activists and SMs.
Positioned on the Borderline and Living the Tension

Alexandra Zavos. The Researcher as Political Subject

During the fieldwork which lasted approximately eight months (November 2005–July 2006), I engaged in what I would call “activist” research, by which I mean to indicate my direct involvement in and production of my topic/field of research, my placement not as an observing outsider but as a member of the group, whose practices as well as my own I wanted to study, contribute to, and influence at the same time as I myself was influenced by them. Therefore I consider my work to both represent and exceed ethnographic research protocols, in the sense that the group’s itinerary and identity, and therefore my object of study, was also partially shaped by my own presence there both as researcher and activist, a double status of which the group was informed and consenting, even if I did not always want to draw attention to it. Nevertheless, my double position as member and researcher of the group, while consciously chosen, proved to be quite challenging. On several occasions I experienced becoming the object of what I have come to name “alignment processes.” In these instances, which ranged from informal talks to formal instructions and requirements, usually around issues relating to the group’s practices vis-à-vis other leftist antiracist groups and the group’s positions on what constituted appropriate migration politics, I was guided to follow the “correct” line and account to the group for my actions.

In addition, my relationships with migrant groups and individual migrants proved to be much less straightforward and easier than I expected, often ending in direct conflicts and/or compromises. My own position and the available or legitimised practices I could engage in, as well as the “style” of engagement, as a researcher and activist, were delineated and determined by certain inescapable markers: first of all, being seen and seeing myself as “Greek,” being a woman, being white, being educated, being middle class. These were a source of continuous internal and external tensions. Given these ongoing tensions, there were many points at which the only thing that bound me to the group and to my activist project was my personal commitment to my research. Seeing that my political commitment was often a source of frustration and disappointment rather than a liberating or emancipating process, it seemed to me relevant to further question activist motivations more generally. I initiated a series of individual conversations with other members of the group, which I introduced as a part of my research and recorded, in order to create an opportunity for further and more intimate discussions regarding how we understand our practices and politics in the group and with migrants.

Barbara Biglia. How to Cope with Multiple Positions Without Going Mad

The tension Alexandra brings out in relation to being situated on the borderline between activism and academia during the whole research process has produced a great deal of debate between us for some time now (Biglia & Zavos 2005), and these debates have constantly fed into my own research process.

At the start of my project I felt comfortable in assuming, both epistemologically and methodologically, the strategic position (Harding 1986; Haraway 1991) of an insider (Plows 1998). I was aware that, somehow, the insider position is subject to criticism because it does not allow the researcher to adopt a neutral standpoint. Nevertheless I felt comfortable with the situation because research neutrality is a utopia and denies the inevitable influence of our own subjectivity as the researcher in the research process. It is also
another way of assuming a power position in the process of constructing realities. Notwithstanding, I quickly realised that the position is not entirely free of limitation and tensions, as I briefly illustrate below.

Sometimes it is easier for participants to be more sincere with an outsider for a number of reasons: because it seems that anonymity can be better preserved, because there may be less stress arising from being judged, and finally because there is not a direct conflict of interest. On the contrary, in a research relationship with a researcher who is involved in the same group, a participant can easily lean toward assuming the group identity without showing her personal opinions.

However, being an insider gave me access (physically) to a collective not generally open to in-depth interviewing by researchers. It also gave me the option of having a more direct dialogue. In fact, as I have analysed elsewhere (Biglia 2003a), in order to protect the Social Movement from external criticism there is a tendency on the part of activists to conceal internal contradictions from outsiders. The fact that the participants I interviewed were friends of friends opened the door to me, as Marina (a Mapuche interviewed in Chile) clearly stated:

“I’m never going to discriminate against you if you come from where you have come from and you want to converse with me . . . . . well, perhaps I would have felt a little reluctant toward you if you had come to me in another way [. . .] my whole life they have lied to my people, so perhaps I would feel a little anxious if I didn’t know where you were coming from, but knowing in advance where you come from means I have no problems and, by the way it may be useful to someone to know a little bit more about my people, I have absolutely no problems, I am grateful anyway.”

So my status as an insider gave me a kind of privileged status and required of me a reciprocal attitude in terms of caring. For example, while women were aware that I was taping the interview, they did not cut their narrative and frequently mentioned names of people and more or less intimate “secrets” about personal relationships between activists in order to exemplify their points. However, none of them asked me to stop taping, nor did they accept my offers of giving them back the tape in case they felt unsure about the use which might be made of the recorded material. Although most activists told me that they did not want that their personal stories to be made public outside of our direct interaction, and, in particular, they didn’t want people or groups to be identifiable, they seemed to feel safe and secure in the feeling that I understood and completely respected their wishes. Obviously, this trust was in the first instance a great gift these women gave me, but on the other hand, it made me feel particularly conscious of the responsibility I have in managing with care the confidence they placed in me.

In addition, the interconnections between my own personal tension and my PhD topic implied the risk that I would project my own ideas, expectations, knowledge, and interpretative frameworks onto the analysis of the interchange. However, interpretation and translation are always present in research. Any research output is the result of the interaction between all the participants (including the researcher); in this sense it is always a collective knowledge.

11The so called movement of movement (MoMo) has a less protective attitude both with journalists and researchers. However the fieldwork of the Ph was completed before the explosion of MoMo.

12The Mapuche are the indigenous inhabitants of Central and Southern Chile and Southern Argentina. The women interviewed are involved in the Mapuche Movement.
production. So such connectedness is endemic to the researcher location/position and is no more compromised/impure than any other possible location/position. The important point is to accept and recognise such impurity and its political contextualisation rather than trying to “market” our result as neutral and objective and to open up the narrative product to be re-elaborated or represented using other perspectives and/or spatial and temporal locations.

Anyway, with the passage of time, I realized that my position was not entirely, or not simply, that of an insider. In the first place, I was doing my work, in part, for nonactivist purposes and thus needed to deal with the special characteristics of my situation. Second, because the research was not (as I was expecting at the beginning) a participative action research. I felt rather more comfortable to recognize in relation to my research that I was in a complex borderline position rather than an insider one. I continued to be involved in academia and/or in activism as an insider, but I always made my contextual role explicit. For example, when I went to an activist meeting I was there as an activist and did not directly use the material or knowledge acquired for my own research work. For this reason, even if my personal involvement in an ongoing activist practice influenced my analysis of the field and, the knowledge produced in informal conversations was crucial for the understanding of most of the interviewed experience, I was not doing ethnography. In the same way, I chose to interview women activists with whom I had never had any previous contact in order not to use personal information I had from any prior activist involvement for the research. These were on the one hand epistemological choices I made in order to respect the participants and, on the other hand political options that made me feel more free to act as insider in other, non-research contexts. In essence, this borderline dynamic made me feel more comfortable within each of the different roles I was assuming.

Reconsidering Theoretical and Methodological Approaches

Alexandra Zavos. Using Intersectionality Theory as a Resource for Reflexive Accounting

In my political work I observed two separate yet related practices where gender and migration combined to regulate the production of political discourses and subjectivities. On the one hand, I encountered the marginalisation of gender in the migration and antiracist movement by Greek and migrant activists alike. Antiracist migration activism in Greece has largely revolved around issues of legalisation, refugee, and asylum rights and the militarisation of border regimes. Within this range of issues, women migrants have been invisible. Antiracist discourses mirror official migration policies where the invoked agent of migration is male. Women migrants appear either as family “appendages” (as wives or mothers) or as victims of trafficking networks and sexual abuse. As one migrant woman noted, “because usually when we talk about migrants in general we mean only men . . . And I want to tell you that we migrant women have particular problems indeed.”

On the other hand, I noted the “minoritisation” of migration in the Greek leftist feminist movement, which exhibits a similarly circumscribed understanding of female migration highlighting only negative aspects of women migrants’ experiences and reproducing dominant representations of women migrants as victims. Discourses of victimization effectively pathologise migrant women as backward, traditional, underdeveloped, disempowered, imprisoned in the family or as objects of male desire, and place them in positions of dependency and subordination, in need of help and patronage. Implicit in these discourses are normative Western, middle class assumptions about the independent and self-directed individual as a political agent of progress and emancipation (Batsleer et al.
Positions of advocacy and moral superiority are thus secured for Greek feminists, including researchers, leaving classed, racialised, and ethnocentric relations of power between women unquestioned.

Staying in the domain of theory, I will briefly consider some of the key issues highlighted by feminist and critical ethnographers in relation to my own research and my attempts at representing both my own and others’ experiences during the period of our collective engagement with antiracist migration mobilizations. One of the points that feminist ethnographers consistently draw attention to is the unequal power relations engendered in and through the research process between researcher and research participants, who are necessarily marked and positioned along multiple lines of difference (e.g., race, class, culture, institutional position) (Stacey 1988; Visweswaran 1988; Williams 1993). As Stacey originally pointed out, reciprocity during the research process, while a guiding and explicit feminist priority, cannot be truly and consistently maintained throughout the engagement. A successful ethnography involves gaining the confidence of participants and securing their cooperation, openness, and willingness to include the researcher as a quasi-insider into the more intimate aspects of their experience. However, this trust cannot but be betrayed, as the analysis and writing of others’ experiences necessarily involves, on the one hand, their objectification and, on the other, the exposure of their vulnerability. It is precisely the generation of increased vulnerability of participants that is the paradox of feminist research, whose attempts at making visible the subjects’ “inside” points of view constructs them as transparent objects. One of the ways in which feminist ethnographers have tried to address this contradiction is by exploring their own and their subjects’ practices of meaning construction within a continuum of commonality and difference (Abu-Lughod 1990). That is, through an attempt to understand and represent differences not as inherent qualities of participants’ subjectivities but as specific and performative negotiations of their particular social circumstances. In fact, as Ian Parker (2005) points out, introducing conflict, both during fieldwork and in its analysis should be one of the goals of critical ethnographic research. Rather than assuming commonality of interests and a seamless fabric of mutual social exchange among group members, the researcher is encouraged to attend to underlying tensions, contradictions, and dissonant perspectives present in groups or communities, which help highlight the ongoing struggles of/for power that shape the group’s identity. Finally, feminist (Lather 2001; Skeggs 2001) and critical ethnographers (Marcus 1986; Clifford 1986; Foley 2002) have addressed the problems of representation, for example, speaking about, for, or with others (Alcoff 1991–1992), through a critique and deconstruction of common academic textual practices. Experimenting with different narrative constructions, such as dialogic and multivoiced texts, and producing different accounts for different audiences are some of the ways in which they have tried to decentre and problematise univocal narrative authority and positivist truth claims and introduce heterogeneity and complexity in the analysis of social reality.

At the same time, considering these issues in my own research with migrant women antiracist activists, I would argue that until and unless migrant women take the unmediated space to research and voice their own issues and, even more to the point, to claim these as knowledges of the politics of (their) oppression, the power dynamics between indigenous Greek and foreign migrant women will not be significantly changed, even though all of us might have the best intentions. In this sense, for me, positioned as a Greek feminist researcher the focus needs to be turned around from who “they” are, to who “we” construct “them” to be, and, at the same time, who we imagine ourselves to be; holding up the mirror to question and unfold our own identifications, priorities, assumptions, hierarchies, and entitlements. As Chandra Talpade Mohanty argues:
“Legal, economic, religious, and familial structures are treated as phenomena to be judged by Western standards. It is here that ethnocentric universality comes into play. When these structures are defined as ‘underdeveloped’ or ‘developing’ and women are placed within them, an implicit image of the average Third World woman is produced. This is the transformation of the (implicitly Western) ‘oppressed woman’ into the ‘oppressed Third World woman.’ While the category of ‘oppressed woman’ is generated through an exclusive focus on gender difference, ‘the oppressed Third World woman’ category has an additional attribute—the ‘Third World difference.’ The Third World difference includes a paternalistic attitude toward women in the Third World.” (Mohanty 2004, p. 40)

Following Mohanty’s critique of Western feminist constructions of universal hierarchies of oppression and representation, I would argue that migrant women in Greece are discursively constructed as Third World women, regardless of whether or not they actually do come from countries located in the (so-called) Third World, or even whether or not they actually do, individually, fall within the boundaries of this categorical representation (e.g., poor, illiterate, traditional, powerless). In other words, migrant women are “Third Worlded” by virtue of being positioned as migrants. This establishes and justifies a relation of paternalistic political representation between Greek and migrant women/feminists. It is this relationship of superiority/inferiority, established alongside overlapping relationships of privilege/marginalisation that needs to be deconstructed and transformed. In this sense, if the regimes of power that determine the relationship between native and foreign women are to be addressed and dismantled, intersectionality, that is, an exploration of the multiple and shifting relational positionalities through which women are constructed as subjects, needs to be considered not only with respect to those “other” women but also as regards Greek women as well.

Nevertheless, as noted in our introduction, this is easier said than done. While these debates have offered me valuable ideas to reflect on and grapple with, putting them to work in my own research project and the analysis of my fieldwork has proven to be more of a challenge than I anticipated. While negotiating different priorities and positions was an ongoing and vital part of my political work and hence also part of my fieldwork and of the data collected from it, my accounts and analysis of it do not render participants’ and co-activists’ voices present and articulate in their own right; rather they seem to have disappeared into the background of my inductive interpretations. More often than not I have felt myself incapable of balancing the needs of objectifying my experience and allowing participants’ agency in the text itself. Most important, I have not managed to satisfactorily connect my reflexive analysis with my political priorities, as described earlier. Sometimes the reflexive analysis obliges me to distance myself from my political commitments, causing me to reproduce the common split between science and politics. To avoid this I contend that these two “spheres” or types of engagement could benefit from increased cross-fertilization, where on the one hand the political side of scientific discourses is made more explicit, and on the other the constructed nature of political discourses is highlighted.

**Barbara Biglia. Rethinking Epistemology and Methods**

Having the participants trust me, as I mention in section three, made me feel extremely responsible for the entire research process and led me to think about the way in which different perspectives—feminist epistemology, critical psychology, action research, etc.—try...
to handle this responsibility. At the same time I had an interesting encounter with a group of other “younger” researchers asking similar questions whom I met with the aim of organizing an international conference on what we decided to call activist research (Investigació 2005).

The interactions between the theoretical material I was studying, the questions and the ethical problems I encountered in the research process, the unfinished definition of what we were calling activist research and ongoing debates with friends and colleagues made it possible for me to define what I have come to call a “Feminist Activist Research” methodology. Far for being a closed set of research recipes, this methodology constitutes one example of how to deal with the ethical and political decisions facing researchers in given situations. I identify 11 basic points that characterise the way in which I have developed my research. None of these points are exactly breaking news; they are largely a reformulation of proposals I have encountered here and there in the literature or in activist discourses. The innovation here is the special way in which I have organised the ideas as a totality in the context of my research. Elsewhere (Biglia 2007b) I have described how I arrived at the specification of these points, and the differences and similarity they have with other proposals put forward in the context of feminist action research. I would like to detail the embodiment of such practice; nevertheless, due to space limitations, here I will just list the basic points. However, I invite the reader to devise possible ways of embodying them in your own research practice.

1. Doing research with a commitment to social change.
2. Attempting to break with the dichotomy between public and private in the research dynamic.
3. Recognising the interdependence between theory and practice, stressing the embodiment process and the ongoing constitutive dynamic between these two representations of reality.
4. Being aware of our contextualised perspective and making this explicit in order to be more understandable and accountable for the analysis produced.
5. Assuming responsibility for the research both in the construction and in the dissemination of knowledge, respecting ethical criteria as appropriate for any specific process of research, and choosing which of the results to disseminate, where, and how.
6. Taking into account the agency of all the subjectivities involved in research and being mindful of and respectful toward each of them.
7. Recognising the power relations involved in a research process and working on these instead of hiding them.
8. Being open to redefinition, interpellation, and transformation through the research process.
9. Maintaining a continuous reflexive self-criticism and producing diffractions of the research process.
10. Recognising that knowledge is not patentable because it is a collective process and pushing for nonproprietary, commons solutions.
11. Working for the redefinition of the process of collective knowledge validation in order to reduce academic power.

However, this Feminist Action Research embodiment was still not enough for me to deal with the complexity I encountered. It failed to define any practical methodology which would help me work with the information I had gathered. It was easy for me to find literature with clear proposals on how to go about respectfully collecting qualitative data; however, the methodology described for data analysis tends to be extremely vague, often
quantitativising (therefore reductive of the complexities of the discourses), and either deconstructive or inductive. The deconstructive approaches (e.g., discourse analysis) offer a powerful tool with which to reveal the implicit meaning of discourses, and in this sense they have great potential for analysing official discourses and meta-narratives. Nevertheless, they also imply a critique of the discourses analysed that is not especially respectful toward the participant point of view when applied to accounts by minoritised subjects. Finally, the interest in identifying the social agents behind discourses in the case of inductive methodologies (e.g., qualitative content analysis) is often inadequate in showing the politically active opinion of the women interviewed.

As a result of these experiences, I was looking for an alternative way of working with the accounts I had collected, and this search finally came to fruition through my interaction with another researcher working on a very different topic yet facing the same problems. Our proposal (Biglia & Bonet 2009) is to consider the construction of personal and collective narratives as a methodology and a process for analysis. These narratives do not have to be a representation of reality, and they do not have to corroborate the accounts provided by the subjects (in the way that historiographical methodologies do). They do, however, represent the outcome of a specific dialogic encounter between subjectivities. This allows for the recognition of the agency of all participants and gives readers the opportunity to actively recreate the accounts of the narratives presented.

This methodology was in fact applied not just to participants’ accounts but to my whole PhD report, which was intended as an exercise in story telling, as “a research methodology, a way to discover things about ourselves and our topics” (Richardson 1994, p. 516). In this sense it is also not a completed but rather an open-ended process, because each time someone reads some part of the account presented, or uses any of the “results,” and any time they diffract on it, it becomes a new product.

Finally, in line with all that is said above it is important to emphasise that the account produced here is the result of my own interpretation of the research process and not an objective account of it. This means that some of the decisions taken in the research were not so evident and/or justified at the time that I took them. In fact, in my opinion, it is impossible during a research process to take any decision with complete political, epistemological, and ethical awareness. Probably, in the rereading and rewriting of my PhD process, I’m adding values that were not explicit or perhaps were not even implicit when I carried out the research.

**Commentary**

**AZ:** The questions Barbara raises offer valuable insights by which to interrogate further my own research. Here, I would like to consider three points that caught my immediate attention. Reading Barbara’s account of her research project, I could not but think that her work starts where mine ends. In other words, my realization of the importance and influence of gender in the development of social movements, in which I also include the antiracist mobilizations I engaged with, which I arrived at through my fieldwork/activism and have tried to document and analyze, is precisely the starting point of her enquiry and attempted intervention. In this sense, my analysis and interpretation of the politics of mobilizing around gender and migration, generated in part by my own activist experience, and in fulfilment of academic requirements, is what potentially constitutes some of the data of her research. This illustrates that the boundary between what constitutes knowledge and data is not clearly marked and predetermined by social scientific methodology.
but is rather an aspect of the standpoint of the researcher and can be seen as an example of feminist epistemological critiques of the multiplicity, situatedness, and partiality of knowledge production.

On the other hand, certain questions posed in Barbara’s research were the primary material of my own work, since working together and campaigning with migrant women activists brought issues of differences and inequalities between us directly to the foreground. In my own case, acknowledging differences and finding a common ground were key to both understanding the dynamics of antiracist activism and to developing a gendered intervention in migration politics. As I have tried to highlight, the construction of migrant and activist subjectivities, is premised on adopting and/or challenging assumptions of entitlement and rights of representation, articulated to racialised, classed, nationalised, and minoritised positions. In this sense, managing difference(s) is crucial to both the reproduction and transformation of antiracist politics and social movements’ practices. Feminist informed research/theory, therefore, presents us with a critical political resource that can be used to redefine methodology, to interrogate the constructions and contestations of subjectivities-collectivities and the naturalized positionings of entitlement both within and outside (national) socio-political contexts, research, and activists agendas. From a feminist perspective, the possibility of forming alliances, not in spite of but precisely by acknowledging and using differences between women has been discussed in terms of “affinity politics” (Haraway 1991) and “transversal politics” (Yuval-Davis 1997). Key to both these feminist calls are understandings of difference as an ethical standpoint that forces but also enables us to move beyond identity politics, which on epistemological and political levels have proven to not only essentialise collective identities, group membership, and personal experience but also, inadvertently, reproduce the nation conceptually as a significant category of organisation and identification (e.g., gay nation). In this sense, moving beyond identity politics can also signify moving into new spaces, scales, and methodologies of political mobilisation.

The final issue I would like to comment on is the question of insider/outsider positioning. As Barbara has noted, bringing a research agenda into social movements is a challenging goal and can sometimes emerge as antagonistic to or conflicting with activist agendas and practices. However, what became obvious to me during my activist research is that these positions are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. In other words, it was my insider experience as an antiracist activist that shaped to a certain extent the focus and scope of my research, as well as providing the necessary motivation for carrying out a more disciplined piece of work. On the other hand, the outsider outlook that I gained from assuming the role and practice of researcher, that is, of someone who not only engages with political mobilisations but also reflects on them and on one’s involvement in them, in a systematic fashion, allowed me to actually gain more insight into the naturalised relations of power and entitlement and hierarchies of political participation underlying antiracist activism. For me, using and at the same time questioning our discourses and practices, offered a vantage point of simultaneous investment in and detachment from the object of my engagement and the community of activists I chose to work with, thus allowing me to legitimise and justify my study and critique as part of my activist concerns, and at the same time offer my insights to the group as one, but not the only, possible interpretation of our actions.

**BB:** My reading of Alexandra’s account was really suggestive and emotional. In fact, despite our differences, I have relived my own fieldwork through the account of her interests and tensions. This is probably not only because we are both borderline, activist, feminist researchers, engaged with the topic of gender relations within SM, but also
because we both identify these spaces as an interesting arena in which to analyse gender discrimination and women’s agency in trying to deal with it. Finally we were both faced with contradictions in relation to our field of analysis (i.e., Social Movements) and in relation to our practice as researchers and activists.

Nevertheless, what really seduces me in her text is the fact that while assuming a very similar political and ethical commitment within what could be termed critical psychological feminist research, we sometimes implemented very different solutions in order to deal with the political tensions we faced. In this sense her choices, and especially the analysis she presents of them, are a great stimulus to rethinking mine.

I was really struck by how Alexandra highlights the conflict/compromise dilemma that we all face in our research processes. Working with other people and being aware of the impossibility of our neutrality, assuming a specific political point of view, trying to be respectful of other participants’ agency and highlighting the power dynamics implicit in the research cannot be done without being open to and facing up to conflict. Both in the SM internal dynamic and in that between the researchers (whether in an insider or outsider position) and the research community, we have to learn how to deal with the pain these conflicts produce and how to introduce and/or accept the negotiations we need to engage in with other research participants, and come to a compromise that shows the impureness of all research dynamics and political choices.

I’m also glad that Alexandra reflected upon the “proliferation and blurring of subject positions” related to the difficulty we sometimes faced in trying to deal with the fragmentation of our subjectivities. We both faced contradictions as feminists involved in SM that reproduce gender discrimination and are not actively working on these internal problems (as analyzed in Biglia 2005) and in relation to our borderline position between activism and research (Biglia & Zavos 2005).

Another point that unites our work is the importance of recognizing the political knowledge produced by marginalised/minoritised subjectivities that can be achieved only through a problematisation of the politics of representation, a task that goes beyond the current scope of our research but that needs to be developed further.

Finally I am fascinated by the description of feminist anthropological critiques of narrative constructions. This work seems to have a lot of potential as a theoretical tool for redefining and rethinking methodological issues in relation to the proposals I presented in my text.

Conclusions

In this reflexive/diffractive account and discussion of our research experiences we have tried to engage with the topic of the special issue on “the ‘practice of research’ and critical psychology” from the double perspective of methodology in and on practice. We have tried to elaborate how the research process can bring out the need to redefine one’s methodology and how the methodology has been embodied in our analytical practices. While we obviously have showed only part of the tensions we encountered and our reflections could be continued ad infinitum, nevertheless there are two points that we hope to have drawn attention to: the first is that methodologies are not good or bad in principle and that there is no single best method with which to analyse a particular topic. Our different choices highlight this. No one is able to solve all the tensions and contradictions involved in the political process of doing research, and anything can become a trigger for interesting reflections if these are situated and ethically positioned. Our proposal is that any methodology could be useful if its application is epistemologically and ethically situated.
In this sense, in our opinion, considering by default qualitative methods more useful than quantitative is a mistake. Similarly, the use of qualitative methods is no guarantee for critical analysis and the strong relativism that can be associated with these methodologies is contrary to the political position of trying to achieve a feminist objectivity (Haraway 1991).

The last point we hope to have clearly shown is the usefulness of a feminist analysis to rethink methodology in and on practices and the work that has been done by feminists in this respect. We hope that these explicit illustrations prove that critical analysis cannot be absent from feminist proposals. So we hope that critical theorists will assume the political risk of reducing the tokenist attitudes frequently showed in relation to feminist theories.

Acknowledgements

We both thank, first of all, the amazing women that generously participated in our respective research. Without their energy, knowledge, fighting power, and determination, our discourses would be completely empty. Second, even if we cannot list the names of all the great friends who have encouraged us and given us theoretical ideas to play with during the long process of completing our studies, we cannot forget them. As far as this specific paper goes, we would like to acknowledge the great work done by the editorial team and our reviewers in helping us hone our arguments and patiently egging us on to meet our deadlines. Last but not least, we would like to acknowledge for their direct input on this piece Maria Puig de la Bellacasa, Edward Hugo, and Erica Burman.

References

Abu-Lughod, L 1990, ‘Can there be a feminist ethnography?’ Women and Performance, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 7–27.

Alcoff, L 1991–1992, ‘The problem of speaking for others’, Cultural Critique, vol. 20, pp. 5–32.

Alemany, MC 1996, Ciencia, tecnología y coeducación, investigaciones y experiencias internacionales, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Barcelona.

Alexander, JM & Mohanty, C 1997, ‘Genealogies, legacies, movements’, in JM Alexander & CT Mohanty (eds.), Feminist genealogies, colonial legacies, democratic futures, Routledge, New York.

Animalhada 2004, ‘Amor y respeto, ¿si no qué? (Love and respect, otherwise what?)’, Mujeres Preocupando, vol. 6, pp. 46–48.

Anonyma 1998, ‘No escape from patriarchy. Male dominance on site’, Do or die 7 Voices from Earth First!, vol. 10, no. 3.

Batsleer, J, Burman, E, Chantler, K, McIntosh, SH, Pantling, K, Smailes, S et al. 2002, Domestic violence and minoritisation: Supporting women to independence, Women’s Studies Research Centre, The Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester.

Biglia, B 2003a, ‘Modificando dinámicas generizadas. Estrategias propuestas por activistas de movimientos sociales mixtos. (Modifying gendarised dynamic. Strategy proposed by activist from mixed social movements)’, Athenea Digital, vol. 4, pp. 1–25, viewed 6 November 2003, http://psicologiasocial.uab.es/athenea/index.php/atheneaDigital/article/view/82/82

Biglia, B 2003b, ‘Radicalising academia or emptying the critics?’, Annual Review of Critical Psychology, vol. 3, pp. 65–83, http://www.discourseunit.com/arcp/arcp5/arIran%20ARCP%205.doc

Biglia, B 2005, Narrativas de mujeres sobre las relaciones de género en los movimientos sociales (Women’s narratives on gender relations within social movements), Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Barcelona.

Biglia, B. 2007a, ‘Teorías ¿sobre/para/desde/en/por? los MS. (Theory on/for/from/within SM?)’, Agora, vol. 17, pp. 83–102, http://www.ceps.es/publi/agora/17/083-102.pdf
Biglia, B 2007b, ‘Desde la investigación acción hacia la investigación activista feminista. (From action research to feminist activist research)’, in R Martinez (ed.), Perspectivas y retrospectivas de la psicología social en los albores del siglo XXI, Biblioteca nueva, Madrid.

Biglia, B & Bonet-Martí, J 2009, ‘La construcción de narrativas como método de investigación psico-social. Prácticas de escritura compartida (Narrative construction as psychosocial methodology of research. Shared writing practices). [73 párrafos]’, Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research, vol. 10, no. 1, Art. 8, viewed 3 January 2009, http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/1225/2666

Biglia, B, Bonet, J & Martí, M 2006, ‘Experiencias y reflexiones de Investigació. (Experiences and reflexions from/of investigació)’, in M Àngels Alió (ed.), Ciutadania i recerca a la universitat, pp. 81–99, Grup de Geògrafs per l’Ecologia Social 2GES, Universitat de Barcelona, Barcelona.

Biglia, B & Zavos, A 2005, ‘Situar-nos a dins, a fora o a la frontera. Quines (im)posibles relacions entre l’activisme i l’acadèmia en les “investigacions crítiques”. (Positioning ourselves within, outside or on the frontiers. Which (un)possible activism and research relations within “critical research”)’, in Investigació. Recerca Activista i Moviments Socials, pp. 83–90, El viejo topo, Barcelona.

Blue 2002, Leftist techies and patriarchy, viewed 8 March 2004, http://de.indymedia.org/2002/01/13720.shtml

Cabruja, T 1998, ‘Psicología social crítica y postmodernidad. Implicaciones para las identidades construidas bajo la racionalidad moderna. (Critical social psychology and postmodernity. Implication for identity constructed under modern rationality)’, Anthros, vol. 177, pp. 49–59.

Clifford, J 1986, ‘Introduction: Partial truths’, in J Clifford & GE Marcus (eds.), Writing culture. The poetics and politics of ethnography, University of California Press, Berkeley, CA.

Colectivo Hipatia 1998, Autoridad científica. Autoridad femenina, Cuadernos inacabados 30, Horas y horas, Barcelona.

Foley, D 2002, ‘Critical ethnography: The reflexive turn’, International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, vol. 15, no. 4, pp. 469–490.

Fox Keller, E 1983, Feeling for the organism: The life and work of Barbara McClinton, Freeman, San Francisco, CA.

Fox Keller, E 1985, Reflections on gender and science, Yale University Press, New Haven, CT.

Haraway, D 1991, Simians, cyborgs and women: The reinvention of nature, Routledge, New York.

Haraway, D 1997, Modest witness@second millenium. FemaleMan meets OncoMouse: Feminism and technoscience, Routledge, New York.

Harding, S 1986, The science question in feminism, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY.

Investigació (ed.) 2005, Recerca activista i moviments socials. (Activist research and social movements), El viejo topo, Barcelona.

Jhonson, S 1997, ‘Gender difference in science: Parallels in interest, experience and performance’, International Journal of Science Education, vol. 9, no. 4, pp. 467–481.

Lather, P 2001, ‘Postbook: Working the ruins of feminist ethnography’, Signs, vol. 27, no. 1, pp. 199–227.

Lather, P 2007, Getting lost, SUNY Press, Albany, NY.

Manchester Women’s Network 2004, Unpublished results of the GEM Project: Gender and community engagement in Manchester, http://www.manchesterwomen.net/file_project.php?id=26

Marcus, GE 1986, ‘Contemporary problems of ethnography in the modern world system’, in J Clifford & GE Marcus (eds.), Writing culture. The poetics and politics of ethnography, University of California Press, Berkeley, CA.

Marvakis, A, Panagiotidou, E, Parsanoglou, D & Tsianos, V 2005a, ‘Fortress Europe?’, AVGI Newspaper, December 4, p. 12.

Marvakis, A, Parsanoglou, D & Tsianos, V 2005b, ‘No papers, no voice! Migrants in the heart of social struggles’, AVGI Newspaper, February 20.

Mezzadra, S 2004, ‘The right to escape’, Ephemera. Theory and Politics in Organization, vol. 4, pp. 267–275.
Embodying Feminist Research

Modica, G 2000, Falce, martello e cuore di gesú. Storie verosimili di donne e occupazioni di terre in sicilia. (Sickle, hammer and gesú’s heart. Likely histories about women and lands occupations in Sicily), Stampa Alternativa, Roma.

Mohanty, CT 1986, ‘Under Western eyes: Feminist scholarship and colonial discourses’, Boundary, vol. 2, no. 12, pp. 333–358.

Noy, C 2003, ‘The write of passage: Reflections on writing a dissertation in narrative methodology’, Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research, vol. 4, no. 2, 54 paragraphs, viewed 1 September 2004, http://www.qualitative-research.net/fqs-texte/2-03/2-03noy-e.htm

Ong, A 1988, ‘Colonialism and modernity: Re-presentations of women in non-Western societies’, Inscriptions, vol. 3–4.

Papadopoulos, D & Tsianos, V 2007, ‘The autonomy of migration: The animals of undocumented mobility’, in A Hickey-Moody & P Malins (eds.), Deleuzian encounters. Studies in contemporary social issues, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke.

Parker, I 2005, Qualitative psychology. Introducing radical research, OUP, Maidenhead, Berkshire.

Piussi, A 1997, Enseñar ciencias: Autoridad femenina y relación con la educación, Icaria, Barcelona.

Plows, A 1998, In with the crowd: Examining the methodological implications of practising partisan, reflexive, ‘insider’ research, M.A. report, University of Wales, unpublished.

Raven 1995, ‘Internal dynamics’, Allarm Womyn’s editions, vol. 12, pp. 18–19.

Richardson, L 1994, ‘Writing. A method of inquiry’, in NK Denzin & YS Lincoln (eds.), Handbook of Qualitative Research, pp. 516–529, Sage, London.

Rose, G 1997, ‘Situating knowledges: Positionality, reflexivities and other tactics’, Progress in Human Geography, vol. 21, no. 3, pp. 305–320.

Sandoval, C 2000, Methodology of the oppressed, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, MN.

Skeggs, B 2001, ‘Feminist ethnography’, in P Atkinson, A Coffey, S Delamont, J Lofland & L Lofland (eds.), Handbook of Ethnography, Sage, London.

Spivak, GC 1988, ‘Can the subaltern speak?’, in C Nelson & L Grossberg (eds.), Marxism and the interpretation of culture, University of Illinois Press, Urbana, IL.

Stacey, J 1988, ‘Can there be a feminist ethnography?’, Women’s Studies International Forum, vol. 11, no. 1, pp. 21–27.

Stanley, L & Wise, S 1990, ‘Method, methodology and epistemology in feminist research process’, in L Stanley (ed.), Feminist praxis: Research, theory and epistemology in feminist sociology, Routledge, London.

Stanley, L & Wise, S 1993, Breaking out again: Feminist ontology and epistemology, Routledge, London.

Subbuswamy, K & Patel, R 2001, ‘ Cultures of domination: Race and gender in radical movements’, in K Abramsky (ed.), Restructuring and resistance. Diverse voices of struggle in Western Europe, pp. 535–545, Self-published.

Tuhiwai Smith, L 1999, Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples, Zed Books, London.

Visweswaran, K 1988, ‘Defining feminist ethnography’, Inscriptions, vol. 3–4, pp. 27–46.

Watts, J 2006, ‘The outsider within: Dilemmas of qualitative feminist research in a culture of resistance’, Qualitative Research, vol. 6, pp. 385–402.

Wilkinson, S 1988, ‘The role of reflexivity in feminist psychology’, Women’s Studies International Forum, vol. 11, pp. 493–502.

Williams, A 1993, ‘Diversity and agreement in feminist ethnography’, Sociology, vol. 27, no. 4, pp. 575–589.

Woodward, C & Woodward, N 1998, ‘Girls and science: Does a core curriculum in primary school cause for optimism?’, Gender Education, vol. 10, no. 4, pp. 387–400.

Yuval-Davis, N 1997, ‘Women, citizenship and difference’, Feminist Review, vol. 57, pp. 4–27.

Zavos, A 2007, ‘Moving relationships/shifting alliances: constructions of migration in the leftist anti-racist movement in Athens’, Annual Review of Critical Psychology, vol 6. Special Issue: Globalization, migration & asylum, http://www.discourseunit.com/arcp/6.htm
About the Authors

Alexandra Zavos is completing her PhD on “Gender, migration and the anti-racist movement in Athens” at Manchester Metropolitan University. She currently lives in Athens where she is working as a researcher for the European funded research project “Gemic—Gender, migration and intercultural interactions in South-East Europe and the Mediterranean” (http://www.gemic.eu), focusing on the topic of intercultural education and the integration of migrant students. She is also currently involved in the feminist initiative “Solidarity to Konstantina Kuneva,” a Bulgarian woman living in Greece, employed in the cleaning industry, who suffered a brutal attack with vitriol on account of her dynamic union activism. Her recent publications include: Zavos, A. (2008), “Moving relationships/shifting alliances: Constructions of migration in the leftist anti-racist movement in Athens,” Annual Review of Critical Psychology. Special Issue on Asylum and Migration, vol. 6, online (http://www.discourseunit.com/arcp/6.htm).

Barbara Biglia completed her PhD in psychology in 2006. She is currently the coordinator of the Interdisciplinary Seminar of Feminist Methodological Research (www.simref.net). She lectures on Research Methodology, Social Psychology and Research on Teaching Practices at the University of Barcelona and Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, and on the international masters programme MUNDUSFOR at the Universitat Rovira e Virgili. She is a member of the research group GREDI where she conducts research on gender violence, processes of social transformation and feminist epistemology. She is a founder of the association LIMES, researching migration. She is also involved in a research project on “Women, social change and model of subjectivization?” directed by the Universidad Complutense de Madrid. She was a founding member (with Alexandra Zavos, Jude Clark and Johanna F. Motzkau) of the international group Femact (feminism and activism). Her more recent publications include: Biglia, Barbara & Bonet-MartÃ, Jordi (2009), Narrative Construction as a Psychosocial Research Method: Sharing Writing Practices, Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 10(1), Art. 8, http://nbnresolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs090183.