

Addressing the Absence of Masculine-Sensitive Research Methods

Reflections from Interviewing Military Men

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The literature on masculinity studies has been a major intellectual force in the past two decades. It engaged feminist research by providing diverse accounts of men's experiences instead of presenting men as a coherent bloc perpetuating patriarchy. In spite of the theoretical developments and richness of empirical accounts of masculinities, it is observed that these advancements have not yet been translated to a discussion on research methods. Unlike feminist research which has generated a set of gender-sensitive methods that address the patriarchal bias of social research, there is no corresponding development in masculinity studies that bring out the sensitivities of studying men. In this piece, I aim to map out the reasons for the relatively muted discussion on masculine-sensitive methods and suggest possible responses. I suggest that the absence of masculine methods can be responded to not by developing gender-sensitive methods that capture "the male experience" but by making "theory-led" selections of existing methods and situating the quality of the data gathered to the intersection of the researcher and respondents' positionalities. To provide empirical grounding to my methodological conjectures, I draw on my experience in conducting fieldwork inside a detention center where military men from the Armed Forces of the Philippines were held.

The literature on masculinity studies has been a major intellectual force in the past two decades. It broadened the discourse on gender by deconstructing the homogeneous conception of manhood and the presumption that men represent a coherent bloc that produces and perpetuates patriarchy. By rendering men's gender culturally visible, it interrogated the dominant configuration of gender practices that legitimizes not only the subordination of women to men but the subordination of other expressions of masculinities to its dominant form. Banking on the successes of feminist research, masculinity studies aim at theorizing the subjective experiences of men and their relationships to their social worlds.

In spite of the theoretical developments and richness of empirical accounts on masculinities, I share the observation that there is little work that translates these advancements to representations in the research process (Haywood & Mac an Ghail, 2003). Unlike feminist research which has generated a set of gender-sensitive methods that address the patriarchal bias of sociological inquiry, there is no corresponding development in masculinity studies that brings out the sensitivities of studying men.

In this article, I aim to map out the reasons for this methodological gap and suggest possible responses. Based on the literature I surveyed to date, this is the first piece that attempts to characterize the reasons for the relatively muted discussion on masculine-sensitive methods and its implications to studies on masculinities. To provide empirical grounding to my methodological conjectures, I draw on reflections from my own research project which involved interviewing detained military men from the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). Through this piece, I hope to (re)start a discussion about "men and methods" and its implications to empirical studies on men's experiences.

My discussion of these themes is structured in three parts. By way of introduction, I provide a background of my research project and

share one of my post-fieldwork reflections: whether I could have been more receptive to the nuances of my male respondents' narratives had I employed masculine-sensitive data-gathering techniques. This prodded me to revisit the literature on research methods and observed that there is no explicit methodological discussion on masculinity studies comparable to the literature on feminist research. Based on my critical reading of the literature, I suggest two reasons for this gap in the second section. I deduced the first reason from feminist critique, suggesting that the methodological gap lies not in the absence of masculine-sensitive methods but in its implicitness in "traditional" social research. Traditional and mainstream methods are already "malestream" methods that have been covertly, disproportionately representing the male experience. This instigated feminist scholars to develop gender-sensitive methods that bring out women's previously unacknowledged narratives. However, the idea that there should be feminist-sensitive methods has not gone uncontested within the feminist camp, as some feminist scholars disapprove of the essentialist tendencies of feminist methods. I suggest that such a take on research methods is the kind that has been embraced by masculinity studies, which relates to the second reason for the muted discussion on masculine-sensitive research methods. Because masculinity studies came of age during social theory's post-structuralist turn, it eschews rigid and static oppositional categories (i.e., male-female) and instead thinks about the process of identity construction and the dynamic "positionalities" of social agents. Given such a framework, I argue that the methodological challenge lies not in coming up with essentialist methods that capture "the male experience" but in: (1) mapping out the dynamic process of negotiating men's multilayered identity, and (2) situating this dynamic in the research process, acknowledging how the negotiation between the researcher and the respondents' positionalities inform the kinds of data generated in the process. In the final part of this piece, I discuss how I navigated through these

challenges in my own case study. I come back to my earlier concern about the need to capture the distinctive social location of my respondents through masculine-sensitive methods and conclude by suggesting that this “gap” was addressed by appreciating their multidimensionality instead of foregrounding the masculine dimension of their narratives.

RESEARCHING MILITARY MEN

My motivation for thinking about masculine-sensitive methods is a derivative of my research for my doctoral dissertation. One of the components of my research involves analyzing the ways in which communicative mechanisms or a discussion-based way of resolving disputes can claim space in a situation of acute conflict. I selected the Oakwood Mutiny as case study, an incident on July 27, 2003 where 323 junior officers and enlisted men from the AFP’s elite units took over the Oakwood Serviced Apartments in Makati City’s central business district and declared their withdrawal of support from the chain-of-command. A pertinent feature of this case is that in spite of the threats of force and pressures to put an end to the standoff, the mutiny concluded without a single shot being fired. Instead, the mutiny was terminated through a series of informal discussions and negotiations, providing rich material to map out the distinct political dynamic of resolving disputes among military men through communicative means. Consequently, my fieldwork was designed to gather data that aid in reconstructing the process of resolving the standoff, particularly the negotiation process. I examined secondary data including court transcripts, documents from the Feliciano Fact Finding Commission, news reports and raw video footage and gathered primary data mainly through interviews with the mutineers, their classmates from the Philippine Military Academy (PMA) and other officials involved in the incident. In total, I interviewed thirty respondents from November 2008 to May 2009. All my respondents were men, twenty seven of them from the AFP and three are civilians¹.

After exiting the field, I took time to reflect on my fieldwork strategy such as my interview guide, my demeanor in engaging with the respondents, my presuppositions before going to the field, and how these affect the quality of data I am analyzing. One of the “speed bumps” (Weis & Fine, 2000) or instances that provoked me to think about my methodological approach was when I thought about the shared social locations of my respondents that informed their narratives. This relates not only to their affiliation to the AFP but also their gender. I consider this issue particularly relevant because the literature on feminist, queer, and masculinity studies have been unanimous in citing the military as the exemplar of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1992; Highgate & Hopton, 2005; Kronsell, 2005; Steans, 2006). The “masculine-warrior paradigm” has consistently been associated to dominant gender expectations across culture and time which does not only involve physical prowess but also the values of authoritativeness, rational conviction, and emotional indifference (see Goldstein, 2000; Sherman, 2005). These norms are hegemonic in the Gramscian sense in so far as that they are made to appear natural, normal, and ordinary, while deviation from these practices are sanctioned through social disapproval or institutionalized punishment. Alfred McCoy (1999) cites hazing in the PMA as an example, a “ritual of passage through ordeal to manhood and acceptance” (p. 12) and is a way of making up for the “colonial emasculation” by following a European model of masculinity (p.12). This ritual of passage not only allows for the assimilation of a new identity for the cadet (from boy to man, from civilian to soldier) but also the generation of enduring bonds of male solidarity through a shared biographical experience (Newman, as cited in McCoy, 1995). Hazing, along with other practices perpetuating hegemonic masculinity, have been considered as a “normal” part of a cadet’s socialization to heterosexual male normativity, making it an established practice “beyond discussion” and critical interrogation (Kronsell, 2005, p. 282).

In a way, the “normalization” of masculinity in the military has crept in to my own research methods. I realized that before and during data gathering, I placed social categories such as PMA batch, rank, service units, field assignments, and political inclinations in the foreground while the category of gender remained in the background. Prior to my fieldwork, I considered the literature on elite interviewing as some of my respondents were senators and generals. I also consulted the literature on prison research because some of my respondents were still detained for their participation in the mutiny. During interviews, I was conscious of the respondents’ references to service units, ranks, political affiliations, and indicators of social power or disenfranchisement but was not too sharp in identifying how masculinity was appropriated in their narratives. With this reflection, I assessed my approaches to data gathering, whether I could have been more receptive to their masculine styles of speech and manner of discursive engagement to generate a more textured understanding of the communicative process involved in resolving disputes among military *men* had I used masculine-sensitive research methods.

When I revisited the literature on research methods, I observed that masculinity studies do not have an arsenal of data-gathering tools designed to capture the male experience in the same manner that feminist research has developed methods that foreground the critical nuances of women’s relationships to their social worlds. Empirical research exclusively dealing with men as subjects used traditional quantitative methods and structured interviews without any explicit justification as to why these approaches are appropriate for studying men. The edited volume *Masculinities and Violence* (Bower, 1998), for example, has a professed aim of understanding the “historical contradictions in masculine roles” but the methodology sections of the empirical studies are notably thin, without any explicit justification as to how surveys, mail-in questionnaires, and structured interviews—the common methods used by the contributors—necessarily capture

the contradictions of masculine roles. A chapter on “Men and Methodologies” in David Morgan’s (1992) book *Discovering Men* is the closest sustained discussion on this matter, where he argues (by way of examples) that using feminist methods that are reflexive and experiential could be consistent to researching men. However, this chapter, along with other discussions on masculinities, remains silent as to why masculine methods did not emerge and whether there is a need for such. In the next sections, I identify two interrelated reasons as to why this is the case and the responses masculinity studies offered to this methodological gap.

GENDERED RESEARCH METHODS

One way of accounting for the absence of masculine-sensitive research methods is to appreciate the wider theoretical current that prodded the development of gender-sensitive methods. In broad terms, the impetus to develop data-gathering strategies that capture women’s experiences is tied to the feminist critique that classical social theory has an obscured account of modernity by implicitly placing the male experience at the center. Classical accounts on the working class or the social contract are in fact, references to working class *men* and the *fraternal* social contract, which left out women’s contributions to social and political thought. In the literature I reviewed for my case study, I also noticed how male soldiers are referred to as soldiers while women are “female soldiers” (see Kronsell, 2009), reminding me of Simone de Beauvoir’s (1949) observation that “a man never begins by presenting himself as an individual of a certain sex; it goes without saying that he is a man.” Indeed, one of feminist theory’s important contributions to social theory is the breaking of silence on men being gendered actors and the implications of such silence on the (gendered) politics of knowledge production.

The concern about the gendered politics of knowledge production is closely linked to the issue of research methods or techniques of

gathering data (Harding, 1987). While feminist research relegated classical social theory to male social theory (Stanley, 1993), traditional or mainstream research methods have also been described as “malestream” methods. Positivistic practices, in particular, have been faulted for disproportionately creating knowledge from the masculine perspective due to their epistemological underpinnings and methodological practices (Stanley & Wise, 1993; Petersen, 1988). Epistemologically, some feminist scholars (Alcoff, 1999; Longino, 1989) interrogate the concepts of objectivity and value neutrality, arguing that these concepts have been used to formalize and de-politicize patriarchal knowledge. One practical manifestation of sexist epistemology in quantitative research is the categorization of “work” as waged labor, while unpaid labor such as housework and childbearing is unaccounted for (Mies, 1986). When these indicators are presented in the form of an “official report,” men’s “subjective” definition of labor productivity is equated to “objective” data while women’s socio-economic contributions are rendered unacknowledged and unknowable (Du Bois, 1983). Apart from this epistemological critique, some feminist scholars are also critical of exploitative, patriarchal practices in data gathering. Among the feminist scholars vocal on this issue is Shulamit Reinharz (1984) who likened the “malestream” manner of data collection to the “rape model of research” where the researchers “take, hit and run,” reducing respondents to manipulable “objects” where information could be extracted from (p. 95).

Deducing from the feminist critique, I suggest that the silence on masculine-sensitive research methods is not so much a reflection of its non-existence but of its implicitness in traditional research methods. Gender-sensitive methods have come to be associated to feminist research primarily because these are reactions against data gathering techniques that fail to acknowledge and account for women’s experiences. Consequently, liberal feminists clamor for the revision of

positivist methods to address their sexist bias while Marxist feminists present a broader epistemological challenge by claiming that it is through women's unique standpoint that laws and structures of patriarchy could be exposed (Hartsock, 1983). On the other hand, post-colonial feminists push for awareness on how one's research perpetuates colonial representations that can further marginalize women as well as how the experiences of non-white, third world women can inform the understanding of our social worlds (Rajan, 1993). These challenges entail the recalibration of "malestream" methods such as ethnography, focus groups, and interviews, creating spaces for collaborative, empathetic and liberating approaches that are attuned to "feminine" characteristics. In practical terms, these are manifested in encouraging female respondents to personally identify relevant issues to be discussed (Aisenberg & Harrington, 1988), welcoming biographical anecdotes or storytelling instead of compelling a female respondent to answer a rigid set of questions (Yeandle, 1984). These allow "the interviewee to define the end of a story" and act as a partner in the research process (Reinharz, 1992, p. 25). Feminist research has also introduced various methodological innovations such as group diaries, life history research, associative writing and participatory "consciousness-raising" approaches which are specifically designed to give women voice and render their marginalized experiences visible. This methodological position was particularly relevant when feminist research was at its infancy as these open-ended, exploratory research methods facilitated the development of new fields of research from the vantage point of women (Maynard, 1994).

The idea that there are "feminist methods" has not gone uncontested within the ranks of feminist research. The points of contention can be summarized to two themes, the first one relating to the uncritical essentialism involved in upholding methodological dualisms. Ann Oakley (1998) has been vocal against categorizing

quantitative approaches or the scientific logic of discovery as “masculine” while empathetic, inclusive and free flowing and participatory approaches are “feminine”. Margery Wolf (1996) similarly argues that data-gathering practices such as developing friendship-like rapport and engaging with meaningful and reciprocal dialogue with respondents, though popularized by feminist approaches, is “not specifically or exclusively a feminist method” (p. 20). I, for one, share the view that research methods are inherently gender-neutral and *any* research method, if informed by sexist (as well as elitist and racist) assumptions, have consequences for the outcome of research (see Morgan, 1981). For example, Judith Stacey (1988) challenged her own initial (feminist) presumption that ethnography’s experiential, attentive, and interpersonal approach to knowledge, though may appear consistent to feminist values and epistemology, is ultimately exploitative in the end. In spite of the “collaborative and reciprocal quest for understanding... the research product is ultimately that of the researcher,” who ends up leaving the field after intervening in the lives of her respondents. Such contradictions leads her to argue that feminist research should be humble about the partiality of their accounts about other women and be aware of the potentially exploitative relationship they develop with their respondents, even though the method used is a “feminist” one.

The second point of contention is about the inappropriateness or inadequacy of mainstreaming gender in selection of methods. While gender should be considered in designing a data-gathering strategy, this should not be the only major consideration. Sandra Harding (1987) succinctly articulates this position, arguing that researchers have to recognize that there is no “women’s experience,” only “women’s experiences,” in so far as no single set of assumptions and research methods can capture the diversity and richness of women’s perspectives. For Harding, gender categories always intersect with class, race, culture, sexuality, and other indicators of social location which

should also be represented in the research process. I appreciated Harding's point better after reading Catherine Riessman's (1987) article "When gender is not enough: Women interviewing women," where she narrated how her experience as a female Anglo interviewer was not enough to make sense of a Puerto Rican working class woman's account of her marital separation in the same manner that she related with the other Anglo woman respondent. Although her respondents were both women, they used different narrative genres or styles of telling a story based on their culturally distinct experience of marriage. Apart from bringing the point home that gender is not necessarily the main consideration when conducting research exclusively with women or men, it also addressed my initial discomfort about not being able to make "masculinity" a *central* feature of my data gathering. My interviewees, even though they are socialized in an institution promoting hegemonic masculine values, are still multidimensional social agents shaped by their diverse biographical roots which cannot be eclipsed by gender. However, recognizing the point about the intersections of gender with different social categories only partially addresses my methodological concerns. If gender is not enough, what methodological approaches can be used to foreground the multidimensional character of social agents? In the next section, I examine masculinity studies' response to this query.

MASCULINITY STUDIES WITHOUT MASCULINE-SENSITIVE METHODS

Harding's point about unpacking the multifaceted experiences of women, as well as Reissman's methodological position about the inadequacy of foregrounding gender in data gathering is the strand of feminist thought that is similar to masculinity studies' approach to epistemology and methods. Although the exact theoretical origins of masculinity studies is difficult to identify², it suffices to point out that the field came of age at the time when the "crisis of masculinity" in

advanced capitalist societies was theorized as part of social theory's post-structuralist turn. Such "crisis" was theorized alongside queer studies where discourses of heterosexual masculinity were critiqued and western feminism where masculine structures of authority were interrogated within the context of de-industrialization of labor, considering manual labor was considered a foundation of masculine power (Carrigan et al; 1985). This prompted a reevaluation of gender identities, deconstructing the unitary interpretation of the "masculine self" by examining how such self is constituted, negotiated, and historically situated.³ It also examined how masculinity's "hegemonic" form, as I introduced earlier, is subverted and resisted, arguing that alternative expressions of masculinities, particularly those attuned to feminine characteristics, have also been victims of oppressive patriarchal discourses. Like Harding and Reissman, masculinity studies argued against the homogeneous conception of manhood and womanhood, arguing that "'boys will be boys' differently, depending upon their position in social structures and, therefore, upon their access to power and resources" (p. 87). For example, the "masculine" value of "toughness" is expressed depending on the social agent's age, social class, sexuality and ethnicity – he may "use a gun, his fists, his sexuality, a mountain bike, physical labor, a car or the relentless pursuit of financial strength to construct this particular aspect of masculinity" (Courtenay, 2000, p. 1390). It is further argued that such conceptions are dynamic, subject to revisions and shifts depending on the context (Whitehead & Barret, 2000). It is through the post-structuralist paradigm that masculinity studies have come to develop a set of theoretical concepts that are not reified or essentialist and instead, focusing on the diversity of discourse on masculinities, identifying the instabilities in identity construction and how these instabilities are (re)presented and not resolved (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005).

While not directly drawing on the literature on masculinity studies, I encountered two studies situated in the Philippine context that

thoughtfully mapped out the dynamic of negotiating and constructing masculinities. Rolando Tolentino's (2009) research on "macho dancers" illustrates how the "underclass disenfranchised male body" has been appropriated as capital for social mobility within the context of neoliberalism. In what appears to be a straightforward case of capitalist exploitation between a financially empowered gay patron to an underprivileged subject, Tolentino provides a nuanced observation stating that the gay patron himself is "working within the patriarchal imperatives of the desired male heterosexual" where the "real phallic power remains to be negotiated based on the terms of the macho dancer" (p. 84). He also analyzes the constructions of the male body through time, from the aesthetic preferences towards young, tall, and fair-skinned men to the political "masculinization" of the presidential body by Presidents Marcos, Ramos, and Estrada. In this piece, Tolentino insightfully maps out the complex relationships of power not only between the gay patron and the macho dancer but their interactions within the context of colonial aesthetics, the neoliberal regime, aspirations of social mobility and male heterosexual normativity.

On the other hand, a number of studies addressed the impact of feminization of migrant labor to traditional gender roles in the family. For example, Alicia Pingol (2004) observed how fathers coped with their wives' departure to work abroad by assuming "a more maternal self" and learning to perform traditionally female roles. She observes how masculinity has been reconstituted in this context by de-emphasizing the body as central to fathers' or husbands' identities which allow them to take on new (reversed) roles. In this study, Pingol draws on both female and male narratives while focusing on the shifting boundaries of gender roles through the lens of sexual division of labor. Taken together, both studies illustrate the kind of analyses that accounts on masculinities offer, illustrating men's shifting relationships with women, gay men, and indeed, fellow heterosexual males based on the possibilities and constraints provided by their social locations.

Having situated masculinity studies within the post-structuralist turn of social theory, the challenges lies, as I mentioned earlier, in translating these theoretical developments to research methods. While the literature on masculinity studies has been engaged in vibrant theoretical debates, these have not yet moved on to sustained discussions on methodology, as I have narrated in the first section of this piece (Haywood & Mac an Ghaill 2003). Chris Haywood and Máirtín Mac an Ghaill observed that even studies professing to take on a post-structuralist strand nevertheless “do so through the unreflexive use of conventional sociological methods” (p. 117).

As a way of out of this methodological dilemma, Haywood and Mac an Ghaill suggest that there is no need to develop a masculine-sensitive/post-structuralist methodology. Instead, they advocate a position wherein the theoretical developments in masculinity studies are utilized to critically inform the research process. I am sympathetic to their position but I suggest a further refinement on this rather broad standard, proposing that the methodological challenge for masculinity studies lies not in coming up with the essentialist methods that capture “*the male experience*” but in (1) mapping out the dynamic process of negotiating social agents’ multilayered identity and (2) situating this dynamic in the research process.

The first challenge involves the critical appropriation of existing research methods to capture the insights of post-structuralist theory or what Mac an Ghaill (1994) calls “theory-led methodology.” This means “traditional” research methods such as interviews, focus groups, ethnography or even “feminist” ones such as diaries and life histories are utilized to gather a multi-voiced, multi-centered data that can bring out the tensions and alliances among subject positions (Lather, 1992; Popoviciu et al., 2006). The two studies I cited earlier used traditional methods such as observation and interviews and insightfully captured the tensions and negotiations among social agents and the way they

manage their situatedness within an existing economic and cultural regime. Viewed this way, traditional methods like interviews can be used to understand how men put forward different representations of the self, ethnography can be used to document how subordinated groups make problematic the institutionalized gender regime through everyday practice (see Máirtín Mac an Ghaill, 1994) while focus groups can be a tool to understand the tensions among men's multiple subjectivities of race, class, and sexuality instead of finding consistent patterns of behavior. This also entails the recognition that the subjectivities observed are produced in the ethnographic encounter itself rather than pre-figured prior to the researcher's intervention (Nayak, 2006). There is no straightforward way of going about this and the challenge lies in establishing how the selected method was "theory-led" or able to bring out the nuances of the theory on masculinity.

Foregrounding the researcher's interventions in data gathering relates to the second methodological challenge. In post-structuralist terms, appreciating the respondents' practices must be situated within the research context where these articulations took place and asking "who asked whom about what and where" (Pini, 2005). As in feminist research, practicing reflexivity or "methodological self-consciousness" (Lynch, 2000, p. 28) is integral to the research process, where researchers are made to locate "how our behaviors, research roles, or discursive choices enact structures and effect this enactment on the people who[m] we research" (Irwin in Huisman, 2008, p. 375). While it can be claimed that reflexivity has evolved to become a "methodological virtue" to the point that no self-respecting researcher professes to be against it or promote un-reflexive research practices (Lynch, 2000), post-structuralism considers reflexivity as central to the data gathering process and not just an afterthought or a footnote in a research report. Reflecting on how our desires and prejudices affect the data we generated is important for post-structuralist methods

because the researcher is considered equally constitutive and central to the data gathering process itself (Lather, 1992). In this case, the researcher is not just an instrument to gather data as in positivism, a “rapist” as in “malestream” methods, or a sympathetic observer as in the case of feminist standpoint epistemology. Instead, the researcher is as much as an agent as the respondent, a co-participant in the construction and generation of data. This is consistent to the post-structuralist argument that there is no “truth” to be ascertained through research, only discourses constituted in the process of data gathering.

One way of locating the dynamic of constructing narratives within the research process is to render the researcher and respondents’ “positionalities” explicit. Floya Anthias (2002) defines positionality as an individual’s social *position* and social *positioning*, making it the “space at the intersection of structure (a social position/social effects) and agency (as social positioning/meaning and practice” (p. 502). Methodologically, the researcher and the respondents’ “positionalities” are relevant in two ways. First, awareness of the relationship between the researcher and respondents’ positionalities lend insight to selecting the research method appropriate for the encounter. For example, Christina Chavez’s (2008) research on multigenerational Mexican American family involved interviewing her own family members. Because of her familiarity with the respondents, she was able to “negotiate a modified interview” which adapts to the family’s usual style of discourse. She conducted informal interviews in her respondents’ homes, which was prone to interruption by her respondents’ children and other family members engaging in small talks and making requests. Because of her positionality as “part of the family,” she was able to reconcile the “interruptions” in the interview as a piece of data accounting for the household dynamic that when a family member is needed, he or she must respond. Chavez’s example illustrates how relating the researcher’s positionality to her respondent’s

allows for an observation that may not necessarily be accessible to a differently situated researcher or respondent. Apart from having a sense of the appropriate research method that fits with the respondents' discursive style, awareness of positionalities also allows the researcher to use it as "currency" in data gathering, especially if the researcher is an "outsider". Prachi Srivastava (2005) uses the term "currency" to refer to the medium of exchange in research which allows the researcher and participants to achieve temporary shared positionalities, "mediate relations of power and, ultimately ease the exchange" (p. 211). These currencies come in the form of using a common dialect or language, emphasizing shared ethnic backgrounds or other affiliations to better facilitate the encounter. Srivastava shares her experience in researching low-fee private schools in Uttar Pradesh, India. I am citing her reflection at length as I consider it to succinctly demonstrate how positionalities are negotiated in the research process:

To initially gain access to schools, I dressed in Western clothes and arrived in a rental car with driver to increase my legitimacy as a researcher from abroad and so that the study would be received with seriousness, as I was often mistaken for a 'young girl'. Thus, without the use of these currencies I thought that within the sociocultural fabric my relatively young age (I was 27 at the time), the fact that I looked unmarried (because I do not adorn myself with the traditional Hindu symbols of marriage), and my gender may jeopardise that initial 'first impression' with school owners, who were typically middle-aged men. Nonetheless, I spoke in Hindi even in the early stages of access and conducted all interviews in Hindi as well. This was not only because most owners did not feel wholly comfortable expressing themselves in English, but more so, in an effort to reduce the cultural gap given my background and my affiliation with an 'elite' British university (p. 214).

In this account, Srivastava demonstrates her awareness of the potential bias and prejudices her participants may have as they size her up as a researcher. In so far as she managed the potential power

relation between the middle-aged male school owners by using “props” that grant her legitimacy as a researcher, she also bridged the potential power relation as a foreign-schooled woman by speaking in Hindi. However, caution is also warranted in invoking props and other “ready-to-wear” categories of identity politics as these could end up using essentialism (i.e. same language, same cultural context/power) in place of methodological rigor. As I mentioned earlier, these positionalities are not fixed but shift during the research process and the challenge is to maintain awareness about one’s positionality being “constantly in flux,” and critically reflect on how one uses these currencies to address the exchange’s dynamic (Srivastava, 2005, p. 216).

In summary, this section outlined the emergence of masculinity studies without masculine methods. I suggested the methodological challenge for masculinity studies lies not in developing masculine-sensitive methods but the use of “theory-led methodology” or those that bring out the nuances of masculinity studies’ theoretical position which captures the multiplicity and dynamism of subjective positions. I also suggested that the account of such dynamic must be situated in the research process, acknowledging how the relationship of the researcher and respondents’ positionalities affects the construction and negotiation of narratives in the research process. I further unpack these concepts by way of example, returning back to my experiences in the field of interviewing military men.

THE NEGOTIATED SPACE BETWEEN

As I introduced earlier, my fieldwork was primarily designed to gather information that contributes in reconstructing the Oakwood Mutiny, particularly the negotiation process. Part of my data gathering involved interviews with junior officers who participated in the mutiny who, at that time, were still detained in the Camp Crame Custodial Centre. The temporal detail of my reflection is worth noting, which is

done after the fieldwork and after I problematized the issue of masculinities and methodology. Needless to say, I was not conscious of the two methodological considerations I proposed above *during* fieldwork as these were derivatives of my reflections and research after exiting the field. My research is also not designed to be a post-structuralist project so the methods I used were not aimed at capturing the shifting subjectivities of my respondents although some post-structuralist insights were useful, as I narrate below. With these considerations, this section can be appreciated as my attempt to appropriate the second proposal I put forward – to locate myself in the research process, the currencies I used and how the interaction of my positionality and my respondents’ constituted the data I gathered. Even though my research is not a post-structuralist project, I consider this exercise fruitful to better appreciate how my intervention as a researcher constituted the data and how I was able to capture the multidimensionality of my respondents considering I did not foreground their masculine dimension. The main “storyline” of my reflection relates to the transition of my positionality during the research process – from being an outsider to negotiating my way “in between” the outsider-insider binary (see Dwyer & Buckle, 2009).

I began my fieldwork in literally as an “outsider.” My respondents were detained and the rituals involved in entering the custodial center signaled my stepping out of my social world marked by freedom and privacy to entering a different one: from surrendering my mobile phone to the guard, having my bag inspected, signing in the visitors’ log book and being escorted to the junior officers’ common room. The physical space of the research site was also alien to me not only because it was inside detention but also because it was a “masculine space,” where men in their late thirties walk around wearing thigh-length shorts as *pambahay* (house clothes), lift weights, and play basketball in the afternoon. Growing up in a predominantly female environment, the custodial center seemed like a boy’s locker room to me, albeit a neat

one. Apart from the slight uneasiness I felt with this new environment, such masculine constitution of the research space further set me apart from my respondents. I am a woman in my late twenties, awkwardly and tightly holding a notebook and a printed interview guide, wearing a collared blouse and formal trousers, not because I was trying to gain legitimacy through my appearance as in Srivastava's case, but out of respect to Senator Antonio Trillanes IV and General Danilo Lim who are high-ranking government officials detained in the center.

Wolf (1996) suggests that being an "outsider" has implications to the relationship between the researcher and respondents especially if the researcher's social advantage is explicitly manifested in terms of class, ethnicity and language. I took my positionality as a class-privileged, fair-skinned, foreign-schooled woman, not to mention my freedom, as indicators of social privilege. Consequently, I chose to conduct semi-structured interviews to give voice to the silenced standpoints of the mutineers who were not allowed access to the public and planned to de-emphasize my social privilege by speaking in colloquial Tagalog and addressing them as "sir." However, my initial speculations about power relationships were altered as I began my interviews. Even though my respondents were incarcerated, they were able to hold on to their social status as rank-bearing, elite-schooled bemedaled men who consistently emphasized their pride as part of the Magdalo group who held out in jail to fight for what they believe in. I found my positionality "subverted" by the differently privileged positionality of my respondents. In my interviews, comments about my youth abound even though the age of the junior officers when they went to Oakwood is not far from my age when I interviewed them. Comments include: "*yung generation mo, generation mo 'yon, ang mag-susuffer*" ("the next generation, that's your generation, will suffer"), "*hindi mo na siguro maalala yung EDSA Dos pero ganito yung nangyari diyan*" ("you probably won't remember EDSA Dos but this is what happened there"). Such comments provoked me to assert my

“authority” as a researcher, purposely citing books I have read or research I have conducted when the tone of their commentaries seem, to me at least, to assume that I was too distant from Philippine realities because of my foreign education. I also matched my language to theirs, assuming an academic tone when some officers assumed a scholarly voice and shifting to conversational Tagalog when talking to enlisted men who were talking in Tagalog.

As I was translating the interviews to English, I realized that treating me as a detached outsider made the officers explicit in terms of their narratives. Their subjective positions were contextualized and historically situated such as linking their issues to EDSA Dos and the wave of coups in the 1980s. Although I initially took these as manifestations of their judgment of my “foreign” status, these pieces of information allowed me to understand how the respondents interpret their subjective positions in relation to broader socio-historical patterns. For example, an enlisted personnel shared that for him, the root of his motivation to participate in Oakwood was linked to Gen. Angelo Reyes’s participation in EDSA Dos:

Actually, sa akin, ha, dun nag-umpisa yan, kay Angie [Gen. Angelo Reyes] na yan. Kasi siya ‘yung chief of staff no’n sa AFP eh, na hindi dapat nakisawsaw diyan sa pulitika... Andun siya, taas taas siya ng kamay don... Kaya ang sundalo, sabi, puwede pala ‘yon. [Actually, for me, that’s where it started, with Angie. Because he’s the chief of staff then in the AFP, he wasn’t meant to dabble with politics... He was there, waving his arms... That’s why soldiers said, ah, that’s possible.]

Such initiatives to present the broader picture allowed me to characterize not only the political character of my respondents but the ease they demonstrated in linking the personal and professional to the political. Apart from their initiative in being explicit about their narratives, my outsider status also allowed me to detect comments that were left implicit and further probe on these concepts. For example

the common expression in the AFP “wait ‘til you become” was consistently cited in the interviews in a pejorative way, leading me to ask my last two respondents to unpack that concept, why it frustrates them and the context where it is used. This allowed me to understand that such expression has been used as an “excuse” for inaction. This phrase, when the second half of it is made explicit, is taken to mean: wait ‘til you become the chief of staff or a high-ranking officer to enact change, usually mentioned by their commanders when they complain of corruption and other grievances. Although it is purely speculative for me to assert that such constitution of the data would have been different if it were a differently situated researcher who conducted the interview, I could at least surmise that my outsider status contributed to making some presuppositions or background conditions explicit that were helpful in my understanding of the mutiny.

Even though I began the research as a complete outsider, such status did not last long. The way I inadvertently structured the “recruitment” for interviews provided my respondents some leverage to participate in designing my research. Their participation in my data gathering strategy can be summarized to two manifestations. The first one relates to participant selection. I gained access to the respondents through a friend who personally knows one of the detainees, whom I will call “Captain” in this article to protect his anonymity. Captain volunteered himself, Sen. Trillanes, and a *mistah* (PMA classmate) for an interview. After my first round of interviews, he mentioned that he already spoke to the officers from the air force and the enlisted men from the marines and I can interview them next time. His initiative led me to classify the respondents based on service units, a category I did not consider prior to fieldwork. In a way, Captain’s initiative altered the structure of my recruitment because my initial plan was to interview anyone who was willing to participate. Conducting interviews by service unit added another dimension to my analysis, particularly how officers from different service units make sense of their participation in the mutiny.

Apart from structuring the selection of my respondents, their requests on the interview format also affected my data gathering. Minutes prior to the interview, some respondents casually asked if they could be interviewed together. I agreed to my respondents' requests, prioritizing their comfort over consistency in applying interview formats (one-on-one versus joint interviews). I noted that joint interviews tend to have a more detailed account of the mutiny because the respondents confer with each other (i.e. "*di ba, bok, ayaw pa papasukin si [Chief Negotiator] Cimatu no'n?*" / "[They] did not want [Chief Negotiator] Cimatu in then, right, mate?"), while one-on-one interviews tend to not dwell on the details of the mutiny and digress instead, with digression defined as narratives that do not directly relate to recounting the Oakwood incident. I, however, was open to accommodating "digression" because it lends insight to the respondents' subjective positions, particularly in having a sense of how they represent their experiences through narratives. One junior officer, for example, shared the context of his domestic life, being an orphan, bachelor, and growing up in an economically underprivileged environment. Such background, he further shares, is one that gave him nothing to be proud of aside from that fact that he is doing something right ("*wala ka nga no eh, wala kang maipagmamalaki, aside from the fact na, alam mong you're doing something right*" / "you have nothing to be proud of, aside from the fact that, you know you're doing something right"). Such sharing allowed me to have a multifaceted understanding of his motivations for going to Oakwood, challenging the common interpretation that these officers are arrogant men with messianic complex (see Davide Commission, 1990). His "digression" demonstrated his process of meaning-making which, on the contrary, was marked by humility and pensiveness. I find his narrative difficult to reconcile with his image I saw on the video footage of the Manila Peninsula siege where he was assuming the hegemonic masculine ideal, wearing a full military camouflage, carrying an M16

rifle, aggressive and straight-faced. Appropriating post-structuralism's prescriptions, I take these conflicting images as manifestations of my respondent's shifting identity, negotiating his aggressive image to his reflective one, foregrounding his depth and sincerity. These kinds of narratives that emerged out of the semi-structured interviews urged me to adopt my interview format to styles that are comfortable for my respondents. Towards the end of my fieldwork, I was not carrying any interview guide anymore, adopting a more conversational style of interviewing and just asking about the negotiation process if it were not raised yet in the discussion.

To a certain extent, my respondents' participation in designing my data gathering strategy – from selecting respondents to altering my interview format – not only allowed for a cooperative research endeavor but can also be seen as a way of establishing shared positionalities with the officers. Since some of them also took masters' degrees and conducted postgraduate research, they were also able to engage my research design itself, with a marine officer commenting on the research brief I sent, saying that I cannot just look at the Oakwood Mutiny without analyzing EDSA I and II while Sen. Trillanes referred me to his own research at the University of the Philippines for my literature review. The language he used, referring to himself as "key informant" further reinforced his knowledge of the research process. These efforts to engage with my research project not only further emphasized the officers' responsiveness and orientation to action, but also served as vehicle to "bring me in" from my outsider status to become a "partial insider" sharing a few identities with my respondents while maintaining a level of detachment from their community (see Chavez, 2008, p. 475).

Apart from bringing in my insider status through gestures of collaboration, I consider myself a partial insider when I realized that I was also assuming the positionality of a guest and not just a researcher. I resisted such appropriation of my identity during my first visit,

declining the detainees' offer of food or water as I was still uncomfortable in the site. In my succeeding visits, since I was more familiar with the space and the people, I spent some time "hanging out" in the dining table during lunch and after the interviews, sharing the roast chicken I brought after being teased for not bringing food in my first visit. I realized that embracing my positionality as a guest allowed me to transform the "masculine space" I initially saw to a "shared space" where food, stories and even (friendly) jibes are shared between me and my respondents. Although the space was still predominantly occupied by men, I was able to use my positionality as "currency," establishing the intersections of our social worlds such as mutual friends, common province, life phase (e.g., being about to get married) and even birth order. Unlike Srivastava, I used these currencies not during interviews but during informal chats, allowing me to negotiate my relationship to the officers outside the researcher-respondent paradigm. I have read articles about female researchers encountering sexist insinuations of their male respondents during fieldwork (see Pini, 2005) and realized that I did not have the same experience because I used these "currencies" to frame my positionality as the officers' younger sister. Our informal chats usually involved them giving marital advice to me considering they know that I was preparing for my wedding during my fieldwork. It felt like elder brothers giving advice to a younger sister, especially since we are somewhat similarly situated in that I am also away from my fiancé and family because I am studying overseas. The presence of the detainees' families in my succeeding visits also served as currency to further talk about family matters, particularly the challenges of raising children while being detained. To this extent, the shared space was not just predominantly occupied by "men" but by fathers, elder brothers, scholars, and hosts to me as their guest. My positionality as a guest placed me in an interesting location in between the insider-outsider binary. I realized how fortunate I am to have been considered as a guest and not a complete outsider who cannot be trusted with their stories.

This is an important realization given that a number of respondents shared their contempt for journalists who merely grab information and are not genuinely committed to understanding their plight. As a guest, there is a recognition that our social worlds intersect but are not primarily similar and that as a guest, I am someone who visits and engages with them but is free to leave or not obligated to stay. Finally, this shared space allowed me to engage in informal yet insightful discussions and generate observations I could not have made in a formal interview setting. For example, the officers were consistent in describing their group as “collegial” and not hierarchical in their interviews but I appreciated this remark better when I saw the officers casually exchanging jokes with Sen. Trillanes, who is depicted as the “leader” of the mutiny. I also gained insight to the officers’ discursive styles while listening to their informal chats, noticing how an officer only had to say a few words to evoke a quick response from one’s peer (i.e. “*ako na, bok*” / “let me do it, mate”). This observation was useful in understanding the importance of implicitness in military speech culture (when talking to one another), which contributed in the part of my dissertation where I characterized the nature of communication among military men.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUDING COMMENTS

My post-fieldwork reflection above illustrates the two main points I raised in this piece. First, even though my research was not driven by masculinity studies and post-structuralism, the methodological argument I made earlier provided me the lens to reflect on how I, as a researcher, am equally constitutive of the data-gathering process. I narrated how I shifted roles from being an outsider as a female, foreign-schooled researcher to a guest and how these affected the quality of data I gathered. As a researcher, I got “direct” responses about the Oakwood Mutiny and some “digressions” that contextualized my understandings. As a guest, I got to understand the practical manifestations of their claims such as collegiality, action-orientedness,

and implicit discursive styles. I also gained a more holistic appreciation of my mutineers' identities, from simply being stiff and authoritative male soldiers to fathers, brothers, hosts, and pensive, not just political or politicized, individuals. While I was able to see these aspects because of my positionality, it is also worth recognizing that these representations are partial, at best. These observations are products of my shifting interactions with the respondents which define the quality of the data. Drawing on Stacey's (1988) insight I raised earlier, such recognition prompts me to make humble assertions regarding my research findings and my ability to capture the representations and narratives my respondents shared.

Second, my narrative above demonstrated how the absence of masculine-sensitive methods was addressed by the use of traditional methods while being aware of the "currencies" exchanged in the data gathering process. The classical feminist critique alerted me to recognize the implicitness of the heterosexual masculine dimension of my respondents during fieldwork while feminists like Harding, Oakley and post-structuralist scholars also made a case for recognizing how gender intersects with other characteristics. Being a detained officer was not just about manhood but also entails their negotiation of their fatherhood, political motivations based on biographical roots, and relationships with peers. To this extent, I consider my "traditional" methods such as semi-structured (to conversational) interviews as well as my informal chats with my respondents as sufficient to capture my respondents' multiple and negotiated subjectivities. Foregrounding their masculinity could have eclipsed the complexity of their experiences and deterred me from providing a more textured account for my dissertation. Although my dissertation's focus is not about masculinities, there have already been studies situated in the Philippine context I cited earlier that successfully mapped out the complex and shifting male experience. Such conversation, I hope, will continue and also engage on one about methods.

Notes

1. The three civilians are: one of the junior officers' lawyers who requested for anonymity, Atty. Jose Lina, (of the Department of Interior and Local Government during the time of the mutiny) and Hon. Rozzano Rufino Biazon, one of the government officials present in Oakwood as the standoff unfolded.
2. Carrigan et al.'s (1985) article "New Sociology of Masculinity" provides a comprehensive review on the development of masculinity studies based on the experience of advanced capitalist societies.
3. Feminists such as Judith Butler also engage the classic feminist account, arguing that "women" is not a fixed and coherent category shared across cultures. Similar critiques have also been made by women from subordinated ethnic groups, from the South and lesbians, whose experiences do not correspond to the conceptions presented by "white Western feminists."

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