



Quantitative Methods for Analysing Gender, Ethnicity and Migration

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December 2006

CONTENTS

1. Introduction	3
2. Quantitative versus Qualitative Methods: The Feminist Debate.....	4
2.1. Objectivity versus Subjectivity	6
2.2. Power versus Equality and Empathy in the Research Process.....	7
2.3. Numbers versus Meanings	8
3. Problems with Quantitative Methods for Studying Ethnicity and Migration from a Feminist Perspective	10
3.1. Missing Data	11
3.2. Gender-Biased Categories.....	12
4. Quantitative Methods for Studying Ethnicity and Migration from a Feminist Perspective	14
4.1. Gender Sensitive Survey Data.....	14
4.2. Computer-Assisted Discourse Analysis	16
5. Conclusions	18
Bibliography	19

“Feminist methodologists do not use or prescribe any research method; rather they are united through various methods to include women’s lives and concerns in accounts of society, to minimize the harms of research, and to support changes that will improve women’s status”
(DeVault, 1996: 29).

1. Introduction

The question of whether or not it is possible to identify a set of specifically “feminist” research methodological tools has spawned heated debate over the past 30 years, both within academic disciplines and between feminists themselves (Brayton, 2006; Cook et alii, 1986; Oakley, 1998b; Reinhartz et alii, 1992; Risman, 1993). As Marjorie DeVault has stressed: « Nearly every writer on the topic agrees that there is no single feminist method, yet there is a substantial literature on ‘feminist methodology’, representing a diverse community of sociologists in lively and sometimes contentious dialogue” (1996: 29). Much of this dialogue has centred on what could be called the “quantitative – qualitative divide”, where feminist research tends to be closely associated with qualitative research methods (Maynard and Purvis, 1994), whilst quantitative methods are generally equated with male / mainstream research design (Cancian, 1992).

In the chapter, we will discuss the potential use of quantitative research methods in feminist studies of gender, ethnicity and migration. Rather than providing yet another critique of the pitfalls and potential dangers of quantitative data from a feminist perspective, we will argue that such methodological tools can provide valuable insights into important aspects of women’s lives. In so doing, we adopt the working definition of “feminist methodology” provided by Marjorie DeVault, who claims that: “the distinctiveness of feminist methodology can be located in the shared commitment to three goals: 1. Feminists seek a methodology that will do the work of ‘excavation’, shifting the focus of standard research practice from men’s concerns in order to reveal the locations and perspectives of (all) women (...); 2. Feminists seek a science that minimizes harm and control in the research process (...); 3. Feminists seek a methodology that will support research of value to women, leading to social change or action beneficial to women (...) Together, these criteria for feminist methodology provide the outline for a possible alternative to the distanced, distorting and dispassionately objective procedures of much social research” (1996: 32-34).

In this chapter, we will use these three criteria as a bench-mark for identifying the advantages and disadvantages of a series of quantitative methods, namely the secondary analysis of large-scale data sets, questionnaire surveys and computer-assisted discourse analysis. All of these methods can be used in a range of disciplinary frameworks and all may provide primary or secondary data sources. Where appropriate, we will also indicate how these quantitative methods may be creatively used in conjunction with the more qualitative methodological tools presented in the other chapters of this volume. Indeed, rather than supporting the adoption of a single research method, we will argue that much research in the humanities and social sciences could benefit from a “methodological mix”, including quantitative data. In line with Barbara Risman and her colleagues, we would argue: “that the question must determine the methodology and that no one method is *a priori* more feminist than another. Quantitative feminists are not necessarily too elitist, careerist or oppressed to use more radical techniques. These techniques may simply be inappropriate to the question being asked. Some feminist questions demand quantitative answers.” (Risman, Sprague and Howard, 1993: 608).

We hope to demonstrate that different research issues call for different research methods and, as long as they are applied from a critical feminist perspective, quantitative methods, whether used alone or in conjunction with more qualitative research tools, have a vital role to play. This idea opens up the possibility of developing methodological pluralism and research strategies that recognise the potential complementarity of certain quantitative and qualitative techniques in studying gender, ethnicity and migration.

2. Quantitative versus Qualitative Methods: The Feminist Debate

Qualitative and quantitative methodologies are still widely considered in the research methods literature to belong to two distinct research traditions. At a basic level, qualitative research commonly refers to the collection and analysis of material that seeks to uncover meaning and to promote the understanding of the experiences of the research subjects. By contrast, quantitative research is about the collection and analysis of numerical data – the social facts. Certain research techniques or methods are associated with each of these research processes. Qualitative research methods include, for example, ethnographic case studies, interviews and observation; whereas questionnaires, surveys, statistics, as well as computer assisted analytical techniques are included among quantitative methods. Underlying this dual model is the notion that these methods are deeply rooted in different epistemological positions, i.e. different conceptions of what is knowledge, what is science, how we come to know things. From an epistemological point of view, qualitative research is often thought to value subjective and personal meanings and is said to be conducive to giving a voice to the most oppressed groups in society, whilst quantitative research is constructed in terms of testing theories and making predictions in an objective and value free way. It implies a clear separation of researcher from the research process and its objects - including people.

Despite the importance and pertinence of much recent feminist criticism of quantitative research methods, it is important to remember that feminist activists have frequently used survey material to underline existing gender inequalities and to place these on the political agenda. Feminist social reformers such as Jane Addams, Florence Nightingale and Harriet Martineau advocated the need for gendered statistics to demonstrate the reality of women's lives (MacDonnald 1993) as a condition for adopting reform policies in line with women's interests. More recently, collecting empirical data on the prevalence of domestic violence against women has been seen as an essential step in putting the prevention of abuse and the protection of the abused on the public policy agenda (Jaspard et alii, 2001).

However, the development of research inspired by the second wave feminist movement in the 1960s and early 1970s has often been characterised by a "qualitative turn" and has developed a widespread critique of quantitative methods, which are usually associated with a positivist stance on social reality. In this sense, feminist critiques of science share many features with other critical analyses of positivism (e.g. the Frankfurt school). Furthermore, the scientific method, with its traditional quantitative and experimental approaches to knowledge, has suffered from a contamination through association, because of its implicit connection within the male academy and with what Nicole-Claude Mathieu has called "androcentric bias" in research design or data analysis (Mathieu, 1992). Much of the contemporary feminist critique of quantitative and experimental methods understandably reflects the way in which these have frequently been used in the past, i.e. as techniques for exploiting women or rendering them

invisible (Oakley, 1998a). The traditional representation of differences between qualitative and quantitative methodologies is summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: The Traditional Dichotomy between Quantitative and Qualitative Methodologies

QUANTITATIVE METHODOLOGIES	QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGIES
Search for general laws of behaviour, empirical regularities, with a view to making theoretical generalisations	Search for meanings in specific social/cultural contexts, with only limited possibilities for theoretical generalisation
Adoption of the natural science paradigm (where objectivity is valued)	Rejection of the natural science paradigm (subjectivity is valued)
Attempt to create or to simulate experimental situations	Attempt to observe reality in natural settings
Explanation = prediction of events, behaviour, attitudes ('statistical causality')	Explanation = understanding, interpreting reasons for observable behaviour, sense given to actions ('historical causality')
Use large-scale study samples and random sampling	Use small-scale sample groups; case studies; purposive sampling
Analysis of data based on deduction	Analysis of data based on induction or grounded theory
Use survey instruments with predetermined response categories based on pre-determined theoretical frameworks (e.g. questionnaires)	Uses open-ended research instruments (semi-structured interviews, life histories, focus groups, observation, etc.) from which theoretical categories (may) emerge
Numbers (measurement)	Words ('thick description')

Source: Damaris 2001: 3

However, other feminist authors have stressed that rejecting quantitative methodological techniques and tools simply because they pose a series of epistemological problems is equivalent to "throwing out the baby because the bathwater stinks" (Risman 1993: 15). We believe that it is possible to use the techniques of quantification for studying gender, ethnicity and migration without falling into the methodological traps that have often been associated with "masculine" or "male-centred" research traditions. In the following section, we will discuss the main feminist criticisms of quantitative methods and show how most of the objections that have been addressed at these methodological tools could just as easily concern qualitative approaches (Oakley 1998b, Sprague & Zimmerman 1989, Risman 1993).

Despite this fact, it remains the case that many feminist researchers have rejected quantitative methods in favour of more qualitative research tools. Such choices have often been made on the basis of feminist critiques of positivism and of conventional notions of science. Indeed, feminist researchers have pointed to the omission and distortion of women's experiences in mainstream science, to the tendency to universalise the experience of men and relatively privileged women and to the use of so-called "male-stream" methods to understand women's experiences (Stanley & Wise 1993, Mies 1983). They have also criticised the use of science to

control women, whether through medicine and psychiatry, or through scientific theories of the family, work and sexuality (Milman & Kanter 1975). Quantitative methods have thus been seen as a way of reproducing the prevailing patriarchal social order and being “implicitly or explicitly defensive of the (masculine) status quo” (Oakley 1998b: 707). As Ann Oakley points out, three fundamental objections underpin the various arguments against quantitative methods: “the case against positivism; the case against power, and the case against p values, or against the use of statistical techniques as a means of establishing the validity of research findings” (Oakley 1998b: 710).

We analyse each of these objections in the following sections of this chapter.

2.1. Objectivity versus Subjectivity

Positivism is an approach to scientific knowledge that seeks facts and general laws which will enable the researcher to predict behaviour. In this case, the quality of a scientific theory is guaranteed by its “objectivity” and lack of bias. Thus, the research results should be verifiable by anyone using the same experimental methods. In order to guarantee the objectivity and verifiability of results, the researcher is required to separate his/her values and personal experiences from the research process. Consequently, one of the main principles of positivism is the subject/object dichotomy; what is studied is an “object” which “the knower/researcher can look at in a value-free and neutral way” (Oakley 1998b: 710). All of these beliefs have been severely criticised by feminist academics, as they have also been criticised in other research traditions, such as phenomenology (cf. Holm *et alii* in this volume) and the interactionist school.

The feminist rejection of positivism is based on a denial of the possibility of objective research outcomes and a denial of the desirability of truly objective data collection techniques (Sprague & Zimmerman 1989). Underlying these objections is the presumption, inspired by the work of Kuhn (1962) and Berger and Luckmann (1966), for example, that all knowledge - including scientific knowledge - is socially constructed. Thus, feminists claim that it is impossible to conduct research that is totally free from subjective bias. They doubt the possibility of discovering scientific “truth” that could exist totally outside the context of the knower. Moreover, some critiques point to the fact that the so-called “scientific objectivity” can actually be reframed as “male subjectivity” (Caplan 1988). Fundamentally, traditional research with its claims to objectivity is defective because it does not recognise how its own biases impact on all stages of the research process, from the choice of subject to the final presentation of results (Brayton, 2006).

Another central theme in feminist critiques of quantitative methods is the negative impact of the separation of subject and object, of knower and known, for research validity (Cook & Fonow 1986, MacKinnon 1982). Since quantitative researchers often only “interact” with their objects of study through a medium (a questionnaire, for example), feminist researchers have questioned whether this type of empirical research can ever represent women’s experience other than from a male point of view (MacKinnon 1982). Indeed, the discussions have quite often assumed that the subject/object separation is a problem exclusive to quantitative research methods and has led to the conclusion that qualitative methodologies avoid many of the pitfalls inherent in more traditional quantitative methodologies. The argument includes two distinct components. Firstly, qualitative research tools allow us to make contact with subjects and avoid the detachment of subject from researcher (Cook &

Fonow 1986). Secondly, qualitative research tools avoid imposing the researchers' analytical frameworks on their subjects and allow female respondents' voices to be heard (Westcott 1990).

However, other feminist researchers have argued that qualitative research tools also imply some kind of selection process, which is inherent to the process of collecting and analysing data, and therefore that they too imply the intrusion of the researcher's values into the research process (Sprague and Zimmerman 1989: 74). Whether selecting many or only a few research cases, choices still have to be made and it would be a mistake to believe that the implications of these choices are lessened by the size of the research sample or by the criteria adopted for data analysis. Some feminist authors have even argued that, since quantification requires the researcher to make his/her selection criteria explicit during each stage of the research process investigation, quantitative methods may be less open to bias than qualitative methods (Sprague and Zimmerman 1989: 73). As Ryff points out, unstructured interviews are just as vulnerable to researcher bias and preconceptions as are quantitative methods, but the bias can operate more subtly and therefore be harder to detect (Ryff 1995: 101). For example, because students rarely receive systematic training in qualitative research methods (Richardson 1996), which are often seen as more "intuitive" and, therefore, as easier to master than quantitative "number crunching" techniques, researchers who use exclusively qualitative methods rarely provide adequate and clear justifications for their methods, results or conclusions. Consequently, validity and bias are problems faced by all researchers in the social sciences and humanities, irrespective of their methodological choices.

The influence of researchers on their data is a dilemma to be faced in all types of research. Thus, although quantitative methods may well have been used historically to produce "bad science" from a feminist point of view, we would argue that there is nothing inherently "patriarchal" in these methodologies. It seems that the feminist debate has somewhat mistakenly confounded the legitimate criticisms of positivist science with the systematic rejection of quantitative methodologies. As Risman has stressed: "One can take a feminist perspective and epistemological concerns and incorporate them into any methodological technique. And one can ignore feminist insights and agendas in any methodological tradition" (Risman 1993: 24).

2.2. Power Relations versus Equality and Empathy in the Research Process

Closely linked to the subject/object debate is the feminist concern with unequal power relations in the research process and their implications for women. It has been argued that mainstream quantitative research tends to reproduce existing power relations, notably because the questions asked tend to be those of the dominant groups in society. Feminist researchers have claimed that quantitative methods, with close-ended response alternatives and interpretative frameworks imposed by the researcher, leave very little place for "women's own voices" to be heard. Thus, the quantitative analysis itself is seen as a process of controlling and manipulating the subjects of the research project, whereas qualitative research is believed to be more open, empathetic and egalitarian (Risman 1993: 20). However, Stacey (1988) argues that even in a warm and collaborative research relationship there is almost always a status difference between the researcher and the respondents. This imbalance of power between the two parties allows the researcher to control the investigation and selection process, and to assume authority over the results. She questions whether the appearance of

greater respect for and equality with subjects in qualitative work masks more subtle forms of potential exploitation (Stacey 1988: 22). Other feminists have stressed the fact that quantitative techniques can also perform the work of “making women visible” and sometimes provide a more compelling motor for social change than personal testimony (Sprague & Zimmerman 1993).

Some feminist authors also claim that the status and power inequality in quantitative research teams conflicts with the feminist political agenda. It is probably true that large-scale research projects, involving hierarchically organised research teams (research directors, assistants, and administrative staff), are generally based on quantitative research methods, not least because these types of project generally receive more generous funding than small-scale qualitative research projects. However, it would be abusive to claim that unequal power relations are specific to quantitative research teams; rather the existence of power and hierarchy in the academe is omnipresent. Nearly all knowledge production within the academe depends upon a hierarchical division of labour and this is not necessarily a negative phenomenon. Indeed, Sprague & Zimmerman (1993) argue that such unequal power relationships are usually transitory in nature and that they can provide supportive and nurturing environments for young female research assistants and graduate students to work in.

Feminists writing on the intersection between gender, race, class and sexuality also bring a further dimension to the power debate. Black feminists, such as Patricia Hill Collins (1990), and feminists from other underrepresented ethnic groups, have strongly criticised biases that exist in white feminist academic work. According to these authors, existing research models, be they quantitative or qualitative in nature, are biased because they produce distorted knowledge about social reality. They recognise that the knowledge constructed within the traditional science framework has been first that of men, and more specifically, white, middle class, heterosexual men, and claim that a part of this bias has been carried over into critical feminist research, which has become the knowledge production of white, middle class, heterosexual women. These critical voices call for research practices where the substantive contours of the hidden racially specific masculine norm, underlying claims to neutrality and impartiality, is made visible.

In this sense, gender and other forms of discrimination need to be taken into account simultaneously, in a way that differs from the simple “add in and stir” model (Puwal 2004). Indeed, it is not enough to simply add race or ethnicity to gender, so that ethnic minority women might be mentioned when the issue of women and migration is raised. Rather the research needs to focus on the specific characteristics of migrant women’s experiences. Furthermore, these experiences should be analysed in the light of the larger social context and compared, not only to the experiences of migrant men, but also to those of non-migrant women and men. In this way, “race” or “ethnicity” will not be separated from white bodies, including female white bodies, and will not be seen as belonging, in the words of Patricia Williams, ‘across the tracks’ in racially marked out non-white bodies (Williams 1997).

2.3. Numbers versus Meanings

Feminist researchers have also criticised the tendency of positivism towards enumeration and the use of statistical techniques. As we have already seen, second wave feminist writers have mainly conceived their knowledge production process in relativist (or later in post-modern) terms and have favoured qualitative investigation. Not surprisingly then, these same authors

have often argued that numbers and statistical techniques obscure the subjective meanings the research subjects attach to the phenomena in question: “the ps they are interested in do not concern the probabilistic logic of statistical p values, but the value of people” (Oakley 1998b: 711). Quite logically, following these arguments, the use of surveys and questionnaires to collect statistical data has been criticised by many feminists who claim that it is impossible to grasp the complexity of social reality with a series of pre-defined questions.

Questionnaire surveys are generally employed to obtain responses from a quite large sample that can be coded as continuous or discontinuous variables and analysed statistically. Surveys are thus used to examine wide-ranging social issues and their results can claim to be “representative”, and can, therefore, be generalised upon to reflect a wider population or society as whole. As Nicole Westmarland states, the survey is generally defined as a quantitative method, “due to the nature of questions asked and the process of analysis, for example, frequency counts, calculation of the mean [...] in short, the kinds of operations associated with the use of a statistical computer package, such as SPSS” (Westmarland 2001). The construction of variables, as well as the tendency to create artificially controlled survey environments has undoubtedly contributed to the feminist rejection of numbers and statistics. Indeed, the mere use of numbers in the research process has sometimes become ideologically linked to the “unpleasantly exaggerated masculine style of control” (Millman & Kanter 1987: 35). Some authors even go so far as to define statistics as “patriarchal” measurements reflecting men’s desire to exert power over nature and people (Griffin 1980:107). By asking: “Do her answers fit his questions?”, Hilary Graham (1983) points to the (masculine) subjectivity involved in defining survey questions and states that “the survey method treats all individuals as being equal units and therefore does not reflect the patriarchal society in which the data are gathered” (cited in Westmarland 2001).

However, not all feminists have rejected the use of quantitative research methods. As Sprague and Zimmerman argue (1989: 79), large scale studies using quantitative research methods have an important potential for progressive ideological and political struggle, since they offer the possibility to demonstrate and prove that women and men are not treated equally in society. Furthermore, a growing number of feminist researchers have claimed that it is possible to avoid gender blind or gender biased analysis of quantitative data and, thus, to use these tools in favour of disseminating information about women’s position. Consequently, several authors have argued for the importance of “counting for women” (Waring 2003) and demonstrated the value of statistics in making the “hidden structures of oppression” more visible (Gorelick 1991). This kind of quantification has played an important role in a vast range of research subjects, ranging from the time spent by men and women in productive and reproductive tasks, through the comparable worth of men’s and women’s work, to the demonstration that abused and battered women come from all social classes and ethnic groups.

Some authors have even suggested that the feminist rejection of quantitative research methods is itself produced by power relations within the academe. In the late 1980s, Linda Grant and her colleagues carried out a survey of the relationship between gender and methods in sociological research as this appeared in 10 major sociology academic journals. They noted that: “Despite substantial speculation about the relationship between gender and methods in sociology, surprisingly little empirical work has addressed the issue” (Grant, Rong and Ward, 1987: 857). Their project was based on the idea that: “Female scholars have been thought to be more likely than males to choose qualitative methods because such methods are compatible with relational and emotional skills stereotypically associated with women. Qualitative

approaches also have been thought to be especially appropriate for study of gender issues and women's experiences and to be an effective strategy for correcting androcentric biases in construction of social theory" (ibid: 856). Their analysis provides an interesting demonstration of the potential use of quantitative methods for uncovering unexpected statistical causal relations. Thus: "Findings support the existence of systematic links between gender and methods, but they were not entirely consistent with the patterns anticipated. We find support for feminist scholar's claims that use of qualitative methods is significantly more common among women than men scholars who publish in major sociological journals. However, for both genders quantitative methods are the most common choice. (...) The associations between methods and topic of article were opposite those anticipated by feminist scholars and theorists, however. Writing about gender increased the probability that women's and men's work would be quantitative." (1987: 859). Uncovering (or "excavating") this unexpected statistical relationship enabled the authors of this study to elaborate two alternative hypotheses to explain their results. On the one hand, they envisaged the possibility that: "greater availability of data suitable for quantitative analysis on women and gender might have reversed an earlier association between methods and topic" (ibid: 861). On the other hand, "research about gender, a relatively new and perhaps not fully legitimated topic of enquiry among all sociologists, might have been more palatable to editors and reviewers of mainstream journals if it used methods dominant within the discipline" (ibid). In the latter case, articles written by women, on gender, using qualitative methods may have been more severely judged on the basis of their "non-conformity" and therefore more frequently rejected in the academic journal selection procedures. Both these hypotheses could obviously be verified, using more subtle and precise statistical calculations, but neither could have been elaborated without a representative sample of journal authors and topics.

These examples show quite clearly that quantitative methods can also be used in a feminist way and produce large quantitative representative data sets not only about women, but also to the benefit of women. Once again, it is not the method that is "patriarchal" or faulty, it is the traditional, non-feminist use of quantitative data collection techniques that has to be contested and rejected in critical feminist research on migration and ethnicity.

3. Problems with Quantitative Methods for Studying Ethnicity and Migration from a Feminist Perspective

In this section we will discuss in more detail the usefulness of quantitative methods in feminist inspired analyses of gender, migration and ethnicity. We suggest that such methods can provide some useful indications about women's experience of ethnicity and of the migration process. However, in order to provide insight into these processes, they must overcome some of the weaknesses or biases that have traditionally been associated with quantitative research procedures. Amongst these problems, we will focus on the problem of missing data on women and on the gender biased categories that are all too frequently used to collect and analyse data on women in general and on migrant or ethnic minority women in particular.

3.1. Missing Data

Firstly, in many countries, data on international migration are lacking in terms of availability, quality and comparability. This is particularly true for countries like France, where the production of statistical data on the basis of membership of ethnic minority communities is quite simply forbidden by law. Underlying this practice is the republican ideal of the “one and indivisible Nation” composed of equal citizens. Since the Republic is supposed to treat all citizens equally « without distinction of race, origin or religion » (Van Eeckhout 2006: 22), there is no justification for producing statistical data on the basis of their ethnic or racial origins. Thus, in France, it is impossible to identify categories such as « black », « Arab » or « Asian » in the official national census data or in any of the other data sources produced by public-sector research agencies, such as the INSEE.

The French vision of the state is quite different from the Anglo-American model. In the UK and the USA, official statistics have included questions about racial or ethnic origins for quite a long time, and the UK has more recently introduced data collection on the basis of religious beliefs¹. In the UK, since the adoption of the « Race Relation Act » in the 1960s, public policies aimed at improving the situation of “disadvantaged groups” through affirmative action have been based on the production of statistics to measure the levels of disadvantage and to bench-mark the effects of different policy initiatives. However, it should be remembered that a question about self-defined ethnic origins, was only introduced into the UK census questionnaire in 1991, whereas this had been an integral part of the census in the USA since 1790 (Van Eeckhout 2006: 23).

At the moment the dominant political discourse in France still corresponds to the « republican model », although the need for statistical data on ethnicity and discrimination is increasingly recognised by politicians and by representatives of ethnic minority groups in the country. These claims have provoked some very heated debates in France. The defenders of so-called “ethnic statistics” argue that without this data it is impossible to measure the existing levels of discrimination on ethnic grounds with any degree of precision. Since it is impossible to show that some ethnic groups within French society do suffer measurable levels of disadvantage or discrimination, it is difficult to convince public opinion and policy makers to take remedial action of any kind. Thus, for example, it is currently impossible to use official data sources to analyse such vital questions as the unemployment rate of women of North African descent or the frequency of mixed-race marriages amongst migrants from other past French colonies.

Opponents to the introduction of statistics based on ethnicity fear that this would lead to increased stigmatisation of the minorities and would therefore reinforce the « ghettoisation » of certain ethnic groups. However, since the European Union has now developed a series of anti-discrimination policies, there is increased pressure on the French government (and on national statistical research agencies) to produce more complete statistical data on these groups. This, together with the existing social and political tensions amongst ethnic minorities (as demonstrated by the Paris riots in 2005), might well end up changing the French law. It is interesting to note that the Brixton riots of the 1980s played a significant role in putting the question of racial discrimination on the political agenda in the UK and this in turn made the collection of census data on the composition of ethnic groups a reality in the early 1990s (Van Eeckhout 2006 : 23).

¹ A question on « religious membership » was introduced into the UK census questionnaire in 2001. In the USA, no such question exists, since it is seen as contradictory to the first amendment of the Constitution.

3.2. Gender-Biased Categories

In addition to the lack of information on migrants or ethnic minority groups, official statistical data sets also tend to be biased in terms of the categories used and they can therefore only provide a partial picture of the reality of migration for women. Firstly, by definition, official data sources often only measure formal migration and tend to deny visibility to illegal or clandestine migrants (and their families). Secondly, official data sources are often “gender blind” and serve to mask the experiences of women migrants.

Since the production of statistical data on migration has been historically motivated by the need to measure and control migrant labour in a colonial or post-colonial context, there has been a tendency – on the part of state bodies and academic researchers alike - to ignore other migrant groups. Thus, “male labour migration” became the central concern of policy makers. Women were made invisible, on the normative assumption that they were either totally absent from the migration process or were present as passive “family members” of male migrant workers. A recent study on gender and migration in Europe concluded that most research appears to be gender-neutral while utilising models of migration based on the experiences of men (United Nations 2005). In the rare cases where the presence of women is acknowledged, their contribution to the economic and social realities of the host country are often ignored or under-estimated (Kofman et al 2000: 3). Thus, a recent study from the Council of Europe, entitled *Current trends in international migration in Europe* (2006), describes the main migration movements in a totally gender blind manner. A large majority of statistical data in this study is composed of genderless “migrants”. It is only when it comes to estimating levels of human trafficking that the statistics present a gender difference, thus making women appear exclusively as the passive victims of forced migration for domestic servitude or sexual exploitation².

The lack of data on women and migration makes it difficult to assess the full implications of migration and international mobility for women. Treating female migrants only as dependent family members of male migrants or as the victims of trafficking is misleading, since women make up an increasing share of migrant workers, moving on their own to become the principal wage earners for their families (United Nations 2005). Existing frameworks for documenting and understanding migration also often assume that the causes and consequences of migration are similar for both sexes, thus ignoring how both migration processes and their outcomes differ for women and men.

In sum, official statistical data based on the idea of the “male migrant worker” tend to ignore female migrants, particularly if they are not involved in the formal labour market. Thus, female migrants suffer from a “double invisibility”, related to their gender and their migration status. This is a major problem, notably because migrant women tend to be more vulnerable to physical, sexual and verbal abuse than their male counterparts. Moreover, they may face double discrimination in the host societies (based on race and gender) and they are more likely to be dependent on intermediaries such as informants, employers or human traffickers. Their position as “dependants” in the legal sense also makes it more likely that they have an unstable residence status or no official status at all.

² For further information see Table 23 of the report, page 66.

Although all these are important points, one must not forget that women are more than vulnerable victims of their circumstances and that the migration process also includes possibilities for the empowerment of migrant women. Creating more systematic statistical data on migration from a gender perspective would probably extend current understanding about international migration and lead to concrete policies, programmes and actions to mitigate such inequalities and promote gender equality for migrant women³.

The lack of gender perspective within the production of official statistical data also makes it quite difficult to study the female migrants' integration within the host societies. Women immigrants are in a paradoxical situation: they are those from whom the host society often expects the most, particularly in maintaining family stability and raising their so-called "second generation" children. At the same time, hardly any attention has been given to their own socio-economic integration (Council of Europe 1995). This failure to consider their socio-cultural and political role goes together with ignorance of their status and their projects.

Moreover, when immigrant women eventually come to the notice of the public authorities they are almost always considered in their traditional role of wives and mothers. Research questions tend to focus on their relationship to a father, husband or brothers and rarely see migrant women as responsible individuals capable of taking decisions and expressing autonomous objectives. However, the stereotypical image of women migrants as "family members", confined to the home with no employment and no involvement in public life, no longer provides a true picture of the way many immigrant women really live (Council of Europe 1995). The number of immigrant women residing in Europe is increasing, and their status, level of education and involvement in social life are far from uniform. Immigrant women have a wide range of activities at home, in schools, in local communities, etc. and they now occupy an important position in the public sphere as well.

Furthermore, studies of migrants' social mobility often take as their starting point and basic unit for comparison the professional situation of "the head of the family" or "the male breadwinner". The role of migrant women has been frequently forgotten or linked to "backward-looking" images of women as "guardians of family unity and the culture of origin" (Council of Europe 1995: 32). Thus, whilst recognition has been given to women's key role in the academic success of their children, especially their daughters, it has been understood in terms of their moral support rather than their know-how or skills. The "male-stream" studies on social mobility still continue to compare the "second generation" migrants' social position to the one occupied by their father and neglect the role played by mothers. This, however, is not a specific gender bias for migration studies, but a common figure with other sociological studies on mobility which also analyse the intergenerational movement only from the "paternal perspective" (Merllié 2001).

It has for several years been recognised that research on immigrant women in the countries of Europe is partial and incomplete and this is regrettably still the case. Public policy decisions have to be based on statistical arguments, estimates and evaluations and the absence of such information is one reason why immigrant women are not referred to either in sociological surveys or in public policy measures.

³ The more systematic collection of gendered statistics on migration was one of the main recommendations of the United Nations' report "World Survey on the Role of Women in Development: Women and International Migration" released in 2005.

4. Quantitative Methods for Studying Ethnicity and Migration from a Feminist Perspective

As stated in the previous section, large quantitative data sets do not necessarily address important questions about migrant (or non-migrant) women's lives and the standardisation of categories based on male experiences is widespread within official statistics. However, several feminist authors have argued that that survey based data can be useful in looking at the *prevalence* and *distribution* of particular social problems (Reinharz 1992) and feminist quantitative researchers have played an exemplary role in putting issues related to ethnicity and migration on the public policy agenda. Well constructed statistics derived from official records or from large-scale surveys continue to demonstrate the ways in which gender, class and ethnicity intersect as axes of discrimination.

Thus, although feminist research still strongly urges to be faithful to women's experiences and to "hearing their voices", there is a recognition of the necessity to carefully contextualise these experiences within wider social structures. This often requires recourse to quantitative data sources documenting, for example, the social and economic living conditions of migrant and non-migrant women and men. As Ann Oakley argues "the underlying gendering of structural inequalities that occurs in most societies could not be discerned using qualitative methods on their own" (Oakley 1998b: 723). Furthermore, large-scale figures on violence against migrant and non-migrant women, for example, would be extremely time-consuming, expensive and difficult to obtain on a national level using qualitative methods such as one-to-one interviews.

In order to illustrate our point, we will look at the advantages of two different quantitative methods for understanding the interactions between gender, ethnicity and migration. To begin with, we will show how questionnaire surveys can be used as a means of measuring ethically sensitive subjects, such as migrant women's experiences of violence, for example. Secondly, we will demonstrate the usefulness of computer-assisted discourse analysis in grasping the subjective meanings of the gendered migration experience, by, for example, measuring the frequency of terms related to suffering and empowerment in women's (auto)biographical accounts of migration.

4.1. Gender Sensitive Survey Data

Explicit discussion of how feminism might modify quantitative research practice is relatively difficult to find. However, one common approach to feminist quantitative work involves correcting gender, race and other cultural biases in standard quantitative research procedures. Those working with survey data have begun to alter survey design and analytical procedures to lessen or eliminate the sources of bias. As Sprague and Zimmerman (1989) argue, one way of doing this, is to make the research strategies transparent in order to make visible the values underlying the investigation and to show how the data are constructed. Another strategy consists of making as sure as possible that the responses correspond to the reality of respondents and to the complexity of issues raised. Thus, within the survey design the ease of coding should be subordinated to "encouraging responses, using open-ended questions where it is inappropriate to offer only pre-defined options, and placing experiences in context"

(Kelly and al 1994: 157). The forms of questions should be as inclusive as possible or space should be left for alternatives and/or comments and the survey setting should avoid the use of pre-defined concepts of, for example, what counts as abuse, violence etc. This type of survey design calls for constant negotiation between the researchers' and respondents' subjective understandings of questions asked and as Barbara Risman claims: "good quantitative instruments have been thoroughly pre-tested so that respondents' views can be incorporated into our research and their voices heard » (Risman 1993: 19).

Another argument put forward to defend the feminist use of survey data is the anonymity and distance it provides for respondents in studies on "sensitive" subjects such as violence and abuse. For example, Liz Kelly and her colleagues question the assumption that women who participate in research will be more likely to share sensitive material in face-to-face interviews than via less personal survey techniques. On the contrary, the distance between the researcher and the study subjects inherent in survey methods may allow women to express their views about difficult subjects and encourage reporting of sexual victimisation. In their study of the prevalence of sexual abuse in schools (Kelly and al. 1994), the authors were surprised by how much some students choose to, or felt able to tell them through anonymous questionnaires. They believe that the survey setting, which allowed young people to take control over what and how much they told, gave the respondents the security they needed. Thus, as the authors put it: "The confidentiality, not having to verbalise their experiences to someone, and the control over how much is said may enable some to tell about sexual abuse, especially those who have not told anyone thus far. It is this possibility that has led us to reassess survey research" (Keely and al. 1994: 155).

In this sense, if the survey setting and its questions are constructed in a way that allows the respondents to exercise some control over the research agenda and to feel safe, the survey method (and its non-personal research relationship) can be a useful tool in producing a "protective distance" between people in different hierarchical positions engaged in the research process, such as migrant women and white researchers, for example.

Feminist (or non-traditional) way of producing survey based data is obviously much more demanding and makes the analysis extremely complex. Answers to open-ended questions are much more complicated to code and analyse than the questions constructed within the limited and specific parameters of traditional survey research. This is however an important issue since the same question asked in two different ways can produce quite different responses. This phenomenon is clearly demonstrated by Liz Kelly and al. (1992) in their study on rape or by Westmarland (2001) in her study on violence against female and male taxi drivers. According to these authors, the respondents do not always have the same understanding as the researchers of the words used to describe a social phenomenon. For example by asking "have you ever been forced to have sex?", instead of "have you ever been raped?", Liz Kelly and her colleagues identified a higher rate of positive responses, indicating that women of their sample did not always label forced sex as "rape". Furthermore, in her study on taxi drivers, Nicole Westmarland found that female respondents only described an act as violent if it involved some form of physical attack and, as she puts it, "they were using a very different criterion to define violence than the one I was applying" (Westmarland 2001).

However, some feminists argue that in certain circumstances the researcher *should* impose analytical categories that don't immediately have meaning to the respondent. Rose Damaris points out that a "set of options offered in a closed questionnaire may even challenge respondents' ways of thinking in a way that could be consciousness-raising" (Damaris 2001:

7). In her working paper on feminist research methods, she gives an example of a structured survey carried out over a number of years at a centre for battered women. This survey included an exhaustive list of all possible types of abuse and asked women to identify their own experiences from a pre-defined list. It turned out that the list contained several incidents that some of the women would not have necessarily spontaneously identified as being “abuse”, and thus the questionnaire helped them “set their experiences in a wider context [...] and come to appreciate the commonality of their experiences” (Damaris 2001 : 7). In this sense, the survey was used not only as an instrument of measure, but also as a tool to help the women open up and talk with other abused women and/or centre workers about their experiences.

One of the challenges in feminist use of survey method is finding ways of sharing research results within and outside the academe. Thus, the results should be presented in an accessible manner and avoid highly specialised “quantitative jargon” understood only by a restricted and selected group of “experts”. Keeping in mind a wide range of potential users of the results, such as feminist scholars and activists, social workers, policy makers etc., while writing them down, can be a good way of avoiding an “overload of academic language”. It is also important for researchers to “speak the same language” as those to whom the research will be presented. Feminists focusing on policy issues point out that “hard” data are often most convincing outside the academe (Spalter-Roth & Hartmann 1991) and, therefore, feminist research needs to produce statistics in order to influence policy decisions and elicit new legislation. As Nicole Westmarland reminds us, “governments are less concerned with the concerns of individuals per se but rather with the wider picture and, it may be argued, they are more likely to take issues seriously if they are presented in this way, and in their language” (Westmarland 2001). Similarly, Shulamit Reinharz argues that “statistical information about sexual harassment [...] contributed to its reification in ways that encouraged the establishment of sexual harassment committees” and “provided legal redress for individuals” (Reinharz 1992: 80).

In sum, survey based data can be very useful in raising social problems and in bringing into light invisible women’s issues. However, this type of data produces explanations of social structures that take into account neither the consciousness of the subjects studied nor the meanings of their experiences for these subjects. Quantitative research methods, such as computer assisted discourse analysis, can also be helpful in producing more detailed and subjective data on women’s migration experiences.

4.2. Computer-Assisted Discourse Analysis

Women have always been an important component of international migration. In 2000, 49% of all international migrants were women or girls, and the proportion of females among international migrants had reached 51% in more developed regions (United Nations 2005: III). As stated previously, male migrants were traditionally seen as the main players in the international migration process and women were perceived exclusively as passive followers. This picture has changed in recent decades and today a growing number of women tend to migrate on their own as principal wage earners for themselves and their families.

However, many studies stress the fact that the migration experience itself is influenced by gender and it holds different risks for women than men. The United Nations’ 2004 *World Survey on the Role of Women in Development and International Migration* provides detailed

statistical evidence of the tendency for women migrants to work in traditional female occupations, including domestic work, the clothing industry and nursing. Within these occupations, the average earnings of migrant women tend to be lower than those of male migrants. In addition, many women who migrate find themselves at risk of gender-based violence and exploitation: “Whether they are labour migrants, family migrants, trafficked persons or refugees, they face the triple burden of being female, foreign and, often, working in dangerous occupations” (United Nations 2005: 2).

However, international migration can also be an empowering experience for women. In the process of international migration, women may move away from situations where they are under traditional male authority to situations in which they can exercise greater autonomy over their own lives. Even when women do not move, but remain behind when their husbands or children migrate, they take on new roles and assume responsibility for decisions affecting the social and economic well-being of their households (United Nations 2005). The migration process thus affects men and women differently.

Quantitative methods, such as the Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS), can be useful in grasping these subjective meanings of the gendered migration experience. The term CAQDAS refers to computer programs specially built for the quantitative analysis of qualitative data. These programs originate from qualitative research and they replace the manual tasks of “cutting and pasting” of the relevant segments of texts analysed (transcribed interviews, archive data, fiction or non-fiction texts or policy documents) and allow a more detailed and sophisticated treatment of the data. CAQDAS programs vary greatly in terms of their specific features, but basically they can be separated into two main categories. Programs such as The Ethnograph, for example, allow computer assisted “cut-and-paste” activities, the retrieval of codes across different files and the creation of memos. Others, like Atlas/ti or NUDIST, recently replaced by nVivo, allow for an additional feature called “theory building capacities”⁴.

Basically this means that the constant comparison principle is taken further in these programs and that they allow the user to test research hypotheses. As Christine A. Barry (1998) points out, CAQDAS software are just tools among others in the “analysis armour” that can do part of the work of analysis, but they do not replace the critical thinking of the researcher. She claims that “for cross-case thematic analysis, I find Nudist a useful way to gather data together and then play with it [...] For crystallising my ideas about the final analysis I return to writing with my word-processor to explore my thinking” (Barry 1998).

How can these quantitative research tools be useful for studying ethnicity and migration? For example, Kevin M. Roy explored how the stories that African American men told of their fathers’ life experiences shaped their own paternal identities by using the NUDIST software (Roy 2006). After having interviewed 40 men, he coded these recorded and transcribed discourses, as well as his own field notes, by using the different options offered by NUDIST. Thus, data were first open coded to identify a diversity of distinct categories such as “son’s anger at father”; “father in protector role”; and “fictional stories of absent fathers” (Roy 2006: 39). This first coding step was then completed by axial coding allowing the researcher to explore and compare patterns of discourse within individual cases and across the three cohorts

⁴ This information and more concerning CAQDAS programs are available on the « Social Work Ressources » website: <http://sophia.smith.edu/~jdrisko/qdasoftw.htm>, accessed 19/12/2006. For more detail on qualitative data analysis using computer software, see: Weitzman and Miles (1995) *Computer Programs for Qualitative Data Analysis: A Software Sourcebook*, London: Sage.

studied. Finally, the author operated a selective coding by combining specific patterns into a core category of father narratives and systematically linking related patterns with this core category (Roy 2006: 39). In this way, he was able to create a range of distinct narrative types based on the patterns of men's paternal identities (including meaning of involvement, and influence of changing social contexts).

In a similar vein, Royster et al. (2006) in their study on health issues among African American men, were able to identify the aspects of male gender socialisation which formed major barriers to their health by using NUDIST program. In this study, transcribed focus group interviews were imported into the software and initial codes were developed into themes (Royster et al. 2006: 393). Themes were then presented to the community coalition for additional feedback and interpretation, in order to confirm that they were relevant to other men in the African American community as well (Royster et al. 2006: 393).

Interestingly enough, we have not been able to find any studies on migrant women using the CAQDAS programs. However, several studies have analysed the emotional implications of the crossing of borders and boundaries implied in the process of immigration through life narratives (Espin 1997) or the construction of first wave and second generation migrants' identities by analysing their discourses on gender, ethnicity, and intercultural experiences (Sargent and Larchanché-Kim 2006, Østberg 2003, Lundström 2006). We believe that this type of studies based on discourses and narratives could benefit from possibilities offered by CAQDAS programs.

Although these methods originate from social sciences and remain relatively rarely used in the humanities, we believe that they could also be of some interest for feminist researchers interested in fiction and autobiography written by women from different ethnic backgrounds. Analysing Black or Creole female writers' narratives on their quest of identity in a multicultural context could benefit from programs such as NUDIST which allow the user to identify recurrent themes and make narrative structures visible.

5. Conclusions

In conclusion to this chapter, we would like to stress the fact that much of the debate on "feminist methodology" is based on a false dichotomy between potentially complimentary research methods. All research data, be it "quantitative" or "qualitative" in nature is socially "constructed", in so far as it is shaped by the categories the researcher chooses to use in order to gather the data and to interpret it. We would like to argue in favour of rehabilitating quantitative methods in feminist research practice, in order to create an "emancipatory social science" perspective (Oakley, 1998b, : 707-731) on gender, ethnicity and migration. Indeed, we believe that no single research method can provide a complete understanding of any social phenomena; each one has its limits and can only draw a part of the picture. Quantitative methods, such as surveys, can be useful in naming women's issues, whereas computer aided data analysis programmes allow us to delve deeper and more fully explain these issues and, consequently, work towards social change.

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