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Participatory methodologies for intersectional research in organisations

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to explore what it means to do intersectional research in an organisational ethnographic case study addressing gender, race, power and change. The main contribution of this paper is a methodological one. The focus is on the relevance and experience of adapting two qualitative research methods – diary study and photographic method.

Design/methodology/approach – The paper describes the design, implementation and impact of the diary and photographic methods. Both research methods combine personal reflection with group dialogue. The case study is framed by feminist analysis of the gendered organisation and examines subjectivities and gender power relations embedded in organisational culture.

Findings – Insights from the case study indicate the importance of participatory methodologies for deepening organisational research in the context of an organisational ethnography; the adaptability of the diary and photo methods; the effectiveness of open questions for reflecting on race and gender when participants know the research context; the significance of reflexive practice; the importance of a process approach for organisational analysis and change.

Research limitations/implications – The case study findings are generalisable. The adaptations of the two key methods are applicable for research in practice. The concrete methodologies are significant for intersectional research inside organisations. The choice of intersections to be studied will depend on the research context.

Practical implications – The case study shows methodological refinements for researching gender, power and difference inside organisations.

Originality/value – The paper provides methodological insights into how to conduct intersectional and deep organisational research.

Keywords Intersectionality, Diary study, Gendered organization, Participatory methodologies, Photo-voice

Paper type Case study

Introduction

The aim of my paper is to present two participatory research methodologies for organisational analysis using the categories of race and gender. The participatory projects are my own adaptations of two qualitative research methods, the Diary Study (Symon, 1998) and Photo-Voice (Wang, 1999). The ethnographic case study is of a South African non-governmental organisation (NGO) working in development. In the ethnography I apply different research methods, for example, life history interview, a staff questionnaire and participant observation, each of which contribute separately and together to my understanding of the organisation. However, it is when I introduce the participatory projects that the research is taken to another level. By this I mean that the findings from the participatory research processes reveal organisational nuance

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and depth in ways that are not achievable by the other tools. The findings from the case study indicate the significance of participatory research processes for deepening organisational research.

Two areas within feminist studies shape the conceptual framework for the organisational ethnography. One is the feminist critique of organisational theory and the recognition of the "gendered organization" (Acker, 1990; Calas and Smircich, 1996; Goetz, 1997; Rao *et al.*, 1999). The other is the body of literature in black feminist thought which highlights that gender power relations are constructed historically in intersection with other categories of difference to produce inequality (Collins, 2000; Holvino, 2010; Hooks, 2000; Meer, 2000, 2013; Mohanty, 1991). The significance of analysing categories of difference is captured in feminist theories of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991), the simultaneity of oppressions (Holvino, 2010) and the matrix of domination (Collins, 2000). Understanding inequality through categories of analysis presents a number of challenges (McCall, 2005). The purpose of this paper is to engage with such challenges and contribute to the discussions about methodological approaches for conducting intersectional research.

Methodological difficulties

The term intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991) captures the way in which different categories of oppression shape women's lives. Unlike an additive model that assumes gender plus race plus class equals triple oppression and each dimension can be researched and understood separately, an intersectional approach argues that categories of difference are mutually constitutive and interdependent (Collins, 2000; Holvino, 2010). Gender, race and class are fundamental categories that work together to produce and reproduce inequalities and diverse experiences of inclusion and exclusion. This multi-dimensional conceptualisation of power and difference gives meaning to women's everyday "concrete" experience (Crenshaw, 1991; Acker, 1990). In real life, women experience inequality because of a number of signifiers of difference and not only one. Holvino (2010) and others, for example, Mohanty (1991) argue that we need to go beyond the categories of gender, race and class and engage with ethnicity, nation and sexuality.

Debates about the usefulness of "categories" as the entry point for intersectional analysis are found in feminist critiques of intersectionality theory. From a post-structuralist standpoint, social identities are "never fully or permanently constituted and are always, in some sense, in a state of flux […]" (Pringle, 1988, p. 54). This state of flux makes the idea of working with categories for intersectional research problematic. Choo and Ferree (2010) suggest that what is needed is a process approach and one that understands power as relational. They argue that we need to bring a "more dynamic, process oriented, non-hegemonic intersectional analysis" into our practice (Choo and Ferree, 2010, p. 147). It is clear however from the literature that there is an established body of work that does engage with the complexity of working with three fundamental categories, gender, race and class (Acker, 2006, 2012; Davis, 2008; Holvino, 2010; McCall, 2005).

Translating the conceptual thinking into research practice presents challenges about how to work with categories, how to frame the research questions and how to analyse and interpret the data. Working with numbers of categories makes for "very complex, unwieldy research processes" (Acker, 2012). Categories do not all function in the same way and some categories may be "unmarked", that is this those categories that work more explicitly with power and privilege, such as whiteness and masculinity (Christensen and Jensen, 2012). One way of managing this level of complexity is to think about different approaches to categories. McCall (2005) identifies three approaches: the

anti-categorical complexity approach which essentially rejects notions of any fixed categories and is located in post-structural theories; the intra- categorical complexity approach which focuses on differences within one category, e.g., women; and the inter-categorical complexity approach which works with existing categories. This framework shows the importance of different conceptions of categories for different kinds of research. The framework implies that strategic choices may be made.

Framing the research questions requires recognition of an "a priori" focus on gender, race and class. Acker (2012) argues that without such an "*a priori* focus, the least visible manifestations of class, race, and gender processes may remain invisible" (p. 220). Acker argues that the categories of gender, race and class need to be named explicitly in the research questions. For example "Have new technologies of wage setting, supervision and accountability been developed […] if so what implications do these technologies have for race, gender, and class equality?" (Acker, 2012, p. 222). The importance of an a priori focus shapes Bowleg's (2008) research on challenges facing black lesbian women. However Bowleg argues that it is important not to name gender, race and sexual orientation in the formulation of research questions. It is more effective to adopt an open-ended approach which invites the respondent to talk about her whole self, that is as a black lesbian woman. This is different to tell me about your experiences from a race perspective first, sexual orientation second and gender third (Bowleg, 2008). The importance of an a priori focus is therefore critical for intersectional research. However the decision about naming the categories in the actual research questions may be dependent more on the overall methodological approach. This point on framing research questions is taken up in detail in the case study.

The question of how best to conduct the analysis and interpretation of the material produced by intersectional enquiry suggests that what matters is the importance of an inter-disciplinary approach. The data produced are inevitably more implicit than explicit and requires an analysis grounded in a wider knowledge of the respondents. This means that it is important to know about the socio-historical realities of oppressed groups and to do this requires an inter-disciplinary approach (Bowleg, 2008). Furthermore the practice of conducting intersectional research requires reflexive practice. We need to be conscious of how our own race, gender, class and other signifiers of difference impact on our research practice (Holvino, 2010; Jackson, 2006).

Methodological opportunities

It is evident that organisational case studies and ethnography are popular approaches for intersectional research (Acker, 2012; McCall, 2005). This makes sense because they produce close-up and detailed narratives. Holvino (2010) proposes three different approaches: researching and publishing hidden stories at the intersections of race, gender, class, sexuality, ethnicity and nation; identifying and untangling the differential and material impact of everyday practices in organisations; and connecting the internal processes of the organisation with the external context to understand organisational dynamics within a broader social context and change agenda. These proposals bring out the simultaneity of oppressions and break down dominant organisational discourses that perpetuate perspectives and experiences of the dominant groups. It is clear that intersectional research requires a more focused and differentiated analysis so that the complexity of multiple intersections are made visible and in time begin to change the organisational discourse (Holvino, 2010).

Insights from the empirical work of Christensen and Jensen (2012) demonstrate the significance of "life story narratives" and "everyday life" for intersectional research.

In their close-up studies of ethnic and non-ethnic Danes in a specific community in Denmark, Christensen and Jensen use life story narratives and an intersectional approach to reveal nuance and diversity. For example, in the analysis of the life story narratives of two Somali women, "[w]e see how their experiences and a self- perception as members of an ethnic minority are closely related to gender, bur are also intertwined with class and age" (Christensen and Jensen, 2012). In another study with two women in the same location, "everyday life" is used as an entry point to examine meanings of respectability and neighbourhood relations. Christensen and Jensen argue that "everyday life" is an important approach for intersectional research because everyday life is not neatly parcelled into categories. "Everyday lives are rarely – if ever – separated into processes related to gender, processes related to ethnicity, and processes related to class. On the contrary […] it must be seen as a condensation of social processes, interactions, and positions where intersecting categories are inextricably linked" (Christensen and Jensen, 2012, p. 117).

These two entry points, life story narrative and everyday life, resonate with my approach to organisational ethnography. I carried out life history interviews and I used the idea of everyday life as an entry point in the diary and photo projects. However in the context of an organisational study, the use of participatory methodologies generates data that are not possible from interviews and other non-participatory methods. In my experience of the South African case study, the participatory methodologies enabled me to capture multi-dimensional reflections on organisational events as they happened. The gendered and raced organisation was revealed in detail and from multiple perspectives because participants reflected on their own everyday experiences of inclusion and exclusion. Furthermore, the participatory approach held the potential for change.

The case study

THEMBA[1] is a South African NGO set up to research and build community capacity to address South Africa's violence under apartheid. At the time of my research from 2000 to 2003, the organisation worked in five areas: gender and women's rights; criminal justice; transition and reconciliation; victim empowerment and trauma counselling; and youth. The staff was made up of lawyers, educationalists, clinical psychologists, trauma counsellors, researchers and women's rights advocates. Women outnumbered men (70 per cent women 30 per cent men) and the majority of staff were black. In the course of the ethnography the staff numbers varied between 65 and 72. The political and social context was characterised by formal and informal efforts to bring about transformation post-apartheid. THEMBA was required, for example, to establish an "employment equity team" and report annually on gender and race demographics across rank in line with the new government's Employment Equity Act (1998). In THEMBA's employment equity plan, changing the racial profile particularly at senior and middle management levels was highlighted alongside other capacity building measures for black staff. Race was the primary lens through which staff and management analysed what went on in the organisation. My decision to work with the intersections of race and gender was therefore shaped by this internal context. In the case study I use the terms black and white as code words to mean individual gender and raced subjectivities, as well as structural inequalities. The two words – black and white – signal the differences of opportunity, privilege and disadvantage as a result of the legacy of apartheid. In the context of South Africa's affirmative action legislation black refers to the "designated group", which is "weighted" for the purpose of employment equity targets[2].

The two participatory methods, the diary study and the photo method were part of an integrated methodology. The diary study began three months after I started the ethnography and the photo project four months after the ending of the diary project. The process of participant observation, "hanging out", conducting interviews and document review continued during and either side of these two participatory projects. For example, I attended management and staff meetings, the research committee, the transformation team, the staff association, different department meetings, external projects and other events such as staff socials (73 recorded observations). I conducted a number of different types of interviews (number of respondents in brackets): staff survey (72); life history (16); change agent (16); critical incident (seven); ex-staff (two); board member (three) and diary interview (18). The analysis and interpretation of the diaries and the photo participatory projects were therefore informed by my total immersion in the organisation over two and half years.

The diary study

The diary study is typically associated with quantitative research using "closed" questions that require yes/no answers. This type of approach is used in managerial studies, for example, measurement of number of tasks and time, and in for example, studies on stress in occupational and organisational psychology. However the diary study can also be used for qualitative research using "open" questions and as an intervention tool, for example, in the context of knowing how individuals manage stress at work (Symon, 1998). In organisational studies, the tool is significant because it provides the sole researcher with an enormous amount of detail and depth that would otherwise take hours of interviewing. For example, as sole researcher in my case study, 22 staff wrote once a week for six weeks generating between one page and six pages per entry. The method captures changes in perceptions and reflections on specific events, as opposed to generalised points of view (Symon, 1998). There is also the possibility that staff comment on the same event, providing the researcher with insights into different points of view. The diary study allows for the gathering of detailed knowledge through close observations about concrete everyday life (Jackobsen *et al.*, 2008).

In my adaptation of the diary study in THEMBA there were two main steps – writing the diaries; and the analysis, interpretation and sharing of findings through dialogue and interview. The writing took place once a week for six weeks, with a few participants carrying on for another six weeks. The dialogue session brought all the diary writers together at the end of the six weeks and it was at this point that I, as the sole reader of the diaries, shared my analysis and findings as themes. The process ended with an interview between each diary writer and myself (see Plowman, 2010 for detailed step-by-step guide of the diary project design).

In total, 22 staff (one third of the organisation) participated in the diary project. The group was made up of nine black women, seven white women, two white men and four black men. Among the group were junior and senior researchers, senior managers, middle managers and administrators. The group was diverse by categories of gender and race and by job, rank, age among other signifiers of difference.

Guiding questions. The process for writing the diaries was guided by the following questions for reflection:

- What happened this week that really made an impact on you?
- Why do you think this event has stuck in your memory? Describe how you felt at the time and now.

- What have you learnt from this?
- What is it about you that makes change possible or prevents change?

What stands out is that the intersecting categories of gender and race, my primary research interest, are not stated in the questions. I deliberately wanted the diaries to be a tool for surfacing how race and gender impacted on individual experiences and to do this through an open-ended approach (Bowleg, 2008). I wanted staff to reflect on their lived everyday experiences in the organisation and examine why things happened the way they did from their own perspective (Christensen and Jensen, 2012). I wanted to learn about their personal narratives. I was conscious that I did not want to go down the route of separating out my two categories of analysis, by for example asking, What about your race? What about your gender? In line with my earlier example of Bowleg's (2008) work on intersectional research I deliberately avoided a "list" of categories type of questioning and as a result designed open questions.

It was however important to share my focus on gender and race with staff to contextualise the guiding questions. I organised a briefing session at the outset to the diary study in which I explained that I was interested in learning about individual experiences shaped by race and gender and other signifiers of difference. I wanted to learn about "everyday life" in the organisation, experiences which are shaped by categories of difference working simultaneously. I wanted to get away from one-dimensional analysis. I talked about my interest in subjectivities and power relations. I also talked about the concept of "organisational culture(s)". This was a concept that staff used frequently to explain what needed to change and why things stayed the same. In theory organisational culture refers to practice, behaviour, attitudes, values, dress code, symbols and deeply held beliefs (Itzin and Newman, 1995; Martin, 1992). In practice organisational culture, " the way we do things around here" is hard to pin down. The diary methodology gave insight and made dominant and sub-organisational cultures visible. Knowing the background to my research was therefore important for contextualising the diary project and signalling my research interests. The recognition of gender and race "a priori" (Acker, 2012) was critical. The diary study was therefore presented to staff as a method for uncovering organisational culture through their own experiences shaped by gender and race.

Participatory methodology. The participatory methodology created a dynamic process for personal reflection, learning about organisational culture and for building trust. At the beginning staff asked lots of questions: "Can we name names"? "How are you, Penny, going to ensure confidentiality and anonymity"? "Who is going to read the diaries"? In addition to signing a consent form that addressed anonymity and confidentiality, it was important for me to build trust with participants, without which it was unlikely that they would share personal experiences. After reading the diaries I reported back to the diary group the themes that emerged across the diaries. Comments and questions from the diary writers helped to further deepen my understanding and analysis. At the end of the writing and dialogue process, I interviewed each diary writer. This was an opportunity to find out about the individual's experience of being a participant in the diary study and to jointly reflect on diary content. The process of interpretation was therefore built into the design at two key stages – dialogue and diary interview.

Outcomes for understanding race and gender and organisational culture. The diaries generated a huge amount of detailed data. The total number of pages varied from five to 29: the shortest diary being two entries and the longest 11 entries. Some wrote one

page and others up to six pages for one entry. Each diary was different. The guideline had been to write for up to 20 minutes and it was clear in a few diaries that people had spent much more time. Writing took place at different times, on different days, in different spaces inside and outside the office.

The diary themes covered the clash between formal rules and informal practice and in particular what this meant for power and decision making; organisational hierarchies; dominant and sub-organisational cultures; formal and informal change strategies and processes; working in silos; and lack of recognition. Cutting across these different areas of organisational life were personal reflections, which revealed the complex and nuanced ways in which gender and race shape experiences of inclusion and exclusion. Finding these multi-layered and multi-dimensional insights meant that I had to read the diaries many times over to get a real grip on what was being said and why. In my reading, analysis and interpretation it was important that I had an appreciation of who was writing, by which I mean an awareness of the writer's individual subjectivity and positionality. I drew from the life history interviews (Christensen and Jensen, 2012), other interviews and participant observation.

Because of the way in which race was a dominant category in the internal discourse of THEMBA, it was much easier to "find" race than "gender". Diary writers brought race into their reflections explicitly. Here are two examples:

> I think it is so hard for us (blacks) to make our mark […] I just feel that some of our white colleagues […] are too used to and too comfortable in their "historical" positions of power […] (black women, diary entry, author's style).

> At the most senior levels, Whites continue to be dominant. The same individuals are named as being leaders in the Field; the same names are mentioned for training opportunities […] (black woman, diary entry, author's style).

It was much harder to find gender, a point that underscores the analysis of the gendered organisation. Gender power relations and gender norms are "normal" in organisations (Newman, 1995) and thereby "invisible" (Acker, 2012) and this is what makes the study of gender difficult. But because of the a priori (Acker, 2012) focus on gender and race that had been shared with participants at the start, diary writers did reflect on gender. This happened in different ways. In this next quote, there is a sense of a separation of categories and the way race trumps gender:

> I am not always aware of the gendered aspects of our work environment often the issues are subsumed under race (black woman diary entry).

In the next example, a black woman reflects on the positive experience of being on an all female panel at a conference and not having to compete with her male colleagues who are forever trying to prove themselves to each other:

> Often with typical macho speak […] use as much words as possible to show who's the alpha male (black woman, diary entry).

And in another example, a diary entry makes conscious the links between gender, power and sexuality in the workplace (Itzin and Newman, 1995; Hearn and Parkin, 1995; Halford *et al.*, 1997; Goetz, 1997).

> There is a fine VERY fine-line between banter/light heartedness and flirtation (white woman, diary entry, author's style).

Working with the intersections of gender and race shed a different light on my analysis of power and difference. For example, in this next quote I am conscious as I read the text that it is written by a black woman who is reflecting on her feelings as a manager. What she says is deepened by my knowledge of her gendered and raced subjectivity and positionality:

> I still feel I have to work harder than anybody else to prove my worth. Maybe [the director (white/male)] doesn't trust me (black woman, diary entry).

In the next quote, a black woman wrote about her ideas for change and explicitly reflects on the need for more women and more black women:

> Within our department we need black women at the higher-levels – this is not just about numbers. It's about having mentors for other junior researchers […] we need women to come in at a higher level […] (black woman, diary entry author's style).

And now from a very different perspective, the diary opens a space to hear about the perspective from a white man on change in the organisation:

> Given the affirmative action target there is pressure to reduce the ratio of white managers (presently making up about 60% of the management committee) to be more representative of the racial demography as a whole (roughly 60% to 70% black including "Indian" and " coloured" staff members). This leaves me feeling somewhat frustrated […] I am concerned about structural/political pressures hindering my development in terms of a career at [organisation] […] (white man, diary entry, author's style).

The diary study is significant because it reveals the complexity of hierarchies of power in organisations: the formal rules of engagement and informal practices. In this next quote a white woman reflects on her perspective and experience:

> There is a hierarchy of power. Which is official and recognised in one way (e.g. the job grading system, lines of accountability) but which is complicated by those unofficial networks, informal power patterns, and the striving for democracy […] which is a process that promises responsibility and authority but often defers back to the "real" powers that be in practice […] (white woman, diary entry, author's style).

With these examples of diary text it is possible to see the significance of the methodology for revealing gender and race, the gendered organisation and deep organisational practice. Without naming race and gender in the guiding questions but making sure that the diary writers thought about race and gender from the outset, the methodology contributed significant insights.

Photo method

Photo-voice is an established method in participatory action research and has its roots in feminist inquiry. Participants take photos of the research problem and discuss the reasons for taking their images in a group dialogue, which promotes critical reflection and ideas for change. The method is used across a range of disciplines and is typically used in groups and communities to shape policy (see e.g. Wang, 1999 for the background and history of Photo-Voice in health research). In my adaptation staff took photos using a disposable camera and were brought together to share and discuss their photos in a group at the end of the project. On a practical level the pictures can be taken using any camera (mobile phone cameras, etc.). The important thing is that there is a way of sharing the images. In my experience the photos were printed out and participants spoke about

their choice of images holding the image in their hands. There are of course other ways of showing images, e.g., projecting onto a screen.

In total, 22 staff participated in the photo project (coincidently the same number as the diary project). Like the diary study, staff responded to an open invitation and there were no criteria other than wanting to explore THEMBA's organisational culture. The photo group was made up of ten black women, four white women, six black men and two white men. While there was some cross-over with the diary participants, 15 out of the 22 were new. Among the group were senior and junior researchers, administrators and counsellors.

The photo project produced a large number of images. From a film of 24, staff chose two photos in response to each of the guiding research questions (see the six guiding questions below). This meant that there was the potential for 12 images to be printed for each person (264 photos). However, in practice not everyone chose 12 photos and so the final number of photos was around 200.

Guiding questions. The photographers were asked to reflect on six questions:

(1) Where do you feel included in the organisation?

(2) Where do you feel excluded in the organisation?

(3) Where do you have your most meaningful work conversations?

(4) What would you show outsiders? (about organisational culture)

(5) What would you hide from outsiders? (about organisational culture)

(6) Who is your organisation?

Like the diary method, the photo project began with a briefing session at which I talked about my research interest in understanding organisational culture(s) from individual and multiple perspectives. I spoke about gender and race as my two categories of analysis. I was then able to proceed without naming the two categories of race and gender in the guiding questions for taking photos. What was different about the questions for the photo method was my decision to steer the photographers to reflect specifically on organisational culture.

Participatory methodology. The design of the photo project was similar to that of the diary project, integrating space for personal reflection with group sharing. The photo project was made up of three steps: taking photos; sharing and discussing photos in a facilitated dialogue; taking themes from the photo project to the whole organisation. In the event we had three dialogue sessions each of which were recorded and transcribed, adding detail and depth to the findings. The analysis of the photos began when the photographers shared their thinking in the group session. Themes were then generated from the group session and shared with the whole organisation in a staff workshop. The organisation-wide sharing generated more insights and comment. As with the diary project, the photo project enabled a participatory research methodology to reveal layers of meaning. The participatory process was however different to the diary study in one significant way, from the start the rest of the organisation was involved. The photographers took photos of colleagues as well as organisational spaces. The interactive element of the photo method encourages discussion and debate in the very act of taking the photo. The method is dynamic and opens space for creativity, fun and resistance. By resistance I mean both that an individual might not want to be photographed and more widely a scepticism about the value of the photo project – how would it make any difference?

The photo tool presents ethical challenges. The use of photos of people in research is never neutral and so it was important to think through how permission was going to be given and how the photos were going to be used (Walker, 2000). It was agreed that the photographers needed verbal consent to take photos of people. It was also agreed that when it came to sharing the photos with the whole organisation (Step 3) the photographer's name would not be attached to her/his photo.

Such was the interest in the photo project that THEMBA's transformation team took the project under its wing. By this I mean, the photo project received the support of the transformation team and this meant that two members of staff joined me in the practical rolling out of this project. Furthermore the final sharing of the photos (Step 3) happened in a staff workshop, where everyone was invited to comment on the photos.

Outcomes for understanding race and gender and organisational culture. The photo method generated a rich data set of images and insights about THEMBA's organisational culture. The pictures captured the dynamics of organisational culture as photographers traversed the organisation, inside and out. Together the images and the description of why they were taken generated a number of themes. For example, one theme was about "the contradictory nature of organisations", captured in a picture of a massage at work promoting a caring culture and a picture of a clock signalling a dominant culture of long working hours. Another theme was about "feelings of exclusion" captured in a picture of a door with a key in the lock. And another was about "feelings of being closely monitored" captured in a picture of a security camera on the entrance to the office. The photo method opened space for creativity and self-expression. For example, Plate 1 is a photo of a poster that was made in response to the guiding question about "exclusion".

The following quote captures the thinking behind the image:

> We tried to represent MCM (management committee meeting) […] I think for me it kind of centered on a whole number of things and I think on racial lines, MCM is so white there isn't any black representation there […] the picture we drew on the door where the MCM meets is half black half white but there's just no black, like full white, representation […] (black woman, photo-dialogue).

In this example, the photographers found it easier to explain experiences of inclusion and exclusion by using a race only lens. The deepening of the analysis for the ethnography and reflected back to the organisation was my intersectional approach. The full analysis of the management committee required both a gender and race lens. It was not only about more black representation but also about more black women.

The sharing and the discussion of the photos in the group drew attention to the way in which young black men met as a group. The images were the trigger for revealing "what goes on":

> The people that I […] associate with in terms of meaningful conversation […] take place over our Friday […] boys, boys what do they call it boy night out […] that's where we tend to discuss some very crucial and sensitive issues pertaining to our jobs and stuff that is happening […] (black man, photo-dialogue).

In another example, the photo project got people thinking about the intersection of home and work. For example, a woman had a photograph taken of herself and her two-year old daughter at home. The photo shows the child crying not wanting her mother to leave her:

> I don't think that we take into account people's personal lives and the affect that they have on the way they are at work, who they are, what they bring, or what they experience on a daily

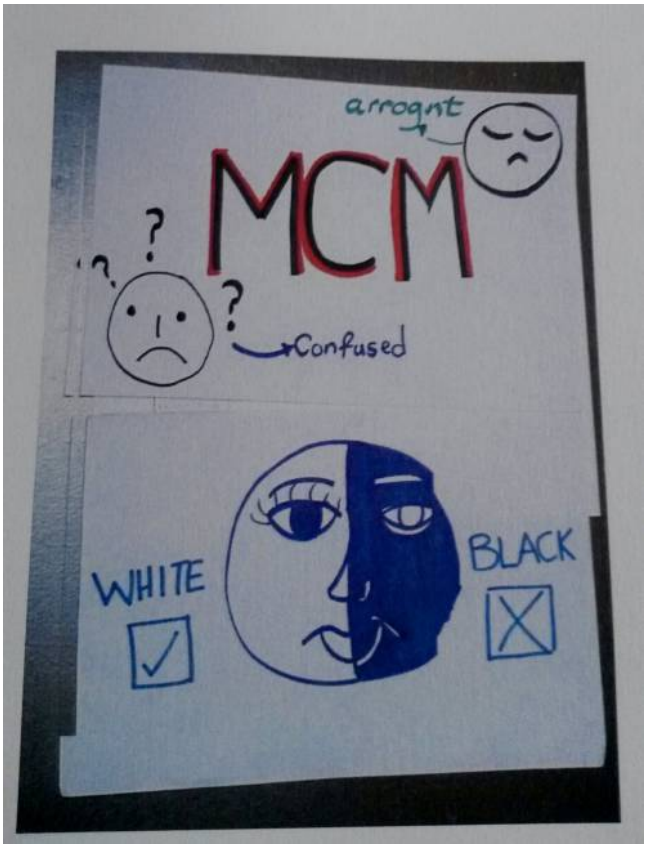

Plate 1.
Example of photo-method

> basis […] but the point is that we don't all come to […] [the organisation] as researchers or receptionists or project managers […] we're also mothers and fathers and sisters and uncles and wives […] (black woman, photo-dialogue).

The experience of adapting the photo method, combining individual reflection and group sharing and discussion shows that this standardised tool is significant for intersectional research. The photo project opened a window not only into individual experiences of race and gender but also into organisational culture(s). One of the most significant outcomes from the photo method was an appreciation of difference in the organisation and breaking away from one-dimensional readings of the "way we do things around here". Furthermore the photo-project opened awareness about the interface between home and work, and how gender norms and processes cut across the private and the public and shape organisational practice and experiences of inclusion and exclusion.

Insights from the case study and implications for intersectional research

Findings from the case study demonstrate how the participatory methodologies were effective for gathering deep personal data as well as being processes that facilitated ideas for personal and organisation change. For a rich discussion on the potential of

participatory practice for transforming power relations see Schurr and Segebart (2012). The ethnography was not conceptualised as a participatory action research process but the diary and photo projects were participatory research processes. There was no agreement between the organisation and myself that the diary and photo themes be shared as outcomes of the research with the whole organisation. But this happened as a result of the interest, energy and desire to share important reflections with colleagues. Middle and senior managers and leadership participated in both projects and this led to the political space for sharing organisation-wide. The participatory approaches were experienced as dynamic and creative processes where power was relational (Choo and Ferree, 2010). Putting these methodologies into practice has implications for planning organisational ethnographies because as the reader can see they take time to implement and are hands-on. The experience from the case study indicates that such an investment is significant for deep organisational research.

As staff became co-researchers, the participatory methodologies changed the power dynamics of the ethnography (Olesen, 1998). This happened in the analysis, interpretation and sharing of findings and was seen, for example, when participants in the photo project grouped together to produce their own poster to explain race and power in the management committee. This shift of power was important for challenging my own sense of control over the research and allowed me to experience the process. The power of the researcher is always present and in both projects it was evident that the audience shifted from me as the sole researcher to the group and that in this there was the opportunity for the gathering of significant insights. Being reflexive was essential to my understanding of power and silences. Revealing the impact of gender and race is found in what is unsaid, as well as what is said. In the diary project this meant reading between the lines and drawing on my wider knowledge of individual subjectivities and organisational practice. Being conscious of my own subjectivity and positionality were essential in a study where I was deeply embedded in the organisation over a period of time. I was an insider and an outsider and in both roles I brought to the research my feminist viewpoint grounded in my experience and politics.

On the question of categories, the case study demonstrates the significance of context. In my experience the decision to work with the categories of gender and race was made from my primary interest in the gendered organisation and the context of my research. Race was the key lens of analysis in the case study organisation and in the external socio-political and historical context race shapes inequality in South Africa. Context is therefore key for deciding which categories. Reflecting on McCall's (2005) framework of three different approaches to categories and complexity, my choice of categories fitted into the "inter-categorical" complexity approach which works with existing categories and the "intra-categorical" complexity approach because of my focus on understanding differences among THEMBA's women and men. It was clear that I was working with race and gender as categories which were about identity and power relations and that my approach was informed by a post-structural reading of the fluidity and un-fixed characteristics of a subjectivities approach. I also worked with the "unmarked categories" of whiteness and masculinity, markers of power and privilege that do not traditionally come into intersectional research (Christensen and Jensen, 2012). These markers were determined by the South African research context and my focus on power and inclusion/exclusion in the gendered organisation. Being conscious about the type of category is therefore important for shaping the research practice and for managing the level of difficulty inherent in a multi-dimensional approach. Insights from the case study suggest that knowing the research context is key for determining which categories.

Reflecting on concerns about complexity and how to manage potentially "unwieldy research processes" (Acker, 2012) I suggest that what matters is the framing of the research and the research methodologies. In the case study, using "only" the two categories of gender and race was sufficient to open a multi-dimensional reading of the organisation because of the way the research had been framed and the participatory process. The diaries and the photos opened up hierarchies, job area, length of service, cultural and ethnic background, friendships and networks, formal and informal workplace practices because of a conceptual understanding of my research interests in gender, race, organisation and change. The participatory projects therefore revealed the impact of the two categories, race and gender, in ways that expanded my analysis of the gendered organisation. The implication for research is therefore less about numbers of categories for intersectional research and more about framing and as already argued the significance of participatory methodologies.

Leading on from the theoretical underpinnings is the concern about how best to ask the research questions. The experience from THEMBA shows the importance of participants being aware of my research interests in gender and race and that with this background there was no need to name gender and race in the guiding questions. In the case study example, the guiding questions for reflection are deliberately open and do not mention the categories and as a result there is no additive trap. By not naming gender and race in the questions there was freedom for participants to highlight what was important to them, and in so doing there was the possibility of steering the research to new and possibly unexpected significant categories. The implication for research practice in organisations, using participatory methodology, is that the questions need to be open and to invite a personal reflection. For example, the diaries were very clearly inviting the sharing of an individual's particular experience and not that of others or the group. To set up these open questions requires time to brief participants so that they do know your categories of interest.

On the challenge of analysis and interpretation of intersectional data, the case study shows the importance of an integrated methodology. Making sense of a diary entry or a photo image was assisted by my wider knowledge of the person writing or taking the photo. For example, a young junior black female researcher, writing a diary entry about the difficulties of being published, made sense to me because of my wider understanding of her positionality – gender, race, age, area of work – and the challenges faced in the organisation. The analysis and interpretation of the photo and diary methods requires other sources of information. Data gathered in participant observation and interviews (life history, change agent) were essential to my analysis. The revealing of gender practices deeply embedded in organisational norms and processes requires multiple points of enquiry. Such invisibility meant a separate search for evidence of gender practice (inclusion, exclusion, etc.) before analysing race and gender together (Bowleg, 2008).

Conclusion

The starting point for this paper was the understanding that there is a challenge about concrete methodologies for intersectional research practice inside organisations. The findings from the case study show the significance of participatory methodologies in an organisational ethnography for working with an intersectional approach to power and difference. The diary study is a tool that is well suited for the close-up examination of organisations and for a participatory process. The tool generates detailed material and reveals hidden personal narratives about the ways hierarchy and decision making, formal rules and informal practice shape diverse experiences of inclusion and exclusion.

Photo-voice is similarly an effective approach. The findings from the case study show that the data generated from participatory methodology reveals deep organisational culture. The fact that numbers of staff are involved produces multiple perspectives. The immediacy and the dynamics of the non-hierarchical research process in which participants become co-researchers produces insights that are not possible even with hours of interviewing.

But as this paper has shown, it was the way that the participatory methodology was framed that led to the depth of analysis. The two categories of race and gender generated the rich data and revealed the complexity of gendered and raced subjectivities and organisational practice. The implication for intersectional research in organisational ethnographies is therefore that participatory methodology deepens analysis. It is to be remembered that participatory methodologies work when part of an integrated ethnographic approach. Making sense of the diaries and the photos happened in the context of and because of the data generated by the life history interview, staff questionnaire and participant observation. Another important dynamic and implication from the use of participatory methodology is that it holds the potential for changing the organisational discourse. For the case study this meant the realisation that gender could not be analysed in isolation from race and vice versa. Differences of experience, inclusion and exclusion were produced and reproduced because of the intersections of gender and race hierarchies and norms, and not because of the separation of gender and race. It is hoped that my adaptations of the diary and photo methodologies will be of interest to other researchers open to experimenting with a participatory process for deepening organisational analysis.

Notes

1. THEMBA is a pseudonym for the organisation meaning "hope" in isiZulu.
2. Black refers to African, Indian and "Coloured" reflecting the statutory stratification of the South African population under Apartheid and the Population Registration Act.

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