Ethics and Emotions: A Migrant Researcher Doing Research Among Romanian Migrants

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Abstract

This article explores both the ethical and emotional issues that emerge while conducting qualitative research as a Romanian migrant researcher among Romanian migrants settled in the UK. I specifically look at the transformative role played by emotions in the research process and how knowledge is generated by a permanent state of 'objective reflexivity' employed by the researcher and self-reflexivity on the part of the participants. While most emotions and ethical considerations transpire mainly from the interaction and the relationship established between the researcher and the participants, I highlight other aspects of fieldwork which also carry ethical decisions and emotional implications, even though not so evident at first sight. These include the relation between the researcher and the topic of the research, the terminology used, the language choice during the interview, and any potential legal aspects. I conclude that juggling both ethics and emotions does not compromise the scientific standard of the research, but rather adds a new dimension to doing research in one's own social context.

Keywords: *Qualitative Research, Emotions, Ethics, Migration, Romania*

Introduction

1.1   Migration-related research entails a set of ethical implications related to aspects such as cultural sensitivities, different worldviews, diverse social and moral values and intense public discourses. These are inherent to the nature of a topic which is widely acknowledged as 'not morally neutral' (Birman 2006:164). However, researchers often neglect to observe that these components which carry ethical implications are also encumbered by emotional undertones. As Brenda Gray rightly points out: 'Emotional reactions are part of human life and are, therefore, never absent from the research situation' (2008:936). In this article I argue that both the emotional and ethical dilemmas equally inform and shape the research process and they both can potentially generate knowledge; it is therefore essential for both aspects to be taken into consideration when conducting fieldwork within migrant communities. It is only through a process of constant reflexivity that this can be achieved.

1.2   More specifically, this article focuses on both the ethical and emotional dilemmas arising from conducting qualitative research as a Romanian migrant researcher among Romanian migrants settled permanently or temporarily in the UK. Between 2009 and 2010, I took forty interviews as part of this research project which overall seeks to look at the discursive construction of the migrants' identity.

1.3   The motivation for the current article sprung from the realisation that alongside the ethical implications (of which I had been made aware through research training seminars and scholarly literature), there had been significant emotional baggage accumulated throughout the research process. Hence I faced the dilemma: what do I do with the emotional dimension of my research? Do I leave it aside in my endeavour to provide an objective account of the research issues? Or should I take it into consideration and conduct a reflexive analysis of how the emotional aspect has influenced, shaped and affected my research? I considered that in order to be true to the research and convey the research findings comprehensively, I had to address both the ethical and the emotional aspects. By adopting this approach I have chosen my experience as 'both the topic of inquiry and a resource for

uncovering problematic experience' (Denzin 1997:216). The advantage of the chosen approach is that it 'can generate a unique form of material that is neither accessible directly through native texts nor simply a reflection of the individual anthropologist's psyche' (Davies 2007: 2).

1.4   It is important to note that not all ethical implications have an emotional dimension; in the same manner not all emotional aspects have an ethical facet. I will therefore focus on instances where I consider that both the emotional and the ethical were involved and will analyse how juggling both aspects adds a new dimension to doing research in one's own social context. Moreover, given the complexity of the correlation between the emotional and the ethical, this article does not plan to be exhaustive. It merely exposes some specific challenges which were faced in the given circumstances of my research. Research of different ethnic migrant groups within the British context or within Romanian migrant groups in other countries might expose the researcher to different emotional and ethical dilemmas.

1.5   Overall, this article aims to contribute to the emerging literature on methodological considerations specific to doing research as an insider within the researcher's own social context. I analyse how I develop a 'reflective emotional engagement' (Spencer 2010) and a reflexive ethical commitment during research. The main approach of my article is self-reflexive analysis and this research is, in essence, my attempt to explore the ethical and emotional honesty required in fieldwork (Rabinow 2007:xxxi). I start my investigation with a brief description of the Romanian migrant community settled in the UK and how I fit in this social group as a migrant researcher. I then provide a broader exploration of the use of emotions in research on the backdrop of ethical concerns. While most emotions and ethical considerations transpire mainly from the interaction and the relationship established between the researcher and the participants, I highlight other aspects of fieldwork which also carry ethical decisions and emotional implications but not so evident at first sight, such as the relation between the researcher and the research subject, the terminology used, the language choice during the interview, and any potential legal aspects. I conclude that both the emotionally-charged situations and the ethically important moments have to equally inform the research and its outcome.

Romanians in the UK

2.1   The Romanian community in the UK is characterized by a diverse social configuration generated by factors such as education, age, the time of the uprooting, the emigration experience, access to existing social networks, access to technology, etc. Two defining historical moments shaped the demographic structure of the community. Firstly, the revolution in December 1989 marked the change of the political regime in Romania from a communist to a democratic country. This transition period reached its peak on 1 January 2007 when Romania joined the European Union. Taking into consideration these historically important events and the status of the migrants when they moved to the UK, I identified three main distinct categories for the purpose of my study: pre-1989 political refugees, post-1989 academics and professionals or what can be described as knowledge diaspora and post-2007 labour migrants. I tried to randomly select participants from these three groups in order for the sample group to be as representative of the first-generation Romanian migrants as possible.

2.2   Based on the sample of participants in the study, I provide below a profile of the three categories. The pre-1989 category consists of political refugees and can be described in Cohen's terms as 'victim diaspora' (Cohen 2008). They left Romania during the communist regime and came to the UK asking for political asylum. Their transnational relocation experience was often marked by life-threatening or at least dangerous circumstances. Most of them were people educated at university level whose main reason for emigration was ideological in nature. Their status changed over the years. Whereas they entered the UK as political asylum seekers, after 1989 they were identified within the host society as migrants.

2.3   The two post-1989 categories moved to the UK with different ambitions. The main aim of relocation for the post-1989 knowledge diaspora is personal development by gaining qualifications and opening up career perspectives. In general they have a good knowledge of spoken and written English which facilitated their direct and immediate contact with the host culture. Their status provided a degree of security and predictability: finances, accommodation, introduction to the host culture. Most of them were in their 20s or early 30s, without dependents. If they had a family, it usually accompanied them.

2.4   The main reason for relocation for the post-2007 economic migrants was financial gain. They fall under Cohen's category of labour migrants (Cohen 2008:61). Their arrival in Britain was, and still is, shadowed by the uncertainty and unpredictability of their everyday life. The aim of their relocation was the promise of a better life, good earnings, and rapid betterment of their economic status. However, upon their arrival in the UK, most labour

migrants faced disappointment as the dream and expectations they had prior to the relocation did not match the reality. Most labour labour migrants did not possess knowledge of conversational English when arriving to the UK. They were also more likely to be alone, leaving their spouses and children behind in Romania.

A piece of the migration puzzle: A Romanian researcher in the UK

3.1 As a migrant researcher, I identify myself with the Romanian migrant community in general terms by sharing common heritage and culture. I moved to the UK in 2002 with the aim of pursuing a postgraduate degree. Given my own migration experience and my current status as a researcher, I identify myself more specifically with the sub-group of knowledge diaspora. Given the time of my arrival, I also share the same economic, political and social background of migration with my co-nationals who chose to migrate for economic reasons. Conversely, I have fewer things in common with the Romanians who fled the communist Romania before the revolution in 1989. The economic, political and social context of their migration is completely different to mine. There are also big generational and age differences.

3.2 Having lived the uprooting and relocation experience myself, I have a good understanding of the participants' daily experiences and practices in their migration context and a healthy dose of sympathy related to the hurdles associated with the relocation process. However, during my fieldwork I discovered that educational differences and generational affiliation specific to the three identified groups can trigger dissimilar levels of emotional involvement and of ethical standards. I analyse these aspects in parallel, offering comparisons between the three categories. For example, the ethics surrounding the legal component of the fieldwork (Düvell, Triandafyllidou and Vollmer 2008:5) featured more prominently when dealing with the labour migrants, while the emotional dimension (Düvell, Triandafyllidou and Vollmer 2008:6) had greater relevance when speaking with Romanians who came as political refugees before 1989.

3.3 Due to my insights of this specific migration context, I entered the field as more than a detached researcher (Kleinman and Copp 1993:10). I carried the emotional baggage of my own migration experience. I had the memories of my own migration story. The main concern of this article is to spell out how I managed the 'ethically important moments' (Guillemin and Gilliam 2004:262) encountered during my research, whereas my emotions were so intrinsic to the whole research process influencing the decisions which I took before, during and after completing the fieldwork (Carter and Delamont 1996:xi).

Emotions and Ethics: Methodological Implications

4.1 Often overlooked is the fact that research is not just an intellectual journey but also primarily an emotional one (Hockey 1996:25). Rabinow was among the first scholars to acknowledge that the production of knowledge is not just an intellectual endeavour, but a moral and emotional process (Rabinow 2007: xxxi) that leaves a mark on both the researcher and the participants equally. Specifically, as the researcher becomes emotionally involved in the fieldwork, the emotions usually 'spill over into the rest of our lives' (Kleinman and Copp 1993:6). At the same time, the participants are faced with the self-conscious analysis of their lives (Rabinow 2007:xxx). Emotionally-charged fieldwork has a transformative effect becoming part of everyone's experience.

4.2 While detached observation can undoubtedly deal with the ethical issues of the research, the researchers can address their emotional involvement only by active participation in the fieldwork. Engaging with the subject of the research at emotional level offers a more comprehensive approach and a more detailed analysis of the context. Kleinmann and Copp suggest that emotions can even contribute to the research project by adding 'depth, power and character' (Kleinman and Copp 1993:viii). This new approach to research is acknowledged as the 'reflexive turn' (Brewer 2000:126) as 'even the most objective of social research methods is clearly reflexive' (Davies 2007:2). Therefore, rather than denying the probability of a level of subjectivity, the researcher would be better to acknowledge the parameters of the research and how his/her engagement with the researched social context has been negotiated.

4.3 The question still remains: how to deal with emotions in the fieldwork? The mere acknowledgment of the emotional is less important than how the researchers ought to use those feelings in order to understand the people they study and to produce valuable research findings. In the context of our research, the feelings and emotions frame migration as an object of study, but when acknowledged and reflected on, new understandings of the phenomenon of migration are produced in the practice of research (Gray 2008: 938).

4.4 In my current research, the option of complete detachment and objectivity dictated by the positivist

tradition was neither possible nor realistic as I could not possibly separate my personal from the scientific self□ (Lincoln and Denzin 1994:578). My own identity influenced my decisions at every stage of the research process□ and therefore the outcome of my research bears the mark of myself as the author of the research (Bruner 1993: 2). As Kleinman and Copp note, 'our identities and life experiences shape the political and ideological stances we take in our research' (Kleinman 1993:10). Doing fieldwork brought me, the researcher, in direct contact with□ people with whom I have in common a life-changing experience of uprooting from the country of birth and relocating transnationally.

4.5   On the contrary, I adopted a very engaged and practical approach. I redirected my social and cultural inheritance to offer a positive contribution to my research, as recommended by Okely: 'The specificity and□ individuality of the observer are ever present and must therefore be acknowledged, explored and put to creative use' (Okely 1996:28). My propinquity with the subject and my first-hand experience gave me the opportunity to□ reveal and engage with the subtleties of the migration process specific to the Romanian community in the UK and□ to enhance my own understanding of some of its aspects. Such an on-the-ground analysis imbues the research with a humanised and personal dimension that no other approach can duplicate (Bird 2003:190), especially in terms of allowing emotions to play an important role. Emotions are part of the natural human experiences and denying their existence in the field risks providing an inaccurate account (Spencer 2011:67).

4.6   Further, the self-reflexive approach solidifies the connection between my academic knowledge and□ personal experience. I am a 'migrant European researcher', a term coined by the network of Young European Social Researchers. They identify academic migrants as individuals who move to another country where they need to use a foreign language for both conducting research and for daily social encounters. They actually experience the same uprooting and re-grounding experience as the people who participate in the research (Borkert and De Tona 2006:3).

4.7   There are numerous aspects of the research which are overburdened with both emotional and ethical implications, all of which 'influence how the data are interpreted and conveyed in writing up the results' (Brewer 2000:127). In the next section of the article, I adopt a critical perspective in order to expose a number of inherent emotional facets of research among migrants. Some are more evident than others.

Terminology

5.1   My first encounter with an aspect embedded with emotional and ethical implications took place during□ the initial stages of my research. While trying to conceptualize my theoretical framework and preparing the interview questions for my fieldwork, I was exploring the use of appropriate terminology. The core concept used□ in my research, the word 'migrant' with all its derivates, although it is largely used in the policy documents, has some intense emotional baggage attached to it. As Düvell *et al.* rightly highlight, 'technical legal or political expressions or political jargon find their way into academic literature; this practice even implies that terms and□ concepts are accepted and their meaning taken for granted. Much of these terminologies, however, serve a certain purpose, such as administering migration, facilitating certain policy processes or manipulating public discourses and are accordingly loaded with ideology and politics' (Düvell, Triandafyllidou and Vollmer 2008:24).

5.2   In media discourses and in the popular vocabulary, the notion of 'migrant' often has a stigma associated with it. Migrants are discursively identified as 'undesirable others' (Glick Schiller 2010:128) which is consequently associated with negative undertones. This framework 'implies some sort of distinctiveness' (Faist 2010:13) of the migrants *vis-à-vis* the host nation. It uses binaries such as home/away, we/others, nationals/foreigners in the construction of migrant identities. It is amid the continuous process of dialogue and negotiations between these sets of dichotomies (Tseng 2002:386) when the negative stereotyping is allowed to sediment in the public consciousness. Although the negative migrant stereotypes are usually perceived as a construct of the host society, they were very much present and acknowledged in the migrants' answers too.

5.3   In legal terms, all the interviewees were migrants at their arrival in the UK, but when I asked them during the interviews if they still considered themselves migrants their answers varied. The labour migrants readily assumed this status for two reasons. Firstly, their current status is a voluntary choice and secondly, they admitted their limited integration in the host society. However, the participants from the other two groups, the pre-1989 political diaspora and the knowledge diaspora, had difficulty identifying themselves as migrants since they have□ put more efforts into understanding and assimilating into the British culture and they were more actively involved in the transnational political arena. The question often took them by surprise and their immediate reaction varied from a rhetoric question: '*What else shall I consider myself?*'; to doubt: '*I think so, I think I am a migrant*' and

total denial of their migrant status: '*I am British 100% now*'or '*I don't feel I am a migrant. I am like any other European citizen who came to study in the UK. I don't feel discriminated. So it's OK.*' The majority of participants eventually admitted to their migrant status. Andrei, a professional migrant who came to the UK in his 20s and subsequently became UK citizen, said:

> *Of course, I am a migrant here in England. Nor am I native, neither do I feel like one. I have obtained British citizenship seven years ago, but I am still a migrant, a foreigner, an outsider. There is no way I can be British. You are British in principle if you come to the UK maybe when you are two or three years old and you grow up here, you have time to assimilate the culture from zero. Maybe in these circumstances. But it's not my case. I came here in my 20s, so…I can't be British.*

5.5   Eventually, due to the shortage of available neutral terminology referring to people who relocated, I had to take the decision to use the term 'migrant' to refer to the all Romanian-born individuals currently living in the UK, irrespective of their migration conditions and experiences. The alternative term would have been diaspora but as Sheffer points out, the conceptual and definitional boundaries between the two terms of 'diaspora' and 'migrants' are blurred (Sheffer 2003:16). Although there seemed to be an initial reluctance towards the acceptance of the 'migrant' status among the participants from the first two groups, eventually all participants came to terms with the use of this term to characterise their social status. Given the overall acceptance among participants, I have decided to use the term 'migrant' throughout my research process to refer to the Romanians who are currently living in the UK.

The researcher's relationship with the subject

6.1   Emotions have played an important part in all stages of my research process from the initial selection of topic to final reporting of results. When choosing the subject of my research, I wanted to work on a project which I was passionate about and which I thought I understood. Davies suggests that the selection of the research subject is 'nearly always a combination of personal stories, disciplinary culture and external forces in the broader political, social and economic climate' (Davies 2007:30). Having lived the migration experience myself, I thought it natural to combine my personal experience and history with my academic interest. At this stage my emotions and feelings served as a 'propellant' (Hockey 1996:12) which helped get the project off the ground. My status as a member of the Romanian migrant community had a direct impact and influence on my motives and approach of the project. My personal feelings and emotions related to this experience were 'powerful motivational factors in the design and conduct of the research project' and shaped the relationship between me as a migrant researcher and migrants as the object of my study, as well as my understanding and interpretation (Jenkins 2006:937).

6.2   When I started working on the research project, I had already been a member of the Romanian community settled in the UK for over seven years. This gave me a significant head-start since I had direct access to the community, therefore avoiding any gatekeepers. I was part of the Romanian networks in the UK. I knew the Romanian organizations and institutions; I was aware of events organized by Romanians. I knew where I could find and approach potential participants to my research. Due to my previous seven-year experience as a Romanian migrant in the British culture, I was very much perceived as one of them. Nevertheless, this is not to say that I perceived my sense of belonging to the researched social context as uncontested or unproblematic. On the contrary, it required a more thorough and critical examination (Davies 2007:42). This was assured by continuous reflective practice in which the relationship between my identity as sociologist and as person played an interchangeable role (Gouldner 1973:77).

6.3   The emotions generated by my attachment and identification with the researched group were mainly positive. I have always been aware of my ethnic identity and valued my cultural background. Even before I started my research project, I was trying to keep updated on the Romanian context by reading online news daily. I established contact with various Romanian organizations which promoted the Romanian culture in the UK and attended some of their events. Although I did not see these links as critical in maintaining my ethnic identity, I always encouraged myself to take part in these sorts of activities. On the other hand, I also had difficulty identifying myself as migrant as the reason of my relocation was pursuing studies in the UK, but I nevertheless accepted my status.

6.4   Once I undertook fieldwork, I discovered that my emotions generated two conflicting manifestations with underlying ethical considerations. On the one hand, my emotions were helpful in offering a deeper understanding of the participants' world and experiences. They also helped me ask specific questions which extracted subtle data valuable for my research. One such example is the subject of the image of the Romanian community portrayed by the British media. Being a member of the Romanian migrant community, I was aware of the

predominant negative media coverage of Romanians and how the Romanian community has been struggling to distance itself from this negative representation by building a more positive image for itself which reflects the diversity of the community. On the other hand, my emotions could also potentially be a hindrance to the process of collecting data by generating research due to personal bias. Since I was interviewing Romanians who lived the same migrant experience of uprooting from their own context and adjusting to a new culture, I was, in a way, trying to find if other people lived the same emotions through their migration experience. I wanted to validate my experience by comparing it with others' accounts. While my emotions acted as a powerful force in drawing me to investigate the topic in question, they were also potentially influencing the data I was collecting. Was I ready to listen to life experiences that were very different from mine?

6.5   One such instance took place when I interviewed a couple who were both doing their doctoral studies in computing sciences. He was very interested in the Romanian political, economic, and cultural life, reading several online newspapers daily. He talked about Romania in a very passionate manner, had a very optimistic view of the country's long-term economic development, and even confessed that he would like to return to Romania one day. I was expecting a similar view from his wife. However, she did not share his feelings and passion for the Romanian context. She was not interested in pro-actively seeking news on Romania, admitted to reading online news very randomly, and all she knew about Romania was from family who usually mentioned major events during their phone conversations. She stated that she had no Romanian friends, nor did she feel the need for any. Her attitude took me by surprise. I assumed that all the Romanians living abroad who belong to the educated class were actively involved in maintaining their ethnic identity by keeping close contact with Romanian developments. Was I ready to hide any emotional anxieties generated by this situation and accept that she could possibly have a limited interest in her country of origin, and no aspiration to return home? My first instinct was to be confrontational. In the end, I chose to leave my emotions aside and continue interviewing her for the purpose of understanding her narrative, her feelings, and her experiences. Had I let my emotions overtake my intellect and influence my professionalism, the interview might have ended in an intense argument which undoubtedly would have been counterproductive (Thuesen 2011: 614).

6.6   I encountered two other similar situations where such negative feelings about Romania spurred in me intense emotions. Nevertheless, as these interviews unrolled, I discovered that the participants' strong feelings were rooted in negative past experiences. My initial feelings of astonishment and disbelief morphed into feelings of sympathy and understanding. One instance occurred when I interviewed a woman who came to the UK in the late 1970s. She was very articulate and intelligent; however, the interview took an unexpected turn due to very strong negative feelings she had about the new generation of Romanians who settled in the UK. Towards the end of the interview, I found out what might have been the cause of her frustration. After 1989, she helped a lot of Romanian migrants settle in the UK, but some of them abused her generosity. In these circumstances, the participant saw the interview as an opportunity to express vehemently her disappointment; hence the emotions were very intense. She hardly answered any of my questions and was always deviating from the subject of our discussion. She was reluctant to share any of her personal experiences, but rather very openly criticized the other members of Romanian community.

6.7   Another example came from a young migrant who relocated to the UK to find a job. She was very critical of Romania in general. She refused to return and visit her friends and family back home and she was trying to pass as British. Initially, I could not understand her reaction but soon it became evident when she confessed her difficult upbringing and broken relationships with her family:

> I like it here. I have always loved the UK. So I am not complaining. Although there were some difficult times, I preferred the difficult times from here rather than in another place.

Language of the interview

7.1   The issue of language might not necessarily be the most obvious research element to be considered either from an ethical or emotional perspective. More recently, both social scientists (Punch 2005) and linguists (Wierzbicka 1999) have acknowledged the multi-layered role played by language in research. Thus language is not treated as a mere channel of communication; rather it becomes a resource (Bryman 2012:522) in its own right capable of generating knowledge. There are more reasons which led them to this conclusion.

7.2   Firstly, in qualitative research, researchers rely on language to collect and analyse data. The centrality of language is evident when conducting interviews with migrants as the researcher needs to choose between the native language of the migrants and the language of the host society. Conducting interviews in a language with

which the participant is comfortable unlocks personal discussions and experiences. It also helped me develop a good rapport with the participants (Pole and Burges 2000:93, Davies 2007:88).

7.3   Secondly, there is a direct link between one's own culture and how we deal with and express our emotions established by 'the lexical grid provided by the native language' (Wierzbicka 1999:26). Consequently, the emotional aspect becomes a key determinant of the research process. Although emotions are part of the universal language, our emotional lives are very much shaped and influenced by our own culture:

> Every culture offers not only a linguistically embodied grid for the conceptualization of emotions, but also a set of scripts suggesting to people how to feel, how to express their feelings, how to think about their own and other people's feelings and so on. (Wierzbicka 1999:240).

7.4   It is this culturally-specific emotional language that the researcher needs to understand when conducting research with migrants. Traditional anthropological schools recognised the benefits of knowing the language spoken in the researched social set-up as a valuable insight into the 'native mentality' (Malinowski 1922). If the researcher is keen on using the data generated by the emotional dimensions in the research outcome, then knowing the migrants' native language is essential. This is not to say that migration research cannot be done unless the researcher knows the migrants' native language. However in this instance the researcher might miss some of the emotional instances during fieldwork.

7.5   The interviews were conducted mainly in Romanian, with two exceptions. Two young professionals claimed that English has now become their first language, owing to the fact that English is spoken in their families, one being married to another European citizen and one to a British citizen. Even in these instances, my initial attempt was to conduct the interview in Romanian, but in both cases, a few minutes into the interview, they both felt uncomfortable using Romanian and apologized for their limited knowledge and use of the language. At that moment, I encouraged them to choose the language they were most comfortable with, so they chose English.

7.6   Knowing both languages, i.e. the language of the migrant community and the language of the host country, was an indisputable advantage while conducting this research. It gave the interviewees the opportunity to express themselves in whichever language they found most comfortable and in which I, as the researcher, could interact with them. Migrants are individuals whose lives are divided between at least two worlds, whose identities are shaped by two social environments, and who switch between two languages on a daily basis. For the researcher to attempt to understand this two-dimensional world of migrants, to learn the way the language is used is essentially insightful. This enables the researcher to understand and analyse the nuances and subtleties of the language used by the participants when recounting their experiences (Polkinghorne 2005:145). Only bilingual researchers who live their own life in two cultures and two languages as the migrant research participants can understand the emotional reality of different cultures and different languages (Wierzbicka 1999:241). I also noticed that the participants who were fluent in both languages often ended up using English when talking about an experience which happened in the United Kingdom and Romanian for experiences that occurred in Romania.

7.7   The emotional aspect associated with the language used during the interview is closely related to the issue of ethnic identity. The members of the pre-1989 diaspora took immense pride in being able to still speak fluent Romanian after so many years since leaving the country. The post-1989 migrants, although using mainly Romanian during their interview, also had many English phrases and idioms randomly infiltrating their answers in order to better illustrate certain circumstances.

The relationship between researcher and interviewees

8.1   The relationship between the researcher and the interviewer can generate a myriad of emotions and feelings from both sides: 'the ethnographic enterprise is not a matter of what one person does in a situation but how two sides of an encounter arrive at a delicate workable definition of the meeting' (Crick 1982:25). The negotiation of the emotional influx unquestionably influences the research experience, as well as the exchange between researcher and interviewee. The process entails a 'mutual search for understanding' which connects the social world of the informant and of the researcher (Davies, 2007:89). However, the main concern of the researcher should be in what manner and to what extent they influence the research. Only through a process of reflexivity can the researcher monitor 'how the selves and identities of the researcher and the researched affect the research process' (Brewer 2000:126).

8.2   The emotional dimension of the relationship between the researcher and the participants is strictly related to a very important ethical aspect, namely that of trust. Only by trust can the interview reach beyond the point where only information relevant to the research is revealed, as well as for the interviewee to feel relaxed in the company of the researcher. A key element of this trust-building process is effective communication before, during, and after the interview.

8.3   By the time the face-to-face interview takes place, the trust should already be in place. The trust-gaining process starts from the first contact, which took place often by email or phone. Right from the beginning, I was very open and transparent about the intentions and purposes of my research by presenting the participants with a short summary of my project. The aim of the summary was three-fold. Firstly, it informed them of the framework of the research and consequently the direction of the interview and the kind of information I was looking for. Its second aim was to 'sell' the research project to the participant by raising their interest in the subject. Thirdly, it created a platform for two-way communication between the researcher and the participants where any concerns could be raised in the initial stages of the research. I also provided them with a brief autobiography so they would know who is interviewing them.

8.4   The information I provided in the first instance proved to be a great platform for when we eventually met for the interview. The terms of the interview were established in advance and I explained to them that their personal details would not be revealed. The surprised reaction came when I asked them to sign the informed consent form. The current standard research protocols established in Western European institutions require the participants to sign such a form which lists the terms and conditions of the interview. Although this procedure has been established with good intentions, in some cases this can instil fear, anxiety, and concern in the participants. In some cultures, such as the Romanian one, this practice is often viewed with suspicion and can potentially inhibit the participant. In my case, most of the interviewees were open and willing to give the interview as they were aware of a 'certain British manner' in dealing with these issues. This was mostly due to the fact that Romanian culture is not a culture where one's rights are protected by legally-binding forms. It is a culture based on trust, willingness and openness rather than suspicion, prevention and negative anticipation. For most of the participants the fact that they agreed to give the interview should, in their opinion, suffice as an official form of consent.

8.5   There were instances when the interview triggered emotional responses from the participants, especially in the case of pre-1989 diasporic group. Their migration stories were marked by tragic events, big personal sacrifices, traumatic situations or inhumane living conditions, hence the emotional implications were considerable, although these events happened in the distant past. The interviewees dealt with their own feelings which surfaced during the interview in different ways. A woman who moved to the United Kingdom more than thirty years ago recollected tearfully the moment when she last saw her family.

> I had to come for a one-week training course in the UK and I had taken the decision long before that I would not return to Romania. I didn't tell my parents or my sister. That was the hardest thing. After I went through check-in I couldn't turn around and have a last look at my family because I knew I would cry and that would give away my intentions.

8.6   She did not tell her family for fear that they would be persecuted by the Romanian authorities if they found out that her family knew of her plans to leave. At that moment, my initial reaction to her emotions was to interrupt the interview and give her time to compose herself. But she declined the offer and stoically continued her story as if she really wanted someone to listen to her experiences. Another participant told me how she had to leave her husband and baby behind; they were reunited only a year later. Another woman in her 70s who was rather bitter about her past saw the interview as an opportunity to express her negative views on both the Romanian migrants in the UK and Romania in general. It seemed like a personal attack to me.

8.7   I also have to mention that the interviews with the pre-1989 migrants necessitated the most emotional involvement from both my side and the participants'. In most cases, the interview turned out to be a whole social experience and a day-out with the interviewee. Although I initially asked them just for up to an hour of their time, they were more than happy to spend most of the day with me either inviting me to stay for lunch or taking me sight-seeing in their city. When the interview took place in this sort of private context, it carried a lot of emotional implications which played a role in the knowledge production.

8.8   These interviews contrasted with the ones conducted with the other two groups of migrants. Some of these interviews were dry in terms of emotions. The post-1989 labour migrants' reasons for being in the UK were very pragmatic. As a consequence, they approached the interview in the same manner, offering me more

generally-known facts rather than their own personal narrative. Another reason why initially the participants did not give specific details of their experience was their assumption that I would know these experiences already, given my own migration experience and the age similarity. My reaction to this situation was to try and steer the interview to a place where they become comfortable with my presence, so that the participants can become more self-reflective of their migration experiences.

8.9 As shown above, knowledge is produced in the course of research as a process of intersubjective interaction. It is the researcher's background, knowledge and positioning juxtaposed with the participants migrant experiences when the emotionally and ethically charged moments take place. Here are a few such examples from my fieldwork. The age difference between me and the pre-1989 political refugees who were significantly older than I am might have had an influential factor in the highly-emotional setting of the interview. My different social positioning in the host country compared with the labour migrants might have inhibited the participants in the first place from sharing their experience. That is why the process of self-reflexivity from everyone engaged in the research, both researcher and the participants, is an imperative tool (Gildersleeve 2010:419) in these instances in order to mitigate any possible situations which might compromise the production of knowledge.

8.10 I have tried to show that reflexivity is a key element in the process of involving the emotional dimension in the process of knowledge generation. Nevertheless, the researcher cannot entirely rely on subjectivity and emotional involvement to shape his/her research. A degree of objectivity and detachment needs to be thrown into the mix, otherwise the researcher falls into the trap of producing a 'narcissistic and egotistical' piece of work (Bruner, 1993, p. 6). This interplay can be achieved by 'stepping in and out' of the social context which makes the subject of the research (Powdermaker 1966:19). After all, social research has a dual nature: 'it depends both on some connection with that being researched and on some degree of separation from it' (Davies 2007:10). A balance between involvement and detachment is required (Denzin 1997:218). This can be achieved by alternating, by means of a continuous process of applied reflexivity, the dual perspectives of the sociologist and the person as it analyses the social set-up.

The legal aspect

9.1 While the emotional aspect was manifested predominantly during interviews with the pre-1989 political refugees, references to legal aspects were made mostly during interviews with labour migrants. As I have already mentioned above, most of the labour migrants faced a set of uncertainties when they arrived in the UK, notably negotiating their prospective for employment and accommodation. Some of them admitted that when they arrived in the UK, they did not have the right documents. Others found themselves living in unsuitable accommodation. Although the fact that I was a Romanian national might have given them reassurance and confidence, nevertheless, the interviews might also expose them to a certain degree of vulnerability and risk. As a researcher, the main ethical dilemma I faced was how to respond to the complex set of legal circumstances specific to their status.

9.2 Dealing with people who were forced to live under legally questionable circumstances generated an inner emotional tumult for me. I mostly felt empathy towards their lifestyle conditions. Most of them worked at least 10 hours a day, six days a week. They lived in a shared house with many other co-nationals who had moved to the UK for the same reason. The hardest aspect of their life in the UK was the separation from their families they had left behind in Romania. However, any understanding I was trying to show towards their circumstances was shadowed by a set of conflicting emotions too. All too easily I could have become critical and judgmental of their choice of lifestyle. But my emotions were also stirred by the realisation that some of them did not have too many choices to change their situation due to either mistreatment at their current work place or the low salary. This was the initial migration experience of a young Romanian in his twenties:

> When I first came to the UK I worked for three months in the construction industry as I wanted to earn some money to pay for my studies. This was in 2002 so Romanians didn't have labour rights at that time. I had a tourist visa. I had to work on the black market. It was a long working day. 10-12 hours a day of intensive physical work. I was not used to this. It killed my back. I was living in a house with other the Romanians and shared my room with a fellow Romanian labourer. I was eating only baked beans, cheap Asda bread and used to drink a Cola or Redbull to keep me going. I promised myself this would be the first and last time I would put myself through such conditions.

9.3 I had to deal with this contradictory inner emotional struggle in real time during the interview. In a compressed period of time, I had to identify my emotions, analyse them and decide how I was going to use them during the interview. Do I show my empathy towards their vulnerability as migrants in the UK, thus encouraging the participants to open up and share their real experiences? The reverse of the coin was that by doing so I

risked portraying the participants as victims, as unprivileged, and in the end their narrative becomes romanticized (Kleinman and Copp 1993:16). Or do I express my opinions on their circumstances while interviewing them and by doing so distance myself from their once illegal status, risk alienating my participants, and fail to obtain any data valuable for my research?

9.4   There are not any yes-or-no answers to these questions, nor is there a normative one. My decisions and my reactions were always guided by two main principles which I adopted for my research. I wanted to avoid emotionally hurting my participants or putting them in a compromising situation which made their future circumstances worse than before I had approached them for the interview. Secondly, I believed that I should do my research so that the outcome would not impact negatively the personal lives of the participants, but if possible inform social agents and political and decision-making actors at macro-level.

Concluding Remarks

10.1   In this article, I have analysed different instances encountered while doing research among Romanian migrants as a Romanian migrant researcher. I was interested especially in situations which presented both emotional dimensions and ethical implications. While the ethical aspects are systematically addressed in methodological scholarship, the emotional is often overlooked.

10.2   The ethical implications of doing research with migrants as a migrant researcher are as significant as the ethical aspects. Both the ethical and the emotional have equally the potential to produce knowledge. This can be achieved only through a permanent state of self-reflexivity assumed by both the researcher and the participants. Several conclusions can be drawn from this understanding. Firstly, given its potentially transformative and shaping factor, the 'emotional' should not be ignored by the researcher at any stage of the research. From the initial moment when the topic is chosen, to doing fieldwork and concluding with the delivery of research outcomes, discovery is best facilitated when the researchers are prepared to invest their own personal identity including the emotional into research. Secondly, researchers are not free of both emotional and ethical bias; emotions play an important role when engaging in research and they often inform ethical decisions. For that reason, instead of ignoring emotions, the researchers need to acknowledge them and openly identify their emotional investment and ethical drive when conducting research. They need to find suitable ways 'to articulate fruitfully the emotional to support knowledge-making with integrity' (Spencer 2011:78).

10.3   Acknowledging the contribution of emotions to the research process is conditioned by a continuously reflexive *modus operandi* which the researcher needs to adopt while doing research. The researcher develops these dispositions only through experiencing the ethical and emotionally charged situations and learning to deal with them (Thuesen 2011:615). This helps the researchers understand their ethical decisions, and helps them build a trusting relationship with the participants and engage with their social context.

10.4   The emotional involvement is very much a reciprocal manifestation as the interview encounter provokes emotions in participants as well. Ultimately, fieldwork where either the respondent or the investigator is emotionally engaged changes them both permanently (Carter and Delmont 1996:x).

10.5   While most of the emotions and ethical considerations transpire mainly from the relationship established between the researcher and the participants in the research project, I highlighted other aspects of fieldwork which also carry emotional implications and ethical decisions. These include the relation between the researcher and the topic of the research, the terminology used, the location of the interview, the language choice during the interview, and any potential legal aspects.

10.6   Finally, doing research among migrants requires a constant balancing act between the challenges and the benefits brought about by the emotional and the ethical implications. Dealing with the ethical decisions and examining the emotions generated during the research process does not compromise the scientific standard of the research. Quite the opposite, it informs and enriches the research.

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