RESEARCH DESIGN IN FEMINIST GEOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

Three key aspects of our identities as researchers undertaking feminist geographic analysis — as scholars, as critical social scientists, and as feminists — obliges us to take seriously our research design. Projects we undertake assist in sorting through the links between macro processes shaping social structures and the micro-diversity we see and experience around us. Research of the everyday world sheds light on the theories we offer to explain and actions we take to effect change in what we find. The design of such projects acts as the foundation into which we incorporate conceptual, methodological, and political goals of our research agendas. In this paper, I draw on my own research of a waged domestic labor process to illustrate the significance of the way in which theory, method, and political action come together through research design.

Introductory comments

Research design as part of a geographer’s methodological orientation is given little attention in the social geographic literature (cf. Jackson and Smith 1984; Eyles 1988; Eyles and Smith 1988). Nor is there much information on how to undertake a feminist geographic analysis (cf. Massey 1984; Lancaster 1985; Mackenzie 1989a). Though salient issues — conceptual, methodological, and political — have clearly been identified and actively pursued, that which underlies all investigations, research design, has been neglected.

Feminist geographers are speaking directly to this omission (England and Moss 1992; Moss et al. 1993). Feminists are addressing research design not only as part of the plan of a research project but also as a way to come to terms with forging collective feminist goals while being consistent in their own worldviews. One project’s research design is but an avenue for the implementation of a larger research program based on a feminist’s personal politics.

In this paper, I first sketch out three sets of challenges feminist geographers face when designing research projects. Then, I offer possible strategies to meet these challenges. Next, I illustrate the significance of research design in economic restructuring studies by drawing on my own research with a waged domestic labor process in housekeeping services franchises. Finally, I comment generally on how research design brings together theory, method, and political action.

Setting the scene and defining a program

We who undertake feminist geographic analysis must integrate three key aspects of a researcher’s identity. We simultaneously act as scholars, as critical social scientists, and as feminists. As scholars we seek to understand, explain, and set into context the social-spatial relations involved in geographic processes. A primary goal is to sort through the links between macro processes (shaping structures) and micro-diversity (acting agents) by creating projects that bring into focus specific sets of social relations in particular places, as for example, in the organization and regulation of women’s part-time labor in post-fordist regimes in the workplace. Then, in both formal and informal collaboration we present and exchange insights, information, and ideas. Formal
outlets include journals, specialized conferences, and small workshops. Informal contact amongst friends, students, and colleagues spurs thinking and creates new opportunities for presentation and exchange.

As critical social scientists in geography we set research programs comprising several concurrent and sequential projects. Our choice of topics for inquiry, techniques for data acquisition, and theories for explanation are inextricably linked to the ways in which we view science. We make the case on conventional grounds that our approach to research is 'valid' and 'scientific' while at the same time pushing the traditions of geography by challenging masculine-biased approaches to research. Then, when carrying out the program, we piece together our efforts and take action in support of oppressed groups through our empirical investigations. Both reflection and action are a necessary part of our methodological orientation, unquestionably derived from the assumptions we make of being and knowledge.

As feminists we make our research programs known. We define our programs by delineating the conceptual, methodological, and political goals of the research we want to carry out. Once we define our program by that which we think and feel important, then we design projects in order to meet these ends.

Feminist geographic analysis need not be so precisely defined as I have defined it here. The ways in which feminist geographers incorporate these aspects of scholarship, critique, and politics into their identity as a researcher in part accounts for the variation in feminist geographic analysis. To illustrate these points, I draw out the commonalities of feminist analysis in economic restructuring studies.

Feminist analyses of economic restructuring differ from non-feminist analyses precisely because the conceptual, methodological, and political goals are based on a different set of values (Lloyd 1984; Keller 1985; Ferguson 1989). Socialist feminist geographers have been demonstrating that economic restructuring affects not only production, but also reproduction (Massey 1983; McDowell 1983; Nelson 1986; Little, Peake and Richardson 1988; Mackenzie 1989b). The central claim is that local sets of gender relations and class relations shape and are shaped by the ways in which these restructuring processes manifest in particular places or localities (Massey 1984; McDowell 1983; Lancaster 1985; Oberhauser 1990). Recognition of distinct local political economies indicates a need for historically- and spatially-specific explanations of industrial change with regard to social and political relations of and in everyday experiences (Mackenzie 1988; McDowell 1991). It has only been recently that non-feminist geographers have been making gender integral to their arguments (e.g. Friedmann 1992; Sayer and Walker 1992), but these latter studies lack the methodological orientation and political commitment feminists have made their own.

For some socialist feminist geographers, topical limitations need not be set at the impact of global restructuring processes on gender or, more widely, on anything that relates to gender. Formation processes of gender and class are entwined with economic restructuring processes in that they interact extensively and are simultaneously produced and reproduced as part of the reorganization of production and reproduction relations (Moss 1990; Chouinard and Moss 1992; Moss 1993). Thus, the basis for the creation of feminist research programs in geography are far more encompassing than choice of topic. Though gender is central to feminist analysis, it is by no means a sole construct; that is, feminist analyses are not gender studies. Gender is not the topic of feminist analyses. Gender is (1) an analytical
category for explanation, (2) a perspective on science, being, and knowledge, and (3) a basis for political action to empower disempowered groups.

Feminist analysts look at the macro processes that are restructuring local political economies, whether they be termed the 'era of post-fordism', 'the post-modern condition', 'flexible accumulation', or 'new world economic order'. They focus on the change these macro processes are generating, whether they be linked to urban development schemes, constitution of place, or national government responses to recession-sensitive local economies. They investigate the shifts, adjustments, and impacts manifest in a place-specific micro-diversity, whether they be an increase in mobility of workplaces or an intense reorganization of daily activities to accommodate cuts in unemployment insurance benefits.

From these shared interests, feminists have created their own research programs and forged characteristic approaches to investigations of economic restructuring (e.g. Fincher 1989 and 1991; Mackenzie 1989a; Rose 1989; Dowling 1993). Without glossing over the variation in topics or the nuances of an analyst's approach, I want to draw out the collective attributes which should distinguish feminist analyses from both non-feminist analyses and gender studies. I do this by outlining what I see as the conceptual, methodological, and political goals and strategies of feminist analysis.

Identifying goals and devising strategies for feminist research

In order to be consistent in undertaking a feminist analysis, specific goals and strategies must be formulated and adopted. Goals and strategies actually should vary from analyst to analyst, project to project. Yet in spite of the variation, there are distinctly feminist strategies that can be used to achieve feminist goals. These include the formulation and adoption of (1) conceptual contributions to the construction of feminist theories of geographic processes and their impact on disempowered groups, (2) guidelines for taking on a feminist methodology, with a complementary set of methods, and (3) a political ethos with a commitment to empower and politicize both the researcher and the 'researched'.

Conceptual goals and strategies

Conceptually, the primary goal is to devise a feminist framework flexible enough to develop theories of reproduction relations, of remunerated and unremunerated and waged and unwaged domestic labor, and of uneven temporal and spatial development processes. Three central tenets underlie such a framework: (1) gender as both a relation and a process is conceptualized with other sets of relations and processes, (2) gender is constitutive of individuals' consciousness and their experiences, and (3) gender is separated conceptually only in order to comprehend entwined sets of relations. Hence, gender imbues the foundation of feminist analysis. Explanations derived within this framework differ from explanations now available. Such theories enhance explanations of, for example, why reproduction relations in the home are being reorganized, 'de-domestified', or commodified in light of the reorganization of production and global restructuring of the economy and how individuals create micro-diversity through the immediacy of survival by acting and reacting within macro processes identified at larger spatial and temporal scales.

Adding gender to an analysis is not enough. Gender must be implicated in the explanation. So, for example, in constructing a feminist theory of reproduction relations, an analyst might draw on the three basic tenets of a feminist analysis. Gender would be
conceived of as a relation and a process with other constructs, such as class and 'race'. There would be an explicit recognition that gender is experienced with sets of relations and processes. Specific conceptual contributions develop incrementally. Rather than presenting a complete account or mature theory of reproduction, it is best to start with applications of specific conceptual arguments in well-defined topical investigations. In this way, arguments come together through building a theory. By confining the application of these conceptual arguments in this way, collaboration and reflection are more likely to take place. Thus, changes in theory flow from these specified reconceptualizations.

For example, in my own research I argue that 'gender' undergoes formation processes akin to class formation processes. I look specifically at gender formation processes at the interface of production and reproduction with women working in housekeeping services franchises. The processes I seek out for study are in an easily readable form — they are located in a commodified form of domestic labor that is being carried out predominantly by women who traditionally have performed these tasks as reproductive labor in the home without wages and without surplus value generation. Gender is not simply ascribed to individuals engaging in productive and reproductive labor. It is integrally involved in the explanation of a particular commodified form of unwaged, partially remunerated labor in the home. However, gender formation and class formation are conceptually separate in order to discern the processes by which the relations entwine (e.g. middle class women hiring working class women) and which make manifest the specificity of both time and space (i.e. historically- and place-specific accounts of micro-diversity).

Explanation of the constitutive processes of gender through affinity and antagonism within gender relations amongst individuals in various sets of power relations (e.g. ethnic, 'race', class, familial, labor, and tenure) would be the challenge for analysis in gender formation studies, like class alliances and class factions in class formation studies. These processes involve subjective experiences of struggles over gendered class capacities and objective conditions of subjectivity. The social mediation of materially objective gender interests results in consciousness formation. Gender consciousness becomes an important explanatory concept when sorting through individuals' thoughts and actions concerning formation, manifestation, and perception of gender.

Methodological goals and strategies

Methodologically, the primary goal is to legitimate subjugated knowledges particularly through subjective and critical approaches to research. Legitimation takes place not only through raising consciousness about unequal power relations, but also with conscious changes in the process of defining sources of acceptable knowledge and in the use of that knowledge. For example, challenging the derogatory notion of the social uses of 'gossip' can validate 'gossip' as a way of knowing for women who have been excluded systematically from mainstream ways of gaining knowledge (Belenky et al. 1986). Also, our own experiences as researchers are very much a part of the research process. The recognition of such, as well as making visible the impact of our own lives in our thinking, and vice versa, are imperative. A related issue is the choice of method or methods. Yes, it is true that critical and subjective methodologies favor qualitative methods, but not to the exclusion of quantitative methods. There is nothing feminist about a method; it is the feminist use of a method that is significant (Jayaratne
are empowered via conscientization. The former, in recognition of another's less powerful position. The latter, in actual awareness and enhancement of her political position.

Fifth, personal historical accounts of activities, events, and processes of the lives of those involved in the research project, including those affected by economic restructuring processes, appropriate the material history of the disempowered. The subsequent placement of all life histories in historical juxtaposition pulls together individual stories and forms a collective whole. Note that this also must involve the researcher's own life history, because power relations amongst participants in the project have been broken down.

These components are not hierarchical in a sense that the upper echelons dominate and determine the lower levels. Rather, the methodology includes all elements interacting, much like how the research itself is carried out. Some individual components may be part of other methodologies, like, for example, the eidetic method in phenomenology or praxis in Marxism. But, it is this particular combination of components that is the basis for feminist research.

In using this particular methodological approach in economic restructuring studies, a feminist researcher seeks from the start to enhance women's social and economic positions politically. By facilitating change through the redistribution of power in the research process and encouraging women to question and challenge the rules that regulate their lives, a feminist researcher is liberating women's subjugated knowledge — individually and collectively.

A complementary set of methods consistent with the goals set up within the research program is also required. Specific types of data are generated by specific types of methods. For example, aggregate data can be acquired through document survey. Such
data set the context within which an investigation is carried out. For example, attempts to show how economic restructuring processes impact local, regional, and global political economies can often be best demonstrated by statistical description (e.g. Massey 1984). In other instances, only in-depth interviews can document an individual's experiences of a particular set of relations or processes (e.g. Mackenzie 1989b). From these data, other types of information can be collected, like psychological and financial coping strategies for job loss.

Reinharz (1983) suggests the use of multiple-depth conversations as a process of constructing meaning between the researcher and the 'researched'. Time and context of the conversations have to be provided in a flexible way for the meaning to be clarified. Breaks in time of anywhere between several days and a few months are necessary in order to review the exchange of information taking place in each conversation. In this way, salient issues can be identified wherein specific social and political goals emerged, rather than having been imposed from the outside. Further, these issues can be incorporated into conceptual models of individual constitutive processes, so that what is important to working women can be accounted for theoretically in formation processes of class, gender, and consciousness.

Political goals and strategies

Politically, the primary goal is two-fold: empowerment and politicization of the researcher and the 'researched'. To presume empowerment can be part of the 'researched's' experience only is myopic. Because individuals are engaged simultaneously in multiple sets of relations as oppressors and as the oppressed, there exists between the researcher and the 'researched' an ebb and flow power relationship. Sensitivity to the unequal distributions involved in the research process is paramount in a feminist approach to research. Political acts need not necessarily lead to, for example, unionization of unorganized laborers, although this is very much an alternative. Access to networks of information for training programs, job alternatives, and support groups is knowledge that can be passed on. Political acts include, for example, assistance in developing confidence to take on challenges to pursue personal development and in giving support to a woman going through a divorce and child custody battle.

Political strategies for accomplishing the goals of empowerment and politicization are the most personal, yet the most elusive. Social and political action can either be formal, and more tangible, or informal and less tangible. Formal action includes concrete monetary gains such as pay hikes, unionization, and increased benefits. Alternately, to secure safer working conditions, the researcher can seek to assist in reorganizing the labor process. The researcher can be directly part of the struggle over legal statutes that regulate women's activities in the economy.

Informal action is difficult to plan for and sometimes even more difficult to identify. One's personal commitment to the research process will shape the amount of informal input. Empowerment is political action. Instances of encouragement permits the researcher to express an explicit set of values, which are either clear at the beginning or made clear during the research process. Such encouragement and support is part of the politicization process for all participants. Such action cannot be undertaken if the goal of the research is to wield power and exploit disempowered groups, either intentionally or unintentionally. The exercise of power that resides, initially at
least, with the researcher should be benevo-

Attaining goals and implementing strategies through research design

Research design pulls together the conceptual, methodological, and political goals of a research program in focused projects through organizing the various strategies in stages or phases. For my doctoral research, I designed a four phase project that sought to address some of these questions in a concrete setting — a waged domestic labor process in housekeeping services franchises (see Figure 1 for the components of each phase). I want to illustrate the significance of research design to achieve the feminist goals and use the strategies set out previously by drawing on this particular research project.

Identifying research goals by asking questions

The most concise way to outline research interests are to put them in question form.

♦ How do women as paid and unpaid laborers in production and reproduction: contribute to the maintenance of capitalism?, promote the reproduction of social relations?, come together as part of the commodification of domestic labor?, and intersect with economic restructuring processes?

♦ How does the material existence of women workers relate to the dominating gender relations of patriarchy? Vis-à-vis domestic labor, both paid and unpaid, why cannot the generation of surplus value define gender within historical materialism, in production, and in reproduction? How do gender relations impact the urban spatial social structure?

♦ What role does ideology play in the formation of values in women? To what extent does subjective experience influence women’s contributions to the reproduction of social relations within the context of capital’s imperative for its own reproduction? What kind of empirical support can be gathered to foster such a thesis?

♦ How will studies in gender relations lead to a better understanding of the social and spatial impacts of policy implementation? How can such studies enhance policy formulation? How does political and social change ensue from this type of research?

♦ How can a feminist analysis of gender relations be integrated into a human geography paradigm? Must feminism remain critique in geography? What can a feminist methodology contribute to human geography and, moreover, to social science as a whole? How do we re-integrate politics and academics in geography?

These questions framed my decisions throughout the research process. They focussed my goals and shaped my strategies, especially in designing the research project.

Experiencing the labor process

I designed the first phase of the research project with emphasis on the implementation of and engaging in experiential analysis (see Figure 2.). As part of participatory research, complete immersion can be important for feminist research because of the insights gained by the researcher through knowing the other within a different set of material conditions, for example, at the workplace(s), at home, and in an interview situation. Complete immersion is a technique often not recognized in economic restructuring projects. Placing localities in the context of
## Research design

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<th>Project phase</th>
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<td><strong>Phase I:</strong> experiencing the labor process</td>
<td>methodological</td>
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<tr>
<td>* initiation of experiential analysis</td>
<td>conceptual, methodological, political</td>
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<tr>
<td>* journal</td>
<td>political</td>
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<td>* covert experience</td>
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<td><strong>Phase II:</strong> talking with participants</td>
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<tr>
<td>* structured interviews</td>
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<tr>
<td>* diaries from participants</td>
<td>methodological, political</td>
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<tr>
<td>* gain access to franchise workers and management</td>
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<td>* short transcription</td>
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<td><strong>Phase III:</strong> surveying documents</td>
<td>conceptual, methodological, political</td>
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<tr>
<td>* literature reviews</td>
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<tr>
<td>* firm files; employee information</td>
<td>conceptual</td>
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<td>* census data; economic and social indicators; and data sets from planning councils</td>
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<td><strong>Phase IV:</strong> reporting information</td>
<td>conceptual, methodological, political</td>
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<tr>
<td>* conference papers and seminar presentations</td>
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<td>political</td>
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<td>* management’s report</td>
<td>conceptual, methodological, political</td>
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<td>* academic journals</td>
<td>political</td>
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<tr>
<td>* non-academic publications</td>
<td>conceptual, methodological, political</td>
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<td>* dissertation</td>
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**Figure 1:** Phases of housekeeping services franchise project

A changing urban political economy usually draws on aggregate data sources. I worked for three and a half months as a part-time cleaner and part-time flyer distributor for a local housekeeping services franchise. I did not reveal my 'true' identity at
the beginning of the employment phase for two reasons. First, I wanted the experience of being a franchise housekeeper, not of a
immerse myself in a working class environment through this specific type of employment. I could fill in the gap between myself

<table>
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<td>1. assumption that individuals create and discover meaning, within an objective reality</td>
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<td>2. personal preparation through empathetic understanding</td>
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<td>3. conscious partiality and recognition of privilege</td>
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<td>4. complete immersion; knowledge of other through multiple conditions of lived realities</td>
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<td>5. research questions of interest to researcher and 'researched'</td>
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<td>6. keeping in touch with changing attitudes, through personal and research journals</td>
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<td>7. multiple-depth conversations carried out over a period of days or months</td>
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<td>8. text from transcriptions basis for interpretation along with journal and historical materials</td>
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<td>9. analysis concurrent with data collection</td>
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<td>10. complementary methods of data collection</td>
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Adapted from Mies 1983; Reinhartz 1983; Maguire 1987.

Figure 2: Basic premises of experiential analysis

student wanting that experience. Second, I figured that this type of complete immersion would allow me particular insights into knowing the labor process that could be gained no other way.\(^5\) I chose housekeeping services franchises for three reasons. First, housekeeping services franchises were at the interface of production and reproduction labor relations. Second, I was already familiar with housekeeping through previous employment as a private housekeeper. By being employed as a franchise housekeeper I would gain experience as a domestic laborer in a clearly defined post-fordist labor process. Third, since nearly all housekeepers working at housekeeping services franchises were white women with working class backgrounds like my own, I could

as a student with working class roots and the realities facing working class women in an industrial-based city in the 1990s.

This experience I recorded in a journal. I recorded thoughts on the labour process, co-worker relations, managerial techniques of labour control, methodology, theory, methods, research ethics, class, gender, class formation processes, gender formation processes, empowerment, conscientization processes, feelings, emotions, my homelife, my worklife, my leisure activities, my thoughts on housework, and so on. I did not record the information in a way that is easily retrievable. I wrote about the day. I wrote about my life. I wrote as a stream of consciousness — directly into a computer. I color-coded with pencil the topics I

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addressed on a print-out of the journal entries. Through this record of employment, I was laying the foundation for an understanding of oppression in the context of waged domestic labor and setting the groundwork for an experientially-informed interpretation of a waged domestic labor process.

Talking with housekeepers, managers and head office personnel

Phase II began with gaining access to workers in other franchises through management and ended with categorizing the information I gathered while transcribing the interviews. The middle part consisted of multiple-depth conversations with women working in housekeeping service franchises and structured interviews with managers and head office personnel.

I had difficulty in gaining access to workers in franchises. At the franchise where I had been employed, I had access to and asked each woman to participate in the study. At another franchise I asked each woman individually, face-to-face, with permission from the manager/owner. I gained access to workers in a third franchise, after nearly five months of talking with the manager about the project. At a fourth franchise, my access to the workers was restricted only to certain employees named by the owner and directed by the top manager. Obstacles put up by the manager of this franchise to both myself and the workers made access nearly impossible. After many phone calls over a period of three months, I acquired sensitive information that led me to the decision not to pursue the workers anymore. Sorting through the topics to be covered in the multiple-depth conversations is an interactive process between conceptual objectives, one's methodological approach, and the politics of the research program. So in reviewing my journal, I identified three areas that I would like to discuss in detail with the women workers participating in the project. The first set of conversations focussed on the labor process — labor tasks and the rules for carrying out the tasks. Topics covered in the second set centered on the interface between home and the workplace(s). They included the division of labor at home, leisure activities, satisfaction of work and home, application of a waged labor process in unwaged labor, household economics, and coping with stress from home and workplace(s) at home and the workplace(s). The third set attempted to pull together these issues by asking directly what the women's views were on gender, class, and their possible links.

These three sets of conversations were put together with three ideas in mind: (1) the length of time the conversation would likely take, (2) specificity of information requested, and (3) the sensitivity of the topics. For practical reasons, I designed the first conversation to be the longest. Details of the work environment would be the most tedious recounting. Once the longest conversation was over then interest would increase, because the women would know that the subsequent conversations would be less demanding. A less formal atmosphere would then follow. Because the women would have done most of the talking in the first conversation, the barrier of subject/object would partially be broken down. I would then be someone to talk 'with' rather than talk 'to'.

I organized the topics in order of specificity. I thought it would be easier to get to know the woman and for her to get to know me if we were to cover very specific information at the beginning. This conscious decision to organize the topics in such a way assists in breaking down the unequal power relations already in place. They were experts; I was interested in their expertise. The women welcomed my suggestion to sit and talk in
doughnut shops. In fact, it enhanced the communication between us because it was a relaxed environment. Then, as schedules grew more hectic, I was invited into their homes by the second and third times we met. (It was only through recommendations by the manager or another worker that I was invited into a woman's home for the initial conversation.)

The topics also progressed from the impersonal to the personal. I felt it necessary to be sensitive to the intrusive character of some of the topics in which I was interested, like household economics. Each time we got together, I reiterated the point that if they did not want to talk about something, to just tell me. Over time, I anticipated gaining trust and being accepted in hopes that the women would not be giving me what I wanted to hear or me only looking at what I wanted to see. This proved to be a useful strategy in that, by the third conversation, the women felt comfortable enough, and had no qualms about, telling me I was wrong. For example, the women would often correct me about my view of what gender was by illustrating how they saw gender differences in their everyday life.

Structured interviews with managers and head office personnel is probably the best format for obtaining information from the franchisers and franchisees. Specific topics are covered by specific questions. In practice, I found that the interview took on a conversational tone where all the information I was going to request came forth during the discussion, without many requests. I think this was directly influenced by my familiarity with the labour process and with the domestic labor industry.

Once the interview phase of the project was complete, I transcribed the tape recordings. Because of my skills as a transcriber, I chose to pull together the task of transcription and categorization. I used a preformatted transcription form that was organized by topic. I shortened the transcription process by directly typing quotes into the appropriate topical sections. During other parts of the recorded conversation, I used only numerical references to the location on the tape. For example, I noted that a lengthy conversation on the influence the husband's mother had on his attitudes toward housekeeping in the home as "[145-196, Part C]" followed with perhaps a quote epitomizing the point the woman was making. In this way, transcription and categorizing of data could be accomplished within a reasonable amount of time.

Surveying documents and reporting the information

Phase III of the research project directs attention to the collectivization of women's stories vis-a-vis macro processes through document survey. Multiple ways to gather information and collect data complement the various areas of the investigation. Identification of macro processes, globally, nationally, and regionally, provides the background against which to set the diverse examples of the manifestations of these processes. The juxtaposition of macro processes and micro-diversity extends the explanatory capacity of the conceptual arguments the researcher is trying to make. Document survey complements the employment and interview phases of the project. Specific documents surveyed for the project with franchise housekeepers include: (1) academic and non-academic literature on theory, methodology, and politics, (2) printed information provided by head offices, (3) print-outs of transcriptions and journals, and (4) descriptive statistical data sources such as the census and material accessible through local and regional economic and social planning councils. An historical account of the emergence of housekeeping services franchises needed to be situated
within the burgeoning of the services industry. Links between women’s part-time employment and increased participation in service-oriented employment had to be sorted through for the specific industrial-based city as well as for other urban environments. This historical account coincides with the investigation of a history of the domestic service sector.

Although a write-up phase, Phase IV of the project actually is carried out concurrently with the other phases. The design of the project allows input at all stages of the research. Reporting the information takes on several forms. Two important avenues for reporting are conference sessions and seminar presentations. I have found these very useful in getting feedback from persons interested in domestic labor, theory, services industry, and feminist social science. Depending on the audience, the focus of the feedback varied. I found that women’s groups were very supportive about the project and challenged the interpretation, whereas more general social science audiences were less supportive and questioned the validity of doing feminist research.

Other forms of write-ups include reports for workers and managers. I wrote a short paper for the women workers on the collectivization of women's experiences, to share our lives with one another. For the managers, I prepared a report that outlines the historical and material conditions at the time of the emergence of franchise housekeeping services and workers' concerns. I wanted to make issues raised by the workers visible to managers and head office personnel because I want to make inaudible voices heard.

It is not pedantic to reiterate that there is interaction amongst the elements of the phases: between theory and method; between the experience and the write-up; between 'undercover' research and empowerment; and between conceptual arguments and political action. Analysis concomitant with data collection serves to enhance these links and permit the interaction to take place. An honest account of the research process will reveal to the researcher the connections between the various components. How open the researcher is to making these links visible and heard is an issue a feminist researcher must take up.

Concluding remarks

Research design is a key organizing element in implementing a feminist research program. Careful attention in outlining each project ensures that the researcher addresses that which she/he intended or intends to address. Sequential data collection phases permit interaction to take place and adds to the full experience of the research process. Choosing methods that complement each other in data collection can flesh out the goals of project. Being consistent in the approach to both the design of the project and the research program assures that researchers build upon their own work in such a way as to maintain a strong commitment to their own politics.

Strategies the researcher takes on are designed to attain general research program goals and specific project goals. Innovative theoretical conceptualizations assist in attaining conceptual goals of the program and the project. Again, it is important to note that both formal and informal avenues are equally legitimate in the process of conscientization and empowerment. Often it is through conversations outside the formal tape-recorded conversation that both researcher and 'researched' are empowered. By breaking up the research program into different research projects, the researcher can specifically address a topic and have a reasonable expectation of what can be addressed through particular strategies. Translation of these strategies is part of the research design.
The goals we set for ourselves in our capacities as scholars, social scientists, and feminists investigating geographic processes need not be antagonistic. Granted, in certain forums our research program must be hidden, as for example, a doctoral dissertation emphasizing feminist political action in some academic departments in North American universities. Persistent struggle on all terrains is necessary to overcome the obstacles already set in our paths. Since I think theoretical explanations of the entwined processes of production and reproduction are important, especially given the complexity of my own experiences of these processes, I want as one goal of my research program to link theoretically macro processes and micro-diversity. Since I think Mies’ guidelines to a feminist methodology is the most appropriate and least exploitative approach to investigations of waged domestic labor, I want to be able to employ freely such a methodology. Since I feel that political aims need not and should not be separate from academic pursuits, I want to publicly recognize my political agenda in my research. Recognition is not enough; acting on personal politics is necessary. We as feminist social scientists set research programs. We can derive many projects within the general framework of goals and, with careful consideration, we can design research projects to meet our goals. Conceptually, I choose to use feminist and Marxist theories as departure points to explain gender formation processes in waged domestic labor processes. Methodologically, I choose feminist approaches to research, based on non-exploitative methods. Politically, I am committed to the conscientization of the women I work with and myself via empowerment.

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NOTES

1. Like Kobayashi and Peake (1993), I use inverted commas with race in order to highlight the social construction of racialised relations.
2. Aggregate scale studies like Massey (1984) would still be considered a ‘view from below’ because such work serves the interests of women workers as an oppressed, exploited, disempowered group.
3. This is not exactly Mies’ intended meaning. I have chosen to present the information in this manner because I believe that points where the status quo can indeed be challenged are points of crisis. These points of crisis can be psychological, interpersonal, or societal. The important criterion is a ruptured normalcy because it contributes to both the consciousness formation of oppressed and exploited groups and the break with the status quo.
4. Not in all cases will the feminist researcher in economic restructuring studies be in a position of power or over the participant, as for example, women as researchers interviewing men as corporate executives. In these cases, the researcher’s personal politics must set the tone for the interaction such that the desired information is gathered and not redefined in the more powerful participant’s interest.
5. For a discussion of the ethical concerns I confronted in this study, see Moss (1994). In the end, although the employment experience was invaluable in my interpretation and analysis of the information I gathered in later phases of the project, I was still a student researcher wanting the experience of being a franchise housekeeper.
6. I asked them after I had worked at the franchise for two and a half months.

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