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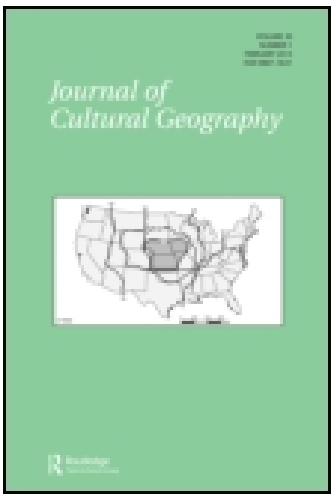

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Navigating the city: gender and positionality in cultural geography research

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Navigating the city: gender and positionality in cultural geography research

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How is qualitative research in geography performed? What are some considerations relevant to qualitative research in the field? Answering these questions requires reflections on the role of positionality and gender in cultural geography research. This paper explores the various ways that insider/outsider status and gender impact urban fieldwork. In doing so, it demonstrates that the issues confronting researchers are universal regardless of field site or national, personal, or professional position. By outlining challenges and successes from fieldwork in very different contexts and settings—the work of a graduate student in London, England and that of a faculty member in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania—this paper shows how a qualitative research methodology is directly impacted by the positions of the researchers and explores universal challenges related to positionality. In particular, we focus on interviews as a method that is central to answering research questions and especially impacted by the personal situations of the researchers.

Keywords: qualitative methodology; fieldwork; interviews; positionality; gender; urban geography

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Introduction

Cultural geographers are interested in the spatiality of everyday life at multiple and fluid scales (Holloway and Hubbard 2000; Bennett and Watson 2002; Johnson *et al*. 2013; Kong 2013). Qualitative methodologies, interviews in particular, are well-suited to provide this insight into personal and lived experiences of research subjects (Jackson 1983). This focus on personal experiences ensures the centrality of fieldwork in cultural geography, and in this paper we discuss the role of positionality while conducting international research. As Parker (2001) notes, qualitative research, especially when conducted in distant field sites, has a profound effect on the researcher and carries challenges that should not be underestimated and need to be carefully examined before beginning research. Here, in particular, we focus on the challenges presented by our positions and gender.

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The increasing popularity of qualitative methods raises questions not only about the methodologies used in geographic research but also about the perspectives and positionality of researchers, what Kong (2004) terms the "by whom, for whom" question. In this paper, by comparing the fieldwork experiences of a professor (Sarah) working in the developing world and a graduate student (Weronika) conducting research in a large, cosmopolitan city, we seek to demonstrate that the challenges presented by positionality are not unique but instead are universal. Much of the existing literature on positionality in fieldwork focuses specifically on one factor (such as race) and a specific field site (often the developing world). Here, we seek to examine positionality in a broader national, personal, and professional perspective across different spaces and cultural groups. We hope that by sharing our own experiences, we can initiate a dialog between researchers to find ways of navigating challenging research situations.

We focus on two important aspects of positionality that impact our research: insider versus outsider status and gender. When we consider gender, we not only reference the physical qualities associated with gender differences but most importantly also refer to socially constructed gender roles. In particular, we think about how our status as researchers affects—both positively and negatively—our ability to navigate urban settings to conduct qualitative research. We use multiple methods in our work including surveys, mental maps, archives, and participant observation, but here we focus on our experiences conducting interviews. We see these interviews as central to our larger questions about personal experiences but also a method especially impacted by our positionalities. To both of us, this connection between our personal experiences in the field and our research locations is closely linked to our understanding of our results.

In our discussion, we build on Rose (1997) who offers a critical reflection on her positionality as it relates to feminist geographical research. She outlines connections between power and knowledge and how they impact research and interviews in particular. She concludes that it is important to work with concerns over position rather than ignore them—a sentiment both authors share. We explore the relationship between linguistic and cultural fluency, building on the work by Chacko (2004) who points out that an understanding and intimate familiarity with the culture of studied people does not naturally stem from fluency in their language or even an upbringing in that culture's values and traditions. We also acknowledge the complexities of positionality that are raised by Ismail (2005). He shows that positionality is more than being an insider or outsider relative to a research group but is also about having insider knowledge and experience of a place and addressing the unique concerns of that place. Our discussions of position in this paper show the importance of fieldwork in understanding place. Importantly, we expand on the existing literature that focuses primarily on research conducted in developing countries (see Nagar and Ali 2003; Chacko 2004; Nagar and Geiger 2007; Chattopadhyay 2012). Through this consideration of research in

both London, England and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, we seek to identify universal issues related to positionality which transcend political, economic, and social contexts of particular research sites.

Navigating the cosmopolitan city

Although we focus on the ways that our positions impact our research, we also acknowledge that our field sites play an important role as well. After briefly outlining our research interests, this section discusses how place factors into our work. It also highlights the challenges of navigating these cities during fieldwork. For as important as our positionalities, insider/outsider status, and gender are to our research, they can only affect our work once we have successfully negotiated experiencing these places.

Weronika is a doctoral candidate who studies migration, ethnicity, and the diaspora of Poles in London, England. She is especially interested in the ways that modern communication technologies assist them in maintaining diasporic networks with their homeland. She is a native of Poland who migrated to the USA for her undergraduate and graduate study. Her own personal experience strongly informs her research. London is a world city that plays a central role in the global economy and contains important political and cultural activities. It attracts not only major businesses, banks, and corporations but also many immigrants from all over the world who hope to become part of London's growing workforce. The majority of these international migrants come from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and various Caribbean countries. Although most countries have tightened their immigration policies in the last decade, the United Kingdom continues to have a fairly open policy. It is one of only three European Union countries which allowed people from the 2004 post-accession members, including Poles, to immediately begin employment in the UK without a phased labor market access period. As various sources and censuses estimate, since 2004 about one million Poles moved to the UK and 560,000 continue to live there, with many settling in London (Berg 2010; Office of National Statistics 2012).

Sarah is a faculty member who studies the multiple legacies of colonialism on urban life, housing, and development in contemporary Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Although it officially ended there in 1961, colonialism continues to linger and impact the everyday lives of Dar es Salaam residents (Smiley 2013). For example, the German and British colonial governments divided the city into zones in order to unofficially segregate it into expatriate European, Asian, and African neighborhoods. These neighborhoods received differing amounts and standards of housing and services such as water and electricity with European areas privileged at the expense of the majority African population. In contemporary Dar es Salaam, residents continue to live and shop in the same areas created for them in the colonial era and the historically African areas still have very inadequate social services.

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Although we address some similar themes within cultural geography, our research takes us to vastly different research locations. Yet in spite of the differences between London and Dar es Salaam, we face many of the same issues during fieldwork. Both are large sprawling cities that present challenges for movement. The costs of urban research, the physical act of navigating the city, and the time involved in movement all impact our fieldwork. Interviews in particular are affected by urban locations since they require more planning and logistical work but also provide a context in which researchers interpret the data collected. As Entrikin and Tepple (2006, p. 32) suggest, the act of navigation is central to the research process since "movements of people through space could also be seen in terms of the experience of place."

We both see the importance of navigating urban life to our research. It is impossible to truly understand how our respondents live in and perceive of London or Dar es Salaam without also sharing similar experiences. By spending many minutes waiting for trains or stuck in traffic or running into roadblocks finding expensive and conveniently located housing, we can better relate to our respondents and their lives, which we hope ultimately makes us better researchers.

Navigating London proved challenging to Weronika. It took her a significant amount of time to familiarize herself with street and public transportation maps of the city. Traveling from one end to the other can take several hours each way. Thus, the act of moving to interviews was time-consuming. She initially planned to interview three to five people each day, but these challenges allowed her to only interview two to three people per day. Many interviewees were also very selective about the time and place of meetings. Professionally employed Polish migrants could only meet the researcher during their lunch break or immediately after work, requirements that were understandable but that impacted research productivity.

Transportation in Dar es Salaam also affected Sarah's research productivity. The most common form of transportation is the public minibus called the *daladala*. There are established *daladala* routes through the city, but these buses do not follow any set schedule, instead beginning their route when the driver and conductor decide the bus is full enough to be profitable. These buses provide a very cheap form of transportation, but can be slow, inconvenient, and crowded. Taxis offer a more direct and expensive form of travel, but are also extremely slow due to the city's extreme traffic congestion. In the past few years, it has become much cheaper to import cars into Tanzania so the number of vehicles on the roads has increased dramatically. It is not uncommon to hear stories of several hour commutes in one direction. Thus, it is necessary to allow for significant travel delays when scheduling interviews and to understand that research respondents suffer these same extreme commutes and may be late to meetings.

The cost of research, especially in expensive urban areas, cannot be overlooked as it directly impacts the duration and intensity of research that can be performed. These costs manifest themselves in a variety of ways

beyond the expected costs of travel, lodging, and food. In Dar es Salaam, an added research expense involves obtaining the necessary official documents including a visa, residence permit, and research permit. Likewise, this field site carries extra health expenses for immunizations (one of which is required for entry into Tanzania) and malaria prophylaxis. Although these costs are not incurred when conducting research in London, that city presents its own significant cost challenges that require a balancing act. By using public transportation rather than renting a car or using taxis, Weronika saved money yet lost time during long commutes between scheduled interviews. The cost of time is also a factor in scheduling and conducting interviews. Both of us have had many interviews canceled and rescheduled at the last minute. For example, Sarah encountered difficulties when attempting to interview a city planner. She arrived at the interview to find a locked office door and that none of the planner's coworkers knew where she was or when she might return. Although the interview was rescheduled for another day, the planner was late to that meeting because of the aforementioned traffic congestion. In another case, Sarah spent a considerable amount of time trying to schedule a meeting with a small non-governmental organization that works to improve slum housing. After finally agreeing upon a time, the group's secretary realized the interview was scheduled on a national holiday—a day when all offices across the country are closed. Since no other days were available to reschedule, the director was kind enough to open his office just for the interview. Both of these examples are representative of our experiences conducting interviews in the field.

As we make clear in this paper, challenges related to positionality are universal. This universality cannot, however, prevent researchers from considering obstacles to research which are particular to a given research location. For example, Dar es Salaam offers logistical challenges associated with technology and connectivity not experienced in London. The city has plenty of hotels and guesthouses that can provide affordable housing, but since many are small and privately owned they may be difficult to arrange from abroad. Specifically, some do not have websites with updated contact information. There are, however, networks of Tanzanian scholars who help provide recommendations and referrals for housing, and the increasing availability of Internet service is gradually changing the situation.

Insider versus outsider positionality

We both recognize that our research is influenced by who we are, especially our position in relation to our research subjects, issues previously raised by Chacko (2004), Nagar and Geiger (2007), and Valentine (2002). This positionality includes how we relate to those people we are researching in terms of cultural backgrounds and socioeconomic characteristics. As Merriam *et al*. (2001) note, researchers traditionally are categorized as insiders or outsiders relative to the ethnic or cultural group they are studying based on

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whether or not they share characteristics. However, positionality can undertake more complex forms when past experiences or personal characteristics of the researcher place the researcher in "spaces of betweenness" (Chacko 2004, p. 54) where their position is fluid and includes both insider/outsider perspectives (see Entrikin 1991; Katz 1994; Nast 1994; Mullings 1999; Chacko 2004). We both experienced a position of "betweenness" when we realized that despite varying cultural, economic, and urban contexts, classifying oneself as either an insider or outsider is not a simple task. This fluidity of insider and outsider status is important to both of our research projects since it informs how various people interact with us and helps provide access to certain people and places.

This simultaneous insider and outsider status is central to Weronika's research in London. She is a Polish native and herself an immigrant, which allows her to be an insider in the broader group of Polish migrants in Western countries. Yet by treating London as a research site rather than a home, she is an outsider while in the city. This dual position allowed her to better connect with some research subjects but also presented some roadblocks that required creative solutions. To young professional migrants, she was an insider in terms of age and broader life experiences. Like these young professionals, she was educated, well-traveled, and aspiring to a successful career. When among underprivileged labor migrants, insider status was more difficult to achieve. On one hand, they all grew up in Poland during a similar time, characterized first by socialism and later by early capitalism and consumerism. They vacationed in the same seaside and mountain towns, enjoyed the same forms of entertainment, and participated in similar social activities. On the other hand, she was perceived as luckier than other migrants since she had the opportunity to migrate to the USA while thousands of Polish migrants had to "settle" for the UK.

Johnson-Bailey (1999) uses the term "colorism" to describe the perception that her lighter skin led to more advantageous life experiences than darker-skinned African Americans. In a similar way, Weronika felt that her migratory path to the USA was perceived as more advantageous to her career than other migrant paths to the UK. She found one way to overcome this barrier was to seek common ground through the description of experiences at the personal level. These personal interactions led to extended interviews that often exceeded the allotted time but also resulted in richer research results. She was pleasantly surprised to learn that these migrants wanted to hear about her own experiences in the USA. She soon realized that if she wanted to gain information about their lives she had to share an equal amount of details about her own life.

Sarah faced an equally complicated positionality problem during her research in Dar es Salaam. For example, one of her research interests is to compare expatriate and African urban life and how they reflect legacies of colonial segregation. As a white American in a predominantly African city, her race suggests she is part of the expatriate community and thus an outsider

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to the city's majority African population. Yet to many of Dar es Salaam's expatriates, she is actually an outsider since rather than living among other foreigners, her research interests often take her to African neighborhoods. Even though her nationality provides her with limited access to the American Embassy, her academic status distinguishes her from Foreign Service staff. These embassy workers tend to have very high socioeconomic status since they are generally paid the same salaries they would make at home and receive other job benefits such as free housing. A researcher living within a limited budget, using public transportation, and eating inexpensive local cuisine is an outsider to many of these expatriates regardless of her skin color.

Being an outsider with regard to many expatriates does not allow Sarah to consider herself an insider to other communities in the city. When researching life in slum settlements, her race makes her a physical outsider to their predominantly African residents. She is also perceived to be an economic outsider. In order to minimize her outsider position, the faculty member uses her knowledge of Kiswahili, Tanzania's official language, to better connect with research subjects. Being able to greet respondents and conduct surveys and interviews in Kiswahili provides a degree of insider status. She also utilizes a local research assistant to help achieve the position of an insider. Another way to have an insider position is to use intermediaries to provide entrance into specific communities and settings. For example, while researching everyday life in Asian communities, members of various places of worship helped to introduce her to other members and vouch for her research and character. While none of these things can guarantee achievement of true insider status, they help her gain a stronger position during research.

It is important to note that simply being an insider does not necessarily have an inherently positive impact on research. The commonality of ethnicity, nationality, religion, or language can certainly help to build a sense of community and comradery between the researcher and her respondents and enhance the mutual trust during the interview process. Yet, in some cases, these same attributes may become an obstacle to the development of a reliable, true picture of migrants' experiences due to a certain level of competition that may arise between people who compare each other's accomplishments and assume a similar social, cultural, or national starting position. This rivalry between migrants of the same nationality or ethnicity can sometimes cause migrants not to be truly open with the researcher, and can be traced to, for example, embarrassment to share personal failures or problems with a researcher who, at least superficially, seems to be a successful outsider.

Weronika, in order to avoid bias associated with national or ethnic sentiments, focuses her studies on the experiences of each individual research participant, pursuing the question of what it is to be human and living in a global world (Tuan 1979; Relph 1986). She is interested in the individual experiences and subjective choices of Poles in London, and she interprets this data through the lens of her personal migratory experiences rather than

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national or ethnic perspectives. But, as she realized, this personal perspective also involves the risk of bias. As a PhD student from an American institution interacting with blue collar labor migrants in the UK, she constantly needed to remind herself of the bias resulting from applying her own career, personal, and cultural standards in order to avoid judging the career decisions of study participants and to arrive at objective conclusions. Likewise, Sarah understands that her own perspectives and perceptions of Dar es Salaam inform her research. She is able to use multiple lenses to understand her data because of her multiple positions.

In the context of national or personal bias, it is nevertheless important to note that pure objectivity is not always the goal of research. It is also possible to conduct research for subjective or emotional reasons. Arreola (2004, p. 143) calls for geographers "to embrace, not shun, work that is highly personal, sometimes emotional" in order to create work that is highly individualistic. We agree with this sentiment, having our own personal reasons behind our research interests. We feel that our research is stronger and more grounded because of our attachments and truly believe that trying to ignore these positions would ultimately be detrimental to the value that this research can provide.

We acknowledge that positionality is fluid and that at various times during the research process we are insiders and outsiders. Certainly, there were times that being insiders was beneficial, whether because it granted physical access to spaces (such as the American Embassy) or because it granted more emotional access to research subjects (such as by speaking a common language). In these cases, insider status was helpful but it was not faked; we certainly do not practice deception while in the field in order to gain a more advantageous position.

Gender positionality

In addition to our positions as insiders and outsiders in relation to our research subjects, another important aspect of our work involves our gender. Not only do our identities as women affect our research interests, but they also impact the actual research process itself. We are conscious about how this position influences our research design and in this section we focus on how it has impacted our use of interviews. We would like to explicitly stress that we do not believe that our gender impedes, inhibits, or disqualifies our research. Nor do we wish to suggest that male researchers never experience gender-based discrimination in the field. Rather we simply acknowledge that our gender is part of our identity as researchers and influences our process of collecting information through interviews.

Feminist geographers often focus on the lived experiences of individuals and groups in their own localities but also remind academics about the challenges that female researchers face while conducting fieldwork (see McDowell 1992; Bell *et al*. 1993; Kobayashi 1994; Till 2001; Nagar 2002;

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Chacko 2004; Chattopadhyay 2012). We quickly realized that our own gender not only informs our work but also plays a very important role during our day-to-day research activities. For Weronika, who was raised in the patriarchal Polish society, her position as a woman affects how Polish male research participants interact with her and how she approaches interactions with Polish male research subjects. When beginning her research, she was worried about the possibility of conducting a successful interview. First, she thought that Polish men would not fully value her as a researcher. Second, she was afraid they would not believe in her ability to specifically relate to their lives as male laborers. In spite of her apprehensions, she discovered that all of her male research participants were approachable, friendly, and eager to share their stories. In fact, she concluded that her position as a female researcher could have been beneficial, as the Polish men were both boasting about their professional successes and also mentioned a variety of personal problems in order to receive empathy, a behavior that may have been less verbalized in front of another man. This observation does bring into question a potential problem with the authenticity of their stories, but she does believe that her gender led to more open and personal conversations.

Sarah also encountered situations where her gender may have made interview subjects more willing to share personal information. When studying everyday life in Dar es Salaam, she asked questions about where respondents shopped and recreated and about their homes—such as the number of bedrooms and amenities such as cable and Internet. Although these were not intrusive questions, respondents were asked to talk about things they might not normally share such as whether they had security guards. She believes that her gender helped make respondents more comfortable answering these questions. Likewise, when asking other respondents about their household water and sanitation access, she was occasionally invited into women's homes. She does not believe that male researchers would have necessarily received that same access. Certainly, she did encounter people reluctant to participate in research, but none of these people explicitly cited her gender as a reason. It is possible their reluctance was a response to her gender, but it could likewise be attributed to her cultural or religious background, especially in encounters with members of the city's Asian and Muslim communities.

We both were conscious of how our identity affected the way we approached field research. In particular, we found that we placed a higher premium on personal safety than that expressed by our male colleagues. Weronika admits to paying constant attention to her security and safety in the field. She was very careful in selecting a proper place to meet with male respondents so they felt comfortable enough to answer personal questions but at the same time so that she felt safe. For example, she was invited to an apartment shared by a group of eight men. She knew this was a one-time opportunity for her to interview men who otherwise, due to their work schedules and lifestyle, would be virtually inaccessible. In order to minimize

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any potential risk, she explained her concerns to a male friend and asked him to accompany her to this interview. To avoid offending the interview participants, the friend was introduced as her transportation provider.

Sarah also kept safety at the forefront of her research decisions. It is important to note that this consideration was not because of any negative experiences but more because of the emphasis that expatriate research subjects placed on fear and crime when discussing life in Dar es Salaam. Issues of fear and safety emerged frequently, from expatriates mentioning which areas of the city that they were told to avoid, to describing areas they perceived as unsafe in spite of never visiting them, to expressing surprise at the researcher's complete willingness to go to those same places. The rhetoric expressed by some of these expatriates followed the "us/them" exclusionary dichotomies discussed by Sibley (1995) and the Orientalist "same/other" discourses described by Said (1979). Even though these comments about fear had some colonial undertones, they nevertheless made the researcher more conscious of her surroundings and encouraged her to take normal precautions such as conducting interviews in public space. We both see the necessity of striking an appropriate balance in order to safely collect rich qualitative data: researchers, especially women, must ensure their well-being while in the field but they should not let fear prevent them from conducting interviews or experiencing everyday life in their research sites.

Gender does not just affect research logistics. Gender, especially when understood as socially constructed gender roles, also influences how researchers and participants interact during interviews. For example, Weronika has interviewed groups of male and female migrants separately and found that the men were more open than women in their interviews. Polish women, especially those from challenged socioeconomic backgrounds, exhibited relatively lower levels of trust and requested a higher degree of anonymity. They specifically requested not to have their names included in publications and would not provide their last names when introducing themselves to the researcher. Some even described their hometowns as "smaller villages near a bigger city" to avoid providing specific names. Likewise, Sarah encountered an unintentional focus on gender when studying expatriates. These female expatriates are often "trailing spouses" who migrated for their husbands' jobs but do not themselves work. The lives of these women—especially how fear influenced their use of urban space—were definitely impacted by their gender and vary greatly from male lives that revolve around work rather than home. Thus, although neither of us consciously chose to consider how gender affects urban life, it has been an important theme of our work.

Gender and positionality in practice: conducting interviews

Having noted that our positions in the field as well as our research sites impacted our interviews, we wish to comment on the experiences of conducting these interviews. Although we both use multiple qualitative

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methods in our work, interviews are a central part of our research methodologies. These interviews tie our survey data, mental maps, and participant observations together and provide much needed context, grounding, and connections. We both use semi-structured interviews and between the two of us we have interviewed a variety of people including government officials, elites, and non-elites. During the course of conducting interviews, we have encountered some interesting situations directly related to our positionalities. Although the specifics of these situations may stem from our field sites, we see the challenges of recording and scheduling interviews to be universal to all researchers.

Weronika's insider position within the Polish community in London provides her with access to various groups of migrants, all of whom approach the process of interviews very differently. Even though she prefers to record interviews, not all research subjects consent. The group of eight male labor migrants described earlier specifically asked not to be recorded, indicating that the presence of a recorder would prevent them from being honest. After the recorder was turned off and stored away, the men began using a very casual language interlaced with curse words, which was a channel for personal, honest stories told without any censorship. Similarly, a group of female janitorial workers in a London hospital was extremely cautious about being recorded. Even though she did not even suggest using a recording device, the women wanted to confirm multiple times that their words were not being recorded. As it became clear during the interview, their migratory decisions were often sparked by domestic violence in Poland which they were not comfortable discussing on the record. In contrast to these experiences, the "yuppie" Poles working in London's professional jobs not only did not mind being recorded but, interestingly, made sure that the recording would be good quality. Many asked if they should be speaking louder or if they should be positioned closer to the recording device.

Likewise, Sarah's position in Dar es Salaam—both as a foreigner and as a woman—did impact her research on expatriate women in the city and provide her convenient opportunities to schedule and conduct interviews. For example, she was able to attend meetings of expatriates and participate in their social activities. Her time with these groups allowed her to interview expatriates in comfortable settings and also led to invitations into some of these women's homes. Her position allowed for this natural entrance into this community and facilitated successful and informative interviews.

Thus, we both recognize that our positions have allowed us to gain an added insight into personal and lived experiences in Dar es Salaam and London beyond what normal fieldwork might yield. Yet these interviews were not always easy. As explained above, we both encountered difficulties in scheduling interviews and navigating our cities to conduct the interviews. In spite of challenges—and because of the successes that stemmed from our positions—we have obtained some of our most relevant and important data through this research method. For example, expatriate women shared details

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about their everyday lives in Dar es Salaam and how they perceived various areas of the city as comfortable or unsafe. Polish immigrants in London provided insight into the various lifestyles, motivations, and struggles of labor migrants to the UK as well as stories about their homeland. We both see interviews as a central part of our fieldwork since they provide data in so many ways; they give us first-hand knowledge of respondents' lives, they take us into areas of the city we might not normally visit, and they give us an important lens to use when interpreting other data.

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Conclusions

As cultural geographers, qualitative methodologies are central to our work. We use surveys, mental maps, participant observation, and interviews to help us understand urban life and the experiences of our research respondents. These methods help us acknowledge that places have multiple meanings and thus a place that is safe and comfortable to one person may be scary and unfamiliar to another (Ekinsmyth and Shurmer-Smith 2002). We see interviews as an especially useful tool for understanding complex places such as London and Dar es Salaam and complex issues such as the experiences of Polish migrants and the legacies of colonialism.

Although we have successfully used a variety of qualitative methods, we have both encountered various challenges during our research related to our positions and our urban field sites. From traffic jams to canceled interviews to feeling like outsiders, we have stumbled while in the field. As this paper demonstrates, these problems are universal regardless of research location, topic, or even a person's position, at least when accounting for the personal factors attributable to us individually, our professional status within the academic community (student/professor), our gender, our cultural backgrounds, and selected research sites. London and Dar es Salaam are two exceptionally different places, but our stories from the field are still remarkably similar. For every hurdle that we have discussed, we have also had many more research successes. These successes have allowed us to meet research respondents from many walks of life who have shared personal stories about their lives. In some cases, our positions have assisted with these successes by helping participants feel comfortable with us. In other cases, these successes occurred in spite of our own fears or the participants' initial impressions of us as foreigners, researchers, and women. Ultimately, we recognize that our positions, and the negotiation of positionality in a relational sense, help us to understand the places and people that we study.

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