Area (2008) 40.3, 383–392

Personality: a new positionality?

Sarah Moser

Department of Geography, National University of Singapore, Block AS2, 1 Arts Link, Singapore 117570

Email: sarah_moser@nus.edu.sg

Revised manuscript received 23 January 2008

Over the past two decades there has been much focus across the social sciences and humanities on issues of positionality. However, in this literature the related issue of personality has not been a consideration despite its profound ability to shape both the research process and product. This paper draws on the wide body of literature on positionality as well as the work of psychologists concerned with understanding personality and emotional intelligence. Through discussion of my fieldwork experiences in Indonesia, I will illustrate some of the limitations of how positionality has been discussed and make a case for further attention to be paid to how personality affects the process of field research and, by extension, the production of knowledge.

Key words: *Indonesia, fieldwork, personality, positionality, knowledge production*

Introduction

> There was once an entomologist who found a bug he couldn't classify – so he stepped on it (Ernest R Hilgard).

This paper has developed out of my experiences conducting fieldwork in Indonesia.[1] In preparation for embarking on my first round of fieldwork, I had familiarized myself with the literature on positionality and situated knowledge, issues relating to research conducted by 'First World' researchers in the 'Third World', and techniques of reflexivity. However, as I spent time interacting with people in an Indonesian village, I became aware that my positionality and the external meta-categories to which I belong (female, 'white', Canadian, graduate student, middle class and so on) quickly diminished in importance to the people I was researching. While this is not to deny the 'complexity of my multiple subject positionings' (Besio 2003, 31) with regard to different people in the village, I found that it was aspects of my personality, such as my social skills, my emotional responses to and interest in local events, how I conducted myself and the manner in which I navigated the personalities of others that were the main criteria by which I was judged. This in turn affected my access to certain people, the degree to which they opened up and shared their stories and views, and ultimately had an impact upon the material gathered.

Over the course of my fieldwork, I encountered numerous other scholars conducting research. As far as the villagers in the field site were concerned, we all shared similar positionalities: we were 'white', formally educated, wealthy (at least by local standards), were non-Muslims, and were somewhat eccentric to have travelled all this way alone. However, while we were initially positioned similarly, as villagers got to know us, I observed that the ways in which we were treated and talked about by the locals in our field site varied significantly and were based less upon our biographies and more upon our unique individual social and emotional qualities – our *personalities* rather than our *positionalities*. While it was clear to me that the vastly different social interactions with our research subjects must inevitably have an impact on our respective research experiences, the literature I had read on positionality did not explore how personality affects the research process and outcomes. This paper sets out to demonstrate that although the two are conceptually linked, the literature on positionality has almost completely overlooked personality. I will then discuss how

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ISSN 0004-0894

psychologists define personality and emotional intelligence and why they matter in the context of fieldwork and in the production of knowledge. Finally, I examine possible future directions for exploring the connections between personality, fieldwork and the production of knowledge.

From objectivity to 'god-tricks': the emergence of the personal

Over the course of the past several decades, feminist theorists have been at the forefront of scholars who have challenged the universality of objectivist social science and the strict dichotomy it maintains between subject and object. Before this shift occurred, it was long believed that the ideal scholar needed to strive for absolute neutrality so as not to 'taint' the research with his or her individuality. Positioned as an 'omnipotent expert in control of both passive research subjects and the research process' (England 1994, 81), the researcher was seen to unearth universal truths about the world rather than to offer interpretations of it (Warren 1988). The implication of this perspective was that any scholar with the 'correct' training in methods and the appropriate fieldwork demeanor could objectively produce the same findings as another. Until the 1970s, such claims to neutrality were also pervasive in geographical research. Guelke's (1974) 'idealist human geography' approach viewed the researcher as an empty vessel that simply observed and recorded the ideas of his research subjects. As observed by Pile:

> geographers have acted as if they stand outside the specific historicity and geographity of their subjects; this has enabled them to comment on the reality of the subject's view of their own situation, while not allowing the subject's valid versions of reality (1991, 467).

Social scientists have grown increasingly suspicious of the possibility of such claims to objectivity and neutrality. The past two decades have brought a growing recognition that we never shed our identities or biographies to become neutral observers. In his landmark book *Reflections on fieldwork in Morocco* (1977), Rabinow was at the forefront of a broad reflexive turn in anthropology that challenged the objectivity of research and fieldnotes, and developed a more nuanced understanding of the inherent power dynamics of fieldwork. Haraway (1988) has famously argued that claims to be able to observe from a distance and to see everything from nowhere is nothing but an illusion, a 'god-trick'; there are no neutral observers and no research is completely unbiased. Furthermore, if researchers are subjective and carry with them unique individual biographies, the knowledges they produce are necessarily affected. Just as all ways of seeing are partial both in that they are incomplete and never disinterested (Jackson 2000), all forms of knowledge are also situated (Haraway 1988).

The reality is that researchers will not all produce the same findings because 'we all speak from a particular place, out of a particular history, a particular experience, a particular culture, without being contained by that position' (Hall 1992, 258). As a counter to the 'overgeneralizing, universalizing claims' (Rose 1997, 308) made by previous generations of supposedly 'all-seeing and all-knowing' scholars (Rose 1997, 305), a growing number of scholars have sought to examine how we as researchers are positioned within various power structures that privilege certain voices over others as 'where we are located in the social structure as a whole and which institutions we are in . . . have effects on how we understand the world' (Hartsock 1987, 188). As McDowell (1992, 409) argues, 'we must recognize and take account of our own position, as well as that of our research participant, and write this into our research practice'. Positionality is a strategy that has been employed to contextualize research observations and interpretations (Cloke *et al.* 2000). This can involve the researcher identifying 'key political aspects of the self' (Cloke *et al.* 2000). For example, Rose (1997), England (1994) and Madge (1993) reveal their feminist positionality to explain what occurs subsequently and to provide new positions from which to speak. Many geographers have explored how positionality, biography and the personal affect fieldwork (England 1994; Twyman *et al.* 1999; Cloke *et al.* 2000; Skelton 2001; Bondi 2002; Chari 2003; Cupples and Kindon 2003; Tembo 2003; Watson 2004). Similarly, others (Sidaway 1992; Madge 1993; Rose 1997) have written about how the positionality of the researcher is crucial to the process of producing knowledge.

While some have criticized this move towards the personal as contributing to a never-ending spiral of relativism (Parker 1992), others have argued that the personal does not mean that scholarly work is weakened as a result, but rather revealing the social structure or position from which one writes can actually lead to more insightful analyses (Harding

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ISSN 0004-0894 © The Author.

1987). How a researcher is positioned in society by sexual identity, age, social and economic status, gender, ethnicity, education and so on may inhibit or enable particular fieldwork methods and interpretations (Hastrup 1992; England 1994). Occupying certain positions and being aware of them may, for example, encourage researchers to take up projects that will place them at an advantage as an 'insider' (hooks 1990; Tembo 2003).

Some limitations of positionality

The move towards embracing the personal has brought about a significant shift in how research is conducted and considered. The recognition that we belong to various social categories that position us differently within power structures has helped researchers move away from traditional views of impartiality and claims to neutrality in fieldwork. However, through fieldwork experiences in Indonesia I have observed several assumptions, limitations and silences in the discourse on positionality relating to the lack of attention paid to personality in research.

The first is the assumption in much of the literature that one's positions *vis à vis* various power structures are necessarily the only or most relevant aspects of one's self to reveal. Ironically, when 'getting personal' about their work, researchers often choose to discuss themselves in terms of often impersonal externally defined categories (female, white, middle class, feminist, post-structuralist, a parent etc.). Discussions about researchers' positionality tend to lack insight about personality and how it may help or hinder the research, and particular challenges that certain personality traits might pose in particular research methodologies and fieldwork contexts. For example, while my whiteness, my foreignness, my education and perceived wealth was a novelty in the context of the Indonesian village in which I carried out fieldwork and (at least initially) brought a certain amount of cachet that opened some doors for me, this was not enough to sustain longer-term relationships necessary for the research. More specifically, the initial respect I could command based on my various positions soon gave way to a respect I had to earn based on aspects of my personality: my skill in navigating the social scene of the village, my willingness to spend time chatting at great length with all classes of villagers, how villagers observed my behaviour, my ability to 'read' various people and social situations, how I formed and maintained friendships, how I responded to local events. Fieldwork in the context of Indonesia, particularly in a village, is intensely social and greatly benefits from an extroverted personality. I have observed foreign researchers in Indonesia whose social positions placed them at a distinct disadvantage, such as being ethnically Chinese in a Muslim-dominated area with a history of anti-Chinese behaviour. In one case, I have seen an ethnically Chinese scholar who was able to flourish in Indonesian village society because her personality was such that she could quickly make friends, put people around her at ease, and initiate jokes, an ability that is highly prized and socially rewarded in much of Indonesian society. Similarly, I have seen some Indonesian Muslim scholars who have not been able to form close relationships in the same village because of the way in which they acted in the village. Some were unable to adjust to village life, were extremely shy or quiet, or did not have the patience to socially interact to the extent that was expected and gave off the impression of being *tertutup*, literally 'closed' or emotionally inaccessible. This situation could have a varied impact on the research, depending on the discipline of study, the material the researcher hoped to gather, and the type of methodology used. Since so much research (at least in an Indonesian village context) is based on social connections, particular social skills in a researcher are advantageous in particular scenarios. Notably, such skills would not be revealed in typical disclosures of positionality and the reader would be likely to assume that an Indonesian scholar would have more 'access' or 'insight'.

Similarly, there is an assumption in the discourse on positionality that power relations emerge solely from a complex structure in which we are all positioned differently. Roses's paper (1997), in which she describes a 'failure' in her research with arts community workers, powerfully illustrates the complexities of how differing positionalities can affect fieldwork. However, it also demonstrates the relative silence on how personality influences such situations. During one interview, her interviewee cracked a joke to a friend walking by about being interviewed for 'Radio 4', which caused Rose to deeply question her positionality to the extent that she felt unable to continue with her research. Her main source of discomfort stemmed from being unsure of the meaning behind her interviewee's joke, suspecting that his comment may have jokingly revealed that he was aware of class differences between them: his status as Scottish working class and hers as British middle

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ISSN 0004-0894

class. How one responds to such inevitable contrasts between the researcher and the researched is likely to be influenced by the personalities involved as much as by the particular differences in positionality. Where the focus is on how we are positioned *vis à vis* our research subjects with regards to race, religion, class, etc., there is a silence regarding how we as individual researchers behave and interact with research subjects who also have a range of social skills and emotional abilities. The individual's personality plays a significant role in shaping power relations in all social encounters, including that of the researcher and the researched.

Published research in which positionality is discussed is also markedly silent when it comes to revealing aspects of one's personality that may hinder a particular research project. While there are surely researchers among us who are viewed to varying degrees as outgoing, shy, domineering, neurotic, paranoid, hot-tempered, impatient and so on, such observations about oneself do not appear in discussions of positionality, even though these traits may have a far more significant impact on the research process and product than being, for example, a feminist, white, a post-structuralist or middle class. In this way, positionality is a highly selective version of oneself that usually serves to keep academic authority intact. For example, when Madge (1993, 297) positions herself as a 'young(ish) heterosexual white woman of middle-class(ish) background', she reveals identities which may be of little consequence to interviewees in certain research scenarios. A limitation of listing such positions is that it tends to address the categories and issues important to academic analysis over those relevant in fieldwork. Furthermore, while I have heard many anecdotes about 'failed' research projects and research projects abandoned due to an incompatibility of the researcher and the research site and methods, there is a lack of published material which explores this.

The last limitation I will discuss stems from an assumption that some feminist geographers have made about fieldwork interactions. For example, England (1994, 82) has observed that 'most feminists usually favour the role of supplicant, seeking reciprocal relationships based on empathy and mutual respect'. While this is a valuable departure from previous approaches, it makes the implicit assumption that (feminist) researchers share the common ability to act as supplicants, to foster reciprocal relationships, and to demonstrate empathy and mutual respect. Feminists may, according to England (1994), favour the role of supplicant yet the ability to successfully perform that role will greatly vary among feminists (or anyone else – one does not have to be a feminist to be able to perform that role). Navigating any social interactions can be challenging, but when there are differences in culture, language, and education, these challenges are compounded and may be prohibitive depending on one's social skills and personality. During various fieldwork experiences I have encountered researchers who claimed to be informed by feminist approaches yet were emotionally unable to connect with research subjects in appropriate ways. In other words, they were engaging in fieldwork that was incompatible with their personalities. The solution here is not to attempt to change one's personality to fit a fieldwork situation but to engage in fieldwork that utilizes one's strengths.

There are few examples in which geographers have explicitly recognized that the individual's mental and emotional abilities have an impact on the research process and outcomes. One piece that stands out is Widdowfield's (2000) paper on emotion in which she examines why researchers have 'failed to recognize, or at least articulate, the potential of emotions on their research' (Widdowfield 2000, 199). Kindon (in Cupples and Kindon 2003) brings up her personality in the context of working and living in close quarters with a colleague and a research assistant while conducting two bouts of fieldwork. Kindon discusses how she resolved personality differences but does not examine how her own individual personality affected her fieldwork interactions with interviewees and how this may have impacted her research. Mills and Withers briefly mention the individual researcher's unique range of abilities that make conducting fieldwork unsuitable for some people:

> different personal characteristics . . . allow for different insights, and as a consequence some researchers grasp some phenomena more easily and better than others. Indeed fieldwork requires imagination and creativity and, as such, is not for everyone (1992, 163).

Similarly, Stanley and Wise recognize that internal mental forces play a role in the fieldwork process:

> Whether we like it or not, researchers remain human beings complete with all the usual assembly of feelings, failings, and moods. And all of those things influence how we feel and understand what is going on (1993, 157).

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ISSN 0004-0894 © The Author.

Both of these quotes begin to get at how researchers have different internal lives and capacities that significantly affect how we see, think about and interact with the world. However, how our personalities affect our social interactions during the research process requires further investigation.

Personality and emotional intelligence

While not denying the importance and the value of the insights on positionality, in this paper I seek to add another dimension to the literature by suggesting that researchers' biographies, as presented in the literature to date, focus on social categories which may not provide enough information about the researcher's internal life, their social abilities, their 'emotional intelligence' and how the individual's personality can affect the research process and outcomes. There is the need to more explicitly examine how we behave and interact socially, how 'different people respond differently to similar events' (Mischel 1986, 4) despite sharing similar social identities.

In order to begin to understand how our distinct emotional abilities and characteristics affect research, it is helpful to turn to work carried out by psychologists on personality and in the related area of emotional intelligence. While no definitions of personality are accepted by all psychologists, there are key components of personality that are generally agreed upon. First, personality involves characteristics that are relatively enduring (Funder and Colvin 1991; Goldberg 1993; Derlega *et al.* 2005). This is not to say that personality is unchanging, but that change occurs gradually over extended periods of time. Second, personality involves 'a certain degree of consistency in how people respond across various situations' (Derlega *et al.* 2005, 4; McAdams and Pals 2006). Mischel (1986, 4) points out that 'personality' usually refers to 'the distinctive patterns of behaviour (including thoughts and emotions) that characterize each individual's adaptation to the situations of his or her life'. As Phares (1988, 4) summarizes, 'personality is that pattern of characteristic thoughts, feelings, and behaviours that distinguishes one person from another and that persists over time and situations'. The focus for personality psychologists is on 'individual differences in basic tendencies, qualities, or dispositions' (Mischel 1986, 4). Our moods form a relatively consistent pattern of interaction with people and how we emotionally respond to certain situations, in other words, our personality, is more or less stable (Funder 1997). A knowledge of our personalities can potentially help guide what type of fieldwork we are most suitable for or capable of.

In the 1980s, many personality psychologists looked to a five-factor model of personality traits, referred to as the 'Big Five'. This was a framework which organized information about people into five broad categories: extroversion, neuroticism, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and openness to experience (Costa and McCrae 1992; McAdams 1996). Over the past decade, however, some personality psychologists have expressed doubt that any trait-based scheme, no matter how comprehensive, can account for all individual differences (Block 1995; McAdams 1996). This has led to a more integrative approach to understanding the individual that explicitly situates the individual within a social, cultural and historical context yet does not 'reject the possibility that there exist universal, cross-cultural truths about human personality, such as those that may be couched in terms of human evolution and the structure of the brain' (McAdams 1996, 296; also see Buss 1991). The integrative framework brings together social science's narrative study of lives, including an array of personality determinants such as genetic influences, brain structure, birth order, early family training, class and race effects, gender, and culture (McAdams 1996; McAdams and Pals 2006). McAdams and Pals have proposed five principles for understanding the whole person:

> Personality is conceived as (a) an individual's unique variation on the general evolutionary design for human nature, expressed as a developing pattern of (b) dispositional traits, (c) characteristic adaptations, and (d) self-defining narratives, complexly and differentially situated (e) in culture and social context (2006, 204).

The five principles assert that the wide variation in dispositional traits are recognizable in part for their evolutionary significance but that 'more contextually nuanced and psychosocially constructed features of personality move well beyond traits in speaking directly to how human beings respond to situated social tasks' (2006, 205). In other words, dispositional traits in personality are manifested in behavioural expressions that are culturally dependent. As Adams writes:

> Neuroticism is neuroticism, wherever and whenever it plays itself out in human life. But whereas highly neurotic young women in the United States may suffer from bingeing, purging, excessive rumination, or ill-advised sexual adventures, their counterparts in

Area Vol. 40 No. 3, pp. 383–392, 2008
ISSN 0004-0894 © The Author.
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> Ghana may tend to express their negative affectivity in other ways, such as somatic symptoms, magical thinking, or avoidance of the many enemies they perceive in their lives (2005, cited in McAdams and Pals 2006, 211).

This is helpful in understanding that individual personalities are acted through various social identities and are highly dependent on context.

Returning to the concept of positionality, we can productively borrow from this integrative approach to more fully understand the individual. The integrative approach acknowledges that certain traits, mental skills, cognitive functions, the ability to read expressions and body language have all evolved in many species in order to communicate with other members of the species. At the same time, the approach does not deny that personality is mediated through various social categories and that personality is shaped to some degree by various social positions and lived experiences. If social scientists fail to recognize the significance of individual differences in our personalities it unproductively implies that personality is simply the sum of one's positionalities. Funder (2001, 134) has critiqued the extreme cultural-constructivists who would argue that personality is simply constructed:

> It is interesting and sophisticated to think of traits as hypothetically 'constructed' concepts with no actual basis in reality, but it is not very useful. Gordon Allport[2] is said to have once pointed out that one could think of stars as mere hypothetical constructs in the minds of astronomers. This view might have merit, but it would halt the progress of astronomy. Similarly, an effort to understand and improve the accuracy of judgements of personality traits might profitably begin with the presumption that traits exist.

These approaches conceptualize personality and positionality as interrelated and contend that they are best examined together. Without knowledge of one's positionality and the cultural context of one's fieldwork, an analysis of a researcher's personality is less useful as personality traits may be manifested differently in various cultural contexts, as mentioned above. Furthermore, even within the same cultural contexts a personality trait may be perceived differently depending on one's positionality. For example, Brown and Ballou (1992) have pointed out that many personality traits are highly gendered. A personality trait such as assertiveness may be perceived differently depending on whether the individual is a man or a woman. Likewise, one's personality may influence one's positionality. Semykina and Linz (2007) have conducted a study in which they conclude that personality affects income, in an effort to partially explain the gender wage gap. In this case, personality traits perceived to be masculine in Russian society were financially rewarded over those perceived to be feminine, thus positioning a greater number of men perceived to hold masculine personality traits in more powerful and well-paid occupations.

While personality is perceived differently according to gender and other social categories, psychologists McCrae and Costa (1997) argue that there is in fact little variation of personality traits across cultures. In contrast to anthropologists and cross-cultural psychologists who have emphasized the diversity of human cultural institutions and their impact on individual psychology (Markus and Kitayama 1991; Konner 1991; Loehlin 1992) McCrae and Costa (1997, 509) argue that there are some 'universals of human nature that transcend cultural differences'. These core traits may be manifested differently to some extent depending on the cultural context, gender, race and so on. Furthermore, their study suggests that an individual who is, for example, an extrovert is generally sociable and frequently recognized as such across cultures.

Though controversial,[3] much psychological research argues that IQ is a reliable measure of an (admittedly narrow) aspect of cognitive capacity, and is relatively stable over time. It is this traditional type of intelligence that education systems recognize, measure, nurture and reward. Those who possess this type of intelligence and who score highly on traditional standardized intelligence tests excel in this system yet may be ill-equipped when confronted with situations outside its purview (Elias *et al.* 1997; Cohen 2001). A growing number of psychologists contend that traditional intelligence measured by IQ fails to consider the complexity and range of cognitive activity, arguing that there are multiple types of intelligence of which 'traditional' intelligence is but one (see Goleman 1996; Mayer and Mitchell 1998; Mayer *et al.* 1999 2001). In *The shattered mind*, Gardner (1975) began to formulate the idea of multiple intelligences, identifying eight types of intelligence (two more were later added). Based on a decade of theoretical and empirical work, Mayer *et al.* (2001) argue that emotional intelligence meets the criteria for an intelligence and can be considered a measurable set of abilities. Although psychologists have debated the existence of multiple types of intelligence that include emotional intelligence (Roberts

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et al. 2001), here I adopt the view that emotional intelligence is one of multiple forms of intelligence in order to have a conceptual handle with which to discuss the range of researchers' emotional and social abilities. The way in which personality, like intelligence, is measured and discussed is admittedly problematic (Gray and Thompson 2004) as both concepts are culturally constructed and are open to a range of interpretations. It does not mean, however, that individual cognitive, emotional and behavioural differences do not exist or that they are not useful ways in which to think about human differences. While complex and problematic in many ways, it is counterproductive to define these terms out of existence (McAdams 1996).

As with traditional intelligence, emotional intelligence can be measured using a series of tests.[4] One such task tests the ability to recognize emotion in the faces of others (Mayer *et al.* 2001). Images of people displaying a wide range of expressions are shown to test subjects who are asked to 'read' the faces to determine the emotion that person is experiencing. Psychologists have found that scores in such testing vary widely, indicating a wide spectrum of social and emotional abilities across the population. Abilities such as emotion recognition would no doubt be extremely useful and even necessary in many fieldwork situations that require an ability to 'read' people's emotional states and social situations. Knowledge of one's general capabilities or limitations in these areas would help to avoid situations in which the researcher is emotionally incompatible with a research project that demands certain emotional abilities or personality traits. Due both to a lack of published material available and a lack of emotional training in our educational experiences, this type of reflection can prove to be more difficult than evaluating our positionality and even requires a certain personality. People's different emotional intelligence or personalities make some people more able than others to recognize when their personality is hindering or affecting their research.

Future directions

While plenty of valuable guidance exists for those interrogating how their positionalities affect the fieldwork process, there is currently a lack of exploration into how differences in personality should be approached and to what extent they affect academic research. As suggested by Mills and Withers (1993), we are not all equally suited to or capable of conducting certain types of fieldwork. While we know that different people respond differently to the same situations, we as researchers are not encouraged to reflect upon how we tend to individually respond to given events as part of the research process.

The aim of this paper is not to argue for further navel gazing. I argue that in practicing reflexivity we would benefit from a more thorough evaluation of aspects of ourselves that are most relevant to our own research contexts. Building on the same logic developed by feminists and others across the social sciences and humanities that has brought the personal into research, I would like to suggest adding another dimension to this exploration of the self to include our individual personalities. It is reasonable to expect researchers, particularly those conducting intensely social fieldwork, to have an understanding of their emotional abilities and how their personalities affect the research process and outcomes. In this final section I would like to make several preliminary recommendations as to how we can begin to analyze personality, to integrate analyses of personality into research and pose several questions for future research.

The first suggestion is to build upon work advanced by feminist geographers and others. The process of examining one's own personality[5] could fruitfully be integrated into the framework of positionality, using the technique of reflexivity to deeply explore how personality affects fieldwork and knowledge production. Reflexivity is a technique developed that is 'self-critical sympathetic introspection and the self-conscious analytical scrutiny of the self as researcher' (England 1994, 82). This analytical scrutiny of the self should be extended to include the more personal (and potentially more unpleasant) aspects of our positionality that may actually be a key part of how we conduct fieldwork. While positionalities and biographies of researchers may be similar, we do not appear the same to the researched. We therefore need to be more conscious of and sensitive to the parts of our personality that have an effect – positive or negative – on those around us.

My second suggestion addresses the general lack of attention to emotional and social skills in educational curricula[6] (Elias *et al.* 1997; Cohen 2001). It would be useful to introduce the concepts of emotional intelligence and personality as part of graduate training so that we can better evaluate our internal selves, particularly for those conducting intensely social fieldwork. While students are increasingly encouraged to be aware of their positionality and

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ISSN 0004-0894

how it affects their production of knowledge, they do not receive any training or guidance concerning their personality in relation to their proposed fieldwork. A deeper knowledge of our emotional abilities could guide us towards making better choices in fieldwork and methodology as it cannot be taken as a given that we will naturally gravitate towards field research that utilizes the strengths of our personality. Such personality training is increasingly offered through business schools where there is the 'realization that technical competence alone is no longer sufficient to exercise management functions' and where many programs have 'further strengthened and extended the personality development elements' (European Business School website, http://www.ebs.de/index.php?id=563&L=1). Many professions openly acknowledge that poor social skills, low emotional intelligence, and mismatched personalities can adversely affect goals (see, for example, Greenhalgh *et al.* 1985; Rosse *et al.* 1991; Rothstein 1994; Funder 1997; Longo and Pompian 2005; ogilvie 2005).[7]

Finally, a greater exploration of how personality – both the researcher's and that of the researched – affects the fieldwork process and outcomes would be a welcome addition to the literature on positionality. While linked to positionality, personality deserves its own analysis. Just as scholars have argued against the researcher as a neutral, detached observer in favour of a situated person who brings his or her own individual biographies, so too do we bring different internal qualities and various emotional abilities to our fieldwork that have an impact on the knowledges we create. While our understanding of our personality will always be partial, our personalities and emotional abilities need not be viewed as unknowable, infinitely relativistic terrain. Through creating stronger linkages to the literature on personality in psychology, geographers can strengthen their own methodologies and techniques of reflexivity.

In considering issues of personality in research, a number of questions emerge for further study including:

- How do researchers' personalities affect the research process and outcomes in various contexts?
- To what extent does the impact of personality depend on the type of research, academic discipline, methodology and what material the researcher hopes to gather?
- How and to what extent are personalities acted out through positionalities?
- How should social scientists go about assessing personality?
- How do psychological understandings of personality relate to notions that we 'perform' various social identities?

This paper has touched on just some of the issues in considering personality in research and further work is required to assess the role of personality in fieldwork and in research outcomes. Further exploration in this area will lead to a better understanding of the impact personality may have on academic research and contribute another dimension to the literature on positionality.

Acknowledgements

I thank Lily Kong, Julia Moser, Natalie Oswin and Lee Seng Lee for their thoughtful comments on an earlier draft and Tracey Skelton and the 'Ta Pow' Social and Cultural Geography Cluster at the National University of Singapore for the feedback. This paper has benefited from the comments of two anonymous reviewers and the encouragement of Diganta Kumar Das, Smita Singh, Kanchan Gandhi and Taberez Neyazi. Last, I thank Miko and B Putra for their assistance and support.

Notes

1 My fieldwork takes place in a village in the Riau Islands, a newly created archipelago province of Indonesia between Sumatra and Singapore. I have made numerous field and social visits of varying lengths between 2004 and the present, lasting anywhere from one to six weeks and have had several friends I made in the village visit me in Singapore. In my research I examine the process of nationalization at the village level in Indonesia, specifically how various village spaces have been constructed to encourage villagers to perform national identity.

2 The pioneer of personality psychology in the 1930s.

3 The basis for IQ is controversial and many critique the content of IQ tests as being ethnocentric. See Steven Gould's *Mismeasure of man* (1981) for a critique of the method of early IQ testing. Methods of testing are admittedly problematic and while results are consistent over time, it is much debated as to what exactly the tests are measuring. However, scientists do agree that we all have different cognitive abilities.

4 This is not to say that the tests are not problematic but that what they are measuring is consistent and repeatable over time.

5 Funder (1999 2001) has questioned the extent to which the average person can accurately judge their own personality or that of others. He believes that we all judge personalities in our daily lives and must be accurate to some degree

ISSN 0004-0894

much of the time in order to function socially. Psychological tests have determined that people are capable of judging personalities with a relatively high degree of accuracy. However, Funder explains that the ability of the individual to judge their own personality has been shown to be problematic and relatively inaccurate.

6 This is beginning to change in some places. It has been pointed out to me that some schools in Singapore have recently introduced testing to assess students' personalities and then use this information to tailor the learning process to individual emotional abilities and personalities.

7 This is not to say that personality testing is not problematic. There is doubt as to how effective personality tests are in assessing the potential and capabilities in employees. However, other psychologists say that certain traits are able to predict important behavioural trends and life outcomes (Wiggins 2003; McAdams and Pals 2006).

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ISSN 0004-0894 © The Author.