

Interactive comment on “More than just translation: challenges and opportunities in intercultural and multilingual research” by L. G. Crane et al.

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Received and published: 7 July 2009

We would firstly like to thank the two reviewers for their thoughtful and invaluable comments. We would also like to pay tribute to Glen Elder, in the light of his untimely death. In the ongoing process of critically reflecting on our article, the reviewers' comments have helped us to focus and refine our thinking. Here, we respond to their main concerns in turn, and highlight a particularly interesting point of divergence.

Reviewer 1 (Gesa Helms) Gesa Helms' suggested a need for a definitive response to how precisely the complexities of multilingual research are more than translation. We have suggested that our key contribution to the debate is widening its focus to

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go beyond simply linguistic concerns, relating to the idea of ‘translingual’ research highlighted by the second reviewer, discussed below.

She also suggested expanding upon the moments of friction and hesitation that operating in a multilingual context involves. We have tried to emphasise what these moments actually meant during the research process for each of us, and relate this to wider concepts such as representation and identity. In particular, in our conclusions we reflect on the methodological implications of multilingual settings for social science research more generally.

She also recommended that we review our somewhat ‘monolithic’ understanding of culture, which seemed to equate language with culture. We have rewritten certain sections to reflect a more nuanced understanding of this concept, which it was always our intention to convey.

Reviewer 2 (Glen Elder) Glen made the extremely helpful suggestion to consider our application of hybrid spaces in terms of being ‘transcultural’ or ‘translingual’. We have applied the label to our proposed methodological approach, as we think it very aptly captures our endeavour to express the importance of reflexivity and the wider focus we are suggesting, going beyond solely linguistic considerations but maintaining a link with language.

He also suggested treating multilingual research as a research methodology, a point which we implicitly made in our original article, and which we have tried to make more explicit in the revised version.

He asked how we propose to disseminate research findings in multilingual settings. While we do not feel that this issue is central to our argument (as it does not necessarily apply to all the authors), we have touched upon it in the concluding section, widening it to relate not just to findings, but also to explanations, presentations, discussions and conversations.

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Finally, we would like to highlight a point of contradiction between the two reviewers, which we also hope will illuminate our position better. Gesa suggested that the observation that people with 'international backgrounds' have greater insights into the issues at hand is 'very unsurprising'. On the other hand, Glen found the discussion of the translatability of theoretical terms from culturally specific contexts 'compelling'. We think that whether or not issues such as translatability are taken for granted depends very much on the perspective of the observer: to someone who has experience of operating in a multi-lingual context, these reflections may be almost banal, while for researchers within a monolingual research setting, they may be enlightening. We suggest that the generalised lack of reflection in human geography and the social sciences more generally, about these issues (which this special edition aims to address) shows that they are far from self-evident for the majority of researchers.

Interactive comment on Soc. Geogr. Discuss., 5, 51, 2009.

SGD

5, C71–C73, 2009

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