



Identities and Belonging

"where are you Really from?"

Researching Scotland's Ruralities
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Structure of Presentation

- **Aim**
- **Context and conceptual framework**
- **Research**
- **Examples of translocational experiences and practices- identity claims and performing identity**
- **Conclusion**

Aim

The overall **aim** of the presentation is to explore the notion of different ruralities by focusing on the 'translocational' dimension of identities and belonging amongst minority ethnic groups including international migrants in rural Scotland.

The presence of minority ethnic people and the ways in which they negotiate and perform identities serves to challenge notions embodied in the much discussed 'rural idyll' and hegemonic notions of who belongs and who doesn't in rural spaces .

Distinctiveness of rural: minority ethnic people

Small numbers, diversity and dispersion impacts on the ability of minority ethnic households in a number of ways :

- to exercise their rights as citizens (for example in terms of access to services, having a collective voice, etc)
- presents particular challenges in negotiating their identities and developing a sense of belonging in the absence of other co-ethnics.
- can lead to feelings of isolation and pressures to assimilate

(e.g. de Lima 2012; Garland and Chakraborti, 2002. Neal & Agyeman 2006)

Ethnicity, 'Race' and Place

'Place blindness' in research on ethnicity / 'race', and **ethnicity / 'race' blindness** in rural literature has led to binary conceptualisations as well as notions of who belongs where :

urban as cosmopolitan V rural as somewhat monolithic where considerations of ethnicity / 'race' are not relevant .

This in turn has led to :

- a continuing tendency to deny, what Cloke (2003, p.3) labels, 'transgressive presences and practices' from rural spaces
- the privileging of particular voices and types of research amongst academics and policy makers with regard to researching ruralities

Conceptualising Identity and Belonging

‘Identity involves individual and collective narratives of self and other, presentation and labelling, myths of origin and myths of destiny with associated strategies and identifications. Belonging on the other hand is more about experiences of being part of the social fabric and the ways in which social bonds and ties are manifested in practices, experiences and emotions of inclusion.’ (Anthias,2008, p8)

Conceptualising ruralities

Recent trends have attempted to explore ruralities as :

- diverse, 'active' and 'mobile' (e.g. Bell et al 2010) ;
- encompassing notions of symbolic significance embodying cultural and social characteristics which are ethnicised , genderised ... (e.g. Bell et al 2010; Neal and Agyeman 2006)
- 'sculpted' by human interaction and 'social relations' - rural spaces and people as mutually constitutive of each other (Neal and Agyeman 2006)
- 'translocational' in the face of changes nationally and globally and a variety of mobilities (Anthias 2008 on translocational ; Hedberg and do Carmo 2012)

Identities, Belonging, Ruralities

The presence of people from diverse minority ethnic backgrounds including international migrants serves to :

- challenge prevailing hegemonic ideas about identities and belonging in rural places and spaces
- disrupt notions of rural as 'fixed' and isolated by drawing attention to 'translocal' flows and social processes beyond national boundaries (Anthias, 2008; Appadurai, 1993)
- the notion of 'translocational' opens up the possibility to explore identity and belonging as stretching across places, spaces as well as time, operating at different scales whilst simultaneously being situated in a specific locality.

Research

- This presentation draws on several research projects undertaken in the **Highlands and Islands, South West of Scotland, Grampian and South West of England** since 1998.
- **Methodology** : Qualitative : interviews , focus groups and questionnaires
- **Sample** :
 - Varies across studies from 20 to over 100
 - Minority ethnic sample :e.g. Asia, Africa, Latin America, Central and Eastern Europe and mixed cultural heritage
 - Age range : 16 plus
 - Socio-economic position : varied

Examples of translocational experiences and practices

Identity as :

- Relational: conditionality; stereotyping –'fixing identities' ;
- contingent on context (spatial, social, national, etc)
- characterised by complex intersectional identities
- hyphenated identities

Performing identity across translocational spaces

Fitting In

Home making

Where are you from?

'I get a lot of people that ask at school "where are you from?" And, I say from (local town) and they say, "well how come you are a different colour?" And I say like well my mum and dad were from India. But I am from Scotland and have lived here all my life and my parents happened to have come from India. People should step back and think about what they are saying rather than stereotype people all the time.'

(Indian female, rural Scotland)

Acceptance is 'conditional'

'The society takes away your identity and gives it back when it wants to. You are an 'honorary white' when it suits them. If you are wealthy and middle class and if you do the rights things and have the right accent, then you experience less racism' (Muslim Female. rural England)

“Fixing identity”

‘Everyone assumes you are from Poland if you speak with an East European accent’ (European female , rural Scotland)

‘They always ask me to demonstrate origami , as though that is the only thing that Japanese women do. Not all Japanese women want to do these things , they are not all traditional. Culture is changing. Japanese women are very modern as well you know .’ (Japanese female, rural Scotland)

Spatial context and maintaining identity

‘It is difficult to keep your own language when there are not many people to speak to in your own language in the community. I have been to Bangladesh several times, but here there are not many Bangladeshi families about and no young people from the same community, this makes it difficult. (Bangladeshi male, rural Scotland)

‘Half and Half’

Claiming hyphenated identities

‘Half and half probably as I have Pakistani parents and that and they were born in Pakistan. My mum was a child when she moved here. Then I was born here, but I am still half Pakistani and then part Scottish as I’ve lived in Scotland all my life.’ (Pakistani female, rural Scotland)

Claiming- Hyphenated identity

‘I would start with English as I was born there and then may be Japanese. I don’t know I don’t feel any of the categories are relevant. I prefer to call myself half English and half Japanese: I like being different.’

(Mixed cultural heritage female)

Performing Identity- reclaiming space?



Performing Identity

AV ; Yeah we celebrate all religious festival you know

AV: Yes you know like Christian Christmas and we have nothing against that at all

Q: So you celebrate other festivals ?

AV: Everything

AN: Yeah and I feel like when my friends ask me “So do you celebrate Easter or something cos I was wondering if I should give you Easter eggs?” I mean I was like “Yeah why not”.

Conclusion

- The experiences of rural minority ethnic groups suggests that identity claims are complex, multifaceted and changing, as well as being contingent on place/s stretched across different types of boundaries and spaces .
- Their small numbers, diversity and dispersion, and the limited availability of public spaces (e.g. streets, markets, etc.) shape their experiences of rurality and can lead to feelings of social and cultural isolation.
- These experiences are reinforced by prevailing policies and attitudes of local communities which can lead to strong assimilatory pressures.
- Despite these challenges minority ethnic households have been proactive in developing adaptive strategies which cross spatial boundaries.

Conclusion

In claiming and performing identity minority ethnic people:

- challenge the hegemonic ideas embodied in notions such as the 'rural idyll' and in discourses about belonging and identity in rural contexts
- emphasise the centrality of place/spaces as metaphorical spaces which co-exist in people's everyday lived experiences drawing on their translocational positionalities, which connect spaces and places stretched across national boundaries .
- acknowledge the centrality of place-based relationships in shaping identity but also emphasise the translocational aspects of identity as stretched beyond the local , thus reinforcing the notion of both fixity embodied in rural as well as notions of rural as 'active' and connected across transnational spaces(Bell et al, 2010)

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Thank you !

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